

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

The EU in Quest for the Recognition of its  
Institutional identity:  
The case of the EU-US dialogues

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# Abstract

While the literature on the European Union's foreign policy has heavily emphasized the EU's marked preference for diplomacy and the conduct of dialogues, the rationale behind the salience of this practice has not yet been fully explored. Therefore, this thesis asks why the European Union promotes and conducts so many political dialogues with third countries in its external relations. The original contribution of this thesis is two-fold: theoretically, it contributes to the literature on the practice of dialogue in International Relations by moving away from theories stressing the rationality of the institutional actors involved in dialogical interactions. Instead, this thesis grounds itself in socio-psychology applied to institutions to conceptualize the practice of dialogue as a symbolically-framed interaction through which institutional identity is recognized and anchored. In doing so, this research demonstrates that the European Union promotes and conducts such an extraordinary number of dialogues with third countries in order to get recognition of its institutional identity as a distinct and relevant international actor. More specifically, the study sheds light on the mechanisms through which the dialogical interaction at the micro-level helps anchor the institutional identity of the EU at the macro-level. Empirically, the thesis contributes to a more nuanced and better understanding of one of the most complex and important relationships of our times – the transatlantic relationship — by presenting original findings on the multiple dialogical encounters occurring at different levels of representation: at the highest level of diplomatic meetings, at the inter-parliamentary level and at the level of civil society. The present work thus departs from traditional perspectives on transatlantic relations by focusing on the micro-level of interaction and its symbolic implications at the macro-level. Through the conduct of interviews with European and American officials involved in these dialogues and several participant observations in the meetings, this study offers a fine-grained analysis of the dialogue as one of the most frequently used tools of foreign policy used by the EU in its external relations.

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# Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries
CFSP	Common Foreign Security Policy
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DG	Directorate General
EABC	European-American Business Council
EAD	Euro-Arab Dialogue
EC	European Community
ECCC	European Community Chamber of Commerce
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HLWG	High Level Working Group
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IP	Intellectual Properties
JAP	Joint Action Plan
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
LIBE	Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (EP committee)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSA	Non-State Actors
NTA	New Transatlantic Agenda
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PDCA	Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement
PES	Party of European Socialists
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SEA	Single European Act
SLG	Senior Level Group
STOA	Science and Technology Options Assessment (EP committee)
TABC	Transatlantic Business Council
TABD	Transatlantic Business Dialogue

TACD	Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue
TAD	Transatlantic Declaration
TAXE	Tax Ruling and Other measures similar in nature or effect (EP Committee)
TDCA	Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement
TEC	Transatlantic Economic Council
TLD	Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue
TPN	Transatlantic Policy Network
TPPC	Transatlantic Partnership on Political Co-operation
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WG	Working group

# Chapter 1 – Why talk about dialogue?

*“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel” (Buehner, quoted in Evans 1971, p. 244)*

## 1.1. The thesis in a nutshell

Not a day goes by without a report in the news on a new political dialogue established between the European Union (EU) and non-EU countries, covering an ever-increasing range of issues and involving different sets of actors. The recent renewal of the political dialogue with Cuba (European Commission, 2017b), the Human Rights Dialogue freshly started with Vietnam (EEAS, 2017), or the project of establishing a strategic dialogue with the Arab League (EEAS, 2015c) are just a few examples of this wider phenomenon that conveys the impression that the EU is talking with virtually all the countries of the world about everything. The establishment of political dialogues between the EU and third countries has definitely become a wide-spread institutionalised practice over the years, constituting in Monar’s (1997, p. 272) words an entire ‘dialogue system’. With the EU currently involved in more than 100 different dialogues with individual countries and international organisations, a non-negligible amount of time and resources is invested in these dialogues.

Surprisingly, this pervasive dialogical practice has not instigated in-depth research about its rationale and significance so far. In common wisdom, the EU dialogues with third countries are either quickly dismissed as cheap talking shops and empty performances (Herranz, 2005) or highly praised as an important foreign policy tool allowing the EU to potentially exert its normative influence on third parties (Smith, 1998, p. 70). There is, however, a dearth of research as to the specific dynamics unfolding during these dialogical interactions and their added value. Therefore, through an in-depth examination of the practice of dialogue at the *micro-level (granular level)* and a macro analysis of these practices’ significance, this thesis re-examines the rationale behind the systematic institutionalisation of political dialogues with third countries. In doing so, it answers the following research question: *why does the EU promote and conduct more dialogues than any other actor in the world?*

The study shows that the main goal of the EU in conducting these dialogues with non-EU countries is to anchor its institutional identity by gaining recognition as a key international actor. In this quest for recognition, the dialogue offers an instance in which institutional actors can experience the institutional identity of the other and their own and engage in recognition

processes with far-reaching implications at the macro-level. In fact, the dialogue constitutes a framework of direct encounter in which temporal and spatial immediacy allows for non-verbal cues and emotions to take a prominent position alongside other forms of communication.

From a theoretical perspective, traditional IR theories and approaches (realism, liberalism, and constructivism) have proposed different perspectives on the added value and significance of dialogues in international politics: while for realists, dialogical interactions are nothing more than a pure reflection of power constellations hinging on coercive mechanisms, liberal institutionalists consider this practice to be a real engine for cooperation, enabling intense exchange of information and views, and possibly leading to joint action. As to the constructivist approach, it considers dialogues as a site in which genuine processes of persuasion and arguing might develop, resulting in the emergence of common understandings and shared ideas. In sum, these theoretical approaches define the essence of dialogue either in terms of power relations or in terms of communication revolving around the transmission of information and knowledge in a rationalistic/cognitive vein. By contrast, this thesis argues that in order to fully understand the significance of the practice of dialogue, one needs to take into account the socio-psychological dimension underpinning the dynamics at play in dialogues. Borrowing insights from socio-psychology and organisational studies, this thesis shows that the EU conducts a large number of dialogues in order to gain recognition for its relevance as a distinct and relevant international power and anchor its institutional identity. In this sense, this thesis challenges the common conceptualisation of EU dialogues as solely foreign policy tools designed to exert influence on the behaviours of non-EU countries and points to another rationale behind the extensive use of these dialogues – one that is related to internal identity and recognition matters.

## 1.2. The significance of the research question and of the selected case study

In EU foreign policy literature so far, there has been a distinct lack of *theoretical* analysis regarding the dynamics and outcomes of the political dialogues conducted by the EU with non-EU countries. Therefore, it is an objective of this research to go some way towards remedying this omission. Indeed, most of the works done so far on the topic of ‘political dialogues’ consist either of historical and legal overviews dating to the 1990s (Flaesch-Mougin, 1990; Nuttall, 1992; Regelsberger, 1991) or provide descriptions of more specific dialogues with China (Kinzelbach, 2015; Kinzelbach & Thelle, 2011), Central Asian states (Axyonova, 2011), Israel

(Harpaz, 2011), and Malaysia (Chevallier-Govers, 2011) without analysing more systematically the nuts and bolts of this dialogical practice and its added value. Yet these dialogues promoted and conducted by the EU are particularly important: they are both a ‘signature practice’ of the EU as a normative power and also constitute a primary instrument to achieve foreign policy goals in that they deal with the issue of effectiveness of the EU as a foreign policy actor. As a result, there is a taken-for-granted assumption that these dialogues are used to influence outcomes in third countries, i.e. in helping the EU to exert influence worldwide. But is it really the case? The main research question guiding this research project is the following: Why does the EU promote and conduct so many dialogues with non-EU countries? What can we learn from the fine-grained analysis of the dialogue’s mechanisms and its implications at the macro-level?

This research question is important for several reasons. Broadly speaking, one cannot emphasise enough the relevance of the practice of dialogue in today’s world characterised by global disorder and even – according to certain commentators – by international chaos. Against the backdrop of a sharp increase in ethnic conflicts exemplified by the implosion of Syria and the barbaric use of chemical gas against citizens, coupled with the development of so-called apocalyptic terrorism (Flannery, 2016) and growing economic uncertainties, a new rhetoric on chaos and global insecurities has emerged. It is the unpredictability of myriad actors – both state and non-state – with means and intentions difficult to comprehend that fuels the fear of the disintegration of the civilizational order (Berthelet, 2014). In these times of turbulences and uncertainty, dialogue is more important than ever. It remains a crucial means of communication and can provide a platform to manage disagreements peacefully, eventually creating the ‘glue’ that make states and other entities stick together. This civilising function of the dialogue becomes all the more important as a testament to the commitment to a non-conflictual on-going interaction, thereby sustaining the civilising process of the international relations. After all, as Jovchelovitch (2011, p. 150) emphasises, ‘The ontogeny of human experience is about encountering and communicating with the other, and succeeding in this encounter is paramount for human life’.

Understanding the reasons that make states engage in dialogue and how the subsequent dynamics unfold in the interaction is therefore essential to avoid the slippery slope towards war and violence. As Mitzen reminds us (2005, p. 401), anarchy lurks outside the meeting room: ‘Without some constraint to keep actors committed to resolving their disagreements discursively, argument can spill over from the conference table to the street, or even to the battlefield’. As such, this enquiry about the added value of the dialogue and its dynamics can

be viewed as an expression of the courage to hope for a world beyond global disorder (Dallmayr & Demenchonok, 2017). An advanced understanding of dialogue is also crucial in these contemporary times when collective action appears to be the only approach to common global problems such as climate change and pandemics, and when – in an economically globalised world – the use of force is not only irrelevant for managing such issues but is a less-effective instrument of power (Kerr, 2010, p. 238). As such, the topic of this thesis is consequential for understanding something that significantly affects many people's lives – and this is an essential criteria for sound research in social sciences (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994).

In the specific context of the EU, this research question is also important and useful from a practical perspective. In fact, given the time and the huge resources invested in the conduct of these dialogues with more than 100 countries and regional institutions, it appears crucial to reach a better understanding of the reasons for, and implications of, this practice. Such a reflexion about the conduct of EU foreign policy is extremely timely in light of the recent political, economic, and institutional developments shaking the EU: while the EU is going through a turbulent phase facing both internal and external crises that have the potential to tarnish its image as a foreign policy actor, it has deliberately built up its diplomatic capacity in the post-Lisbon era, aiming at making its foreign policy more effective and raising its profile as a genuine diplomatic actor. One recent book about the EU as a diplomatic actor focuses on the EU's capacity to engage authoritatively in the core process of negotiation, representation, and communication in order to influence third parties (Koops & Macaj, 2014). By uncovering how power constellations, institutional processes, and inter-institutional relations affect the diplomatic performance of the EU, its focus is very much on how internal EU coordination impacts its capacity to act as a diplomatic actor. My perspective differs in the sense that it examines the interaction with the third country *itself* and not with the internal functioning of EU diplomatic machinery.

To answer the key research question mentioned above, I confine myself to the dialogue that presents the most interesting features for the purpose of this research, namely the EU-US dialogues. Three main reasons motivate my choice for this case study. First, in terms of policy relevance, there is no doubt that the transatlantic partnership is worth studying in depth, as it has retained its importance in shaping the outcome of future global developments. The transatlantic relationship is arguably the most significant relationship in the international system (McGuire & Smith, 2008; Steffenson, 2005, p. 1). Moreover, because this study aims at understanding the rationale and dynamics inherent in the dialogues, one needs to select a case in which the study variable (i.e. instances of dialogues) is present in unusually large

quantities (Van Evera, 1997). The EU-US dialogue meets perfectly this criterion and corresponds in this sense to the most extreme case method (Gerring, 2008): due to the complexity of the EU-US relations made of many configurations of actors and issues, the density of the dialogues is particularly striking. Indeed, the EU-US bilateral partnership features an intensity and frequency of consultations on a wide range of transatlantic and multilateral issues, unprecedented in the diplomatic relations of either partner and in the history of diplomacy writ large (Ginsberg, 2001a). Thirdly, the initial research was originally undertaken in an exploratory fashion and therefore not constructed to test the specific hypothesis that is now the primary argument. The rationale behind the analysis of this specific case rather lay in the promises it held in terms of the quality and quantity of the discursive interaction based on the Habermasian pre-requisites for an ideal-speech situation. First, it arguably features a significant *common lifeworld* reflected in the basic political values and norms that the EU and the United States share, and it also roughly approximates the configuration of a ‘dialogue among equals’ where the power asymmetry is not so accentuated (in economic terms at least). In fact, the United States and the EU are unique partners in the sense that there are no other comparable partners that share such similar interests and values. In the words of Baun (2014, p. 25), ‘Europe and the US remain the essential, and to some extent, “natural” partner of the other, a consequence of existing institutional and economic ties and more than seven decades of cooperation, historical and cultural bonds that remain substantial, shared values and common value-based interests and the absence of other credible alternatives as reliable long-term partners’. Yet as Gerring (2008) argues, research is about discovery and in the course of the research dead ends are reached and surprising phenomena revealed. Finally, from a more practical perspective, this case presents advantages in terms of source availability. As Cohen (1997, p. 19) mentions, ‘Material on contemporary diplomacy – archival, published and oral – is very much accessible in the United States and the openness of American public life facilitates political research to a degree hardly found elsewhere’.

### 1.3. What is a dialogue? A working definition

A short background on the key concept of ‘dialogue’ at the heart of this study is in order. I first emphasise the positive connotation that the term ‘dialogue’ has acquired over centuries and across disciplines and then specify the working definition of dialogue used in this study in the context of international relations.

### *The magic of dialogue across disciplines*

First of all, as the title of Yankelovich's book *Magic of dialogue: transforming conflict into cooperation* suggests (1999), dialogue has become a buzzword with a taken-for-granted positive value. Indeed, in everyday parlance, dialogue is generally positively considered as it holds the promise of bringing positive outcomes. It is often referred to as a means to improve a problematic situation: it is expected to 'transform' and 'change' for the better and to allow the interlocutors of the dialogue to reach a specific goal through the use of language and communication. Even when dialogue fails to bring the positions of diverging sides any closer, its outcome is still presented in a positive light with the participants often ironically declaring at the end of the meeting that 'they agreed to disagree', as in the case of high-level diplomatic dialogue between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in December 2012. Merkel reported that they had an 'open discussion between friends. Everything was on the table. But on the settlement issue we agreed to disagree' (Keinon, 2012).

The virtues of dialogue have been hailed in a variety of contexts. In the words of Yankelovich (1999, p. 16), 'When dialogue is done skilfully, the results can be extraordinary: long-standing stereotypes dissolved, mistrust overcome, mutual understanding achieved, visions shaped and grounded in shared purpose, people previously at odds with one another aligned on objectives and strategies, new common ground discovered, new perspectives and insights gained, new levels of creativity stimulated, and bonds of community strengthened'. Similar conclusions have been reached in studies examining the benefits of dialogue in the business sector between companies and stakeholders, for instance (Burchell & Cook, 2006). Applied to the realm of international politics, the same assumptions are made: dialogue has traditionally been opposed to coercion and associated with consensus building. The promise of dialogue is 'to facilitate the conduct of international relations along consensual, non-coercive lines', potentially allowing parties to 'overcome the fragmentation of the international system' (Deitelhoff & Müller, 2005, p. 178) and transcend 'power politics'. Phrased differently, there is an implicit assumption that the dialogue has a *transformative* power, and that the discursive interaction is able to change things for the better.

This well-accepted positive connotation associated with the concept of dialogue finds its roots in ancient historical practices and influential philosophical works on the subject. First, it is worth remembering that the very term 'dialogue' comes from the Greek words *dia* and *logos*. *Dia* meaning 'through' and *logos* translating to 'word' or 'meaning'. In essence then,

dialogue refers to a flow of meaning from which shared understanding can emerge (Isaacs, 1999, p. 19). The tradition of dialogue in its idealistic form – that is, in which people think together in relationship – can be traced to the talking circles of Native Americans, to the Agora (market place) of ancient Greece, and beyond that to the tribal rituals of many indigenous peoples in Africa, New Zealand, and elsewhere (Isaacs, 1999, p. 26). In addition, over centuries, influential philosophical works have attempted to capture the essence of dialogue in its ideal-typical form (Buber, 1958; Levinas, 1991). For instance, in a Socratic perspective, dialogues serve as a means to find the rational truth through questioning, while for the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, dialogue is the best way to improve and transform societies by coming to a reasoned consensus among truth-seeking actors (Habermas, 1981). The common denominator among all these conceptions of dialogues is their view on dialogue as a particular type of communication of the highest quality holding great promises in terms of change.

From Thucydides's 'Melian Dialogue' in the first century to the most recent 'strategic dialogues' between NATO and its former adversaries to the East and its Mediterranean partners, through the 'inter-civilizational dialogue' launched by the former Iranian President Khatami with the United States in the 1990s, the term 'dialogue' has also acquired a multiplicity of meanings in International Relations that require some definitional clarifications. This is all the more true, considering the fact that 'dialogue is not a concept that has a "natural" home at the international level of analysis' (Fierke, 1999, p. 27).

### *A working definition of dialogue*

For the purpose of this study, I adopt a working definition of 'dialogue' intended to draw attention to the main relevant features of the concept developed in the IR literature. I define here dialogue as a '*face-to-face interaction in an institutionalised framework*'. The face-to-face aspect of the interaction is key as its inherent spatial physical immediacy allows for the use of non-verbal communication and the display of emotions. As to the institutionalised nature of the dialogue, it sets the parameters and rules of the interaction, influencing the behaviour of the participants. In what follows, I briefly explain how dialogue has been used in the context of cooperation, diplomacy, and conflict resolution, and emphasise the relevant aspects that I incorporate in my own working definition of dialogue and the justification behind this choice.

### ***Dialogue and cooperation***

In the realm of cooperation, the term ‘dialogue’ appears very often in two different forms: as a general framework of cooperation and as a narrower component of this large framework, corresponding to the very action of exchanging views which generally occurs in a discursive context and on an institutionalised basis. Indeed, over the years, the term ‘dialogue’ has been used interchangeably with the notion of ‘partnership’, entailing the idea of a rapprochement between two distinct political entities. Originally conceptualised at the interpersonal level, this term has come to be applied to dialogues between states, cultures, and even civilisations. The studies on the NATO dialogue with Eastern European countries at the end of the Cold War (Fierke, 1999), on the important dialogue or ‘engagement policy’ launched by the United States vis-à-vis China in the mid-1990s, or on the ‘inter-civilizational dialogue’ promoted in the framework of the tense relations between Iran and the United States (Lynch, 2000) are just a few examples. Yet within these broader frameworks of cooperation, one often finds provisions for the establishment of more concrete dialogues defined in narrower terms – as an *institutionalised* setting involving participants that engage in face-to-face communication to achieve specific goals, such as the exchange of views and ideas, the monitoring of progress, and more. In this sense, dialogue refers to the practice of ‘talking’, to the actual meetings, consultations and forums of discussion that are supposed to be the engine of cooperation. Furthermore, the importance of the *repeated* nature of the interaction should not be underestimated because the expectation to meet again repeatedly in the future affects the actors’ behaviour and enhances the prospects for cooperation (R. Axelrod, 1984). Therefore, an important characteristic of dialogue in this context is its institutionalised dimension, which clearly establishes the aims and rules informing these discursive face-to-face interactions. This feature is important to underline as it makes the difference between ‘dialogue’ and a mere ordinary discussion that can virtually take place everywhere with all kinds of actors on an informal basis.

### ***Dialogue and diplomacy***

In the realm of diplomacy, one can similarly draw a distinction between a broad conceptualisation of dialogue as the ‘essence of diplomacy’ (Jönsson & Hall, 2005) and a narrower understanding of dialogue as one specific means through which diplomacy is actually conducted. Regarding the first aspect, it is worth reminding that diplomacy has traditionally been conceived as essentially a dialogue between independent states, or as Watson (1982, p. 11) put it, as ‘the process of dialogue and negotiation by which states in a system conduct their

relations and pursue their purposes by means short of war'. In this perspective, also shared by Sir Harold Nicolson, diplomacy is a process of negotiation and deliberation that promotes peace and international cooperation among states. According to Watson, diplomacy is inevitable: 'States which are aware that their domestic policies are affected by "everything that happens" outside, are not content merely to observe one another at distance. They feel the need to enter into dialogue with one another. This dialogue between independent states ... is the substance of diplomacy' (Watson, 1982, p. 14).

The second and narrower use of dialogue in the diplomatic context relates to the specific setting of 'face-to-face interaction' between official representatives. In this respect, the distinction between negotiations and dialogue is telling. According to common wisdom, negotiations are often associated with the dramatic moment in which all the stakeholders are 'around the table' in a face-to-face interaction, trying to reach a final agreement. Yet the overall process of negotiations cannot be reduced to the final face-to-face interaction: negotiation is defined as a *sequence of actions* in which two or more parties address demands, arguments, and proposals to each other for the ostensible purpose of reaching an agreement (Iklé, 1964, p. 711; Odell, 2000, pp. 10–11). It does not involve only face-to-face exchanges but also other activities, such as lobbying, exchanges of proposals, and intense correspondence between the parties about certain principles or detailed revisions of an agreement. Furthermore, it is worth emphasising that negotiations do not necessarily require the simultaneous *physical* presence of the negotiators: they can be carried out 'at a distance' through diplomatic correspondence, telephone, fax, or email (Barston, 2006, p. 48). Hence in this context, dialogue corresponds only to one *means of communication* among many others that might be used during the process of negotiations or in the service of any other diplomatic function. What matters is the *face-to-face* nature of the interaction because it confers a higher degree of importance to what is being done or said in this framework. As such, the dialogue works as a key clinching moment – particularly relevant when it comes to the psycho-sociological needs of the participants in terms of recognition and respect.

Drawing on this short survey of the use of dialogue in diplomatic context, my working definition of dialogue puts the emphasis on the *face-to-face interaction* characteristic of dialogue that differentiates it from other diplomatic tools. Furthermore, by differentiating dialogue from negotiations, I made clear that my working definition of dialogue does not assume that dialogues necessarily aim at reaching agreement; their goals can be multiple and are determined by the institution in which they are embedded.

### *Dialogue and conflict resolution*

The third literature in which the term ‘dialogue’ has great prominence corresponds to the sub-field of conflict resolution and peace-building. In this perspective, dialogue is typically hailed as a progressive force fostering mutual understanding and as an effective tool for conflict resolution. Yet despite this broad understanding, ambiguity characterises the use of the term ‘dialogue’ with no proper comprehensive definition being offered (Feller & Ryan, 2012, p. 153). One main distinction that warrants underlining in this context, however, deals with the notion of ‘dialogue’ as opposed to ‘talks or negotiations’. The literature on conflict resolution categorises negotiations as being outcome-oriented and as unfolding in an adversarial formal configuration whereas dialogue is conceived as a process geared towards trust and confidence building in a less structured and more empathetic atmosphere (Burton, 1997; Fierke, 1999; Fisher & Keashly, 1988; Reimann, 2004; Rothman, 1992). An additional element differentiating negotiations from dialogue deals with the type of actors participating: whereas negotiations (or track I diplomacy) traditionally involve officials, political leaders, diplomats, and formal mediators, dialogue (track II and track III diplomacy) involves civil society actors, such as private persons, former diplomats, academic institutions, religious organisations, as well as NGOs and local organisations (Reimann, 2004). For the purpose of this study, I do not adopt the distinction made in the conflict resolution literature between negotiations and dialogue. Stripping away the normative dimension of dialogue, I rather take the term at face value, i.e. as a mere instance of discursive exchange without previously assuming an adversarial outcome-oriented or more conciliatory process-oriented approach to the interaction itself. A particular aspect of this body of literature that will be further developed in the theoretical framework relates to the socio-psychological dimension inherent in conflict resolution and peace building (see Kelman, 1965, 2008, 2012).

#### 1.4. Overview of the argument

The thesis puts forward a socio-psychological explanation of the EU dialogues. It shows that the practice of dialogue serves to anchor the EU institutional identity through an on-going and iterative process of recognition unfolding in the face-to-face interaction between representatives of participating institutions. By moving beyond the traditional conceptualisation of dialogue in IR and by taking into account the socio-psychological dimension of the dialogue, I propose a richer conceptualisation of dialogue in IR rooted in the full appreciation of the identity factor. I show that the dialogue constitutes an instance in which

the recognition process of institutional identity is at work. The inherent characteristics of the dialogue in terms of spatial and temporal immediacy allows the display of emotions that becomes crucial in this recognition process. Institutional identity is defined as ‘the identity which is the most central, enduring and distinctive about an organization’ (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 410). While the interaction unfolds among individual representatives at the micro-level, its significance transcends the meeting room due to the power of symbolism. More specifically, my argument unpacks this recognition process of institutional identity at three critical moments of the dialogue: (1) entering in the room, i.e. the preparation and setting; (2) communication and exchanges within the room; and (3) leaving the room – pointing to the different practices and discourses that emanate from the dialogue and that eventually anchor institutional identity. The third phase of the dialogue is particularly important because it allows actors to project the outcomes of the recognition process taking place behind closed doors to the world.

The explanation proposed in this thesis does not refute the other theoretical approaches in IR on the added value of dialogue and its function in the pursuit of other goals pursued by international actors, such as security and profit. Rather, the thesis sheds light on the fact that the quest for recognition underpins other practices, such as the quest for security and profit. In fact, the quest for recognition is the most important of the three modes of interactions, as the social structure that underpins the quest for security and profit assumes identity in the first place. This point follows the constructivist logic, according to which interests are not given as such, but always depend on an entity’s identity. So, following the symbolic interactionist tradition *à la Goffman*, I argue that dialogue can also be thought of as a performance in which actors can experience first-hand the institution they represent in all its complexity and uniqueness. In fact, in this symbolically framed interaction, the actors project the identity of the institution they represent in terms of values, interests, and procedures.

The need for recognition of the EU’s institutional identity transpires across all the different components and actors constituting the EU, hence the study of the different case studies with different actors (i.e. dialogue among parliamentarians, dialogue among diplomats, and dialogue among members of civil society). While the inter-parliamentary and executive dialogues directly involve EU representatives and as such is more straightforward, the third case study involves non-state actors, i.e. European and American business and consumers’ representatives. These in a way are outside of the formal institutions of the EU but the vitality and success of these transatlantic civil society dialogues act as an indirect recognition of the relevance of the EU and its policies.

## 1.5. Contribution to the literature

By answering this research question, the thesis offers both a theoretical and empirical contribution.

Theoretically, it deepens our understanding of the practice of dialogue and role of dialogue in international relations. Dialogue has traditionally been conceptualised as fulfilling different functions, according to various IR theories. In the realist perspective, whereby states are first and foremost concerned with the quest for security, dialogue is seen as a full manifestation of power and as an instance dominated by bargaining dynamics in a coercive setting. By contrast, for liberal institutionalist and constructivists, dialogue is instrumental in allowing the exchange of information and the emergence of shared understandings, thereby benefitting states and institutions in their quest for profit and progress. My focus in this research is on the quest for recognition and on the specific and important role that dialogue plays in this context. While rationalist and constructivist approaches emphasise the cognitive capacity of the participants – either as utility-maximising actors, sensitive only to new information that might change their cost-benefits, or as actors deploying logical arguments in the form of practical inference – the identity-based model proposed in this thesis brings to the fore key socio-psychological elements inherent in the dialogue, inviting us to understand ‘*homo politicus*’ as ‘*homo symbolicus*’. Dialogues are not merely instances in which speakers raise rational claims, whether in the form of threats/rewards, information, or more complex ideas. Other dimensions of human experience do matter, such as the quest for respect and for recognition often accompanied by the display of emotions. The research also shows that the identity-based model proposed in this thesis essentially underpins the other IR theories: the quest for the recognition of one’s identity informs the other dynamics and vice versa. The discursive dynamics at play during the dialogue itself serve to anchor the identity of the interlocutors.

Theoretically, the thesis also makes a contribution to the literature on recognition in International Relations by shedding light on the micro-foundations of recognition in dialogical interaction. Indeed, the thesis unpacks the process through which recognition can also be granted or withdrawn at the micro-level during dialogical interactions with far-reaching macro-institutional consequences. In this sense, the thesis is a great addition to the recognition literature that has mainly focused so far on either formal modes of recognition used by states to grant or withhold recognition from other states and collectives, such as recognition acts enacted in the legal realm (Fabry, 2010), or on more informal modes of recognition, such as

public statements at the international level (Gustafsson, 2016). This study suggests that recognition processes are at play in everyday diplomatic practice, such as regular dialogues and meetings with implications at the macro-level for the whole institution. It thus broadens the universe of instances in which recognition can be sought and granted. The study makes an additional contribution to the literature on recognition by further exploring the burgeoning concept of ‘indirect recognition’, whereby recognition is given to states or institutions by non-state actors (Geis, Felh, Daase, & Kolliarakis, 2015). Typically, the literature on recognition dealing with non-state actors, such as NGOs, has explored the phenomenon of ‘vertical recognition’, whereby NGOs seek ‘vertical’ recognition from states and international organisations. In the words of Heins (2015, p. 204), ‘In order to be able to participate in international conferences convened by the United Nations (UN), NGOs have to go through a quasi-diplomatic accreditation process’. In the case of this study, however, I explore the ‘reverse directionality’ of this vertical recognition and show how non-state actors can actually recognise and contribute to reinforce state or institutional identities.

This research also helps bridge the gap between the literature on dialogue in International Relations and diplomatic studies. Drawing on Jönsson and Hall (2005), Bjola rightly emphasises that, ‘the bulk of the literature on diplomacy has been written either by practitioners or diplomatic historians, neither of whom are much interested in theoretical and conceptual development. On the other hand, those engaged in theory, namely IR scholars - have rather been oblivious to the study of diplomacy. As a result, a gap has emerged between the theory and the practice of diplomacy – to the extent that the two camps do not comfortably talk to each other’ (Bjola, 2013, p. 3). To some extent, this study helps bridge this theory-practice gap by linking the practical day-to-day management of diplomatic relations in the case of dialogues to broader questions regarding power relations, the role of enmity and friendship in world politics, and issues of recognition.

Furthermore, from a diplomatic studies perspective, this research also offers a valuable contribution by exploring an interesting confluence of trends: the persistence of a long-standing form of diplomacy (face-to-face encounters in an institutionalised framework) combined with new practices in terms of issues covered and actors involved. Regarding the century-old practice of dialogue – defined as a face-to-face encounter among official representatives in an institutionalised framework – one might ponder its added value in a world where diplomacy takes place more and more in the digital space (cf. digital diplomacy). In fact, gone are the days of the Medici when *envoyés* were sent on horses across the European continent to deliver important messages. Nowadays, in light of technological advances, an incredible number of

emails can be exchanged and video conferences can easily be held with interlocutors on the other side of the world. Still, face-to-face encounters continue to take place, exactly as in the time of the Medici. So why does the physical encounter still matter so much in today's fast-paced world? What is its enduring added value? Secondly, this study also addresses new practices of diplomacy characterising the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, research has shown that the range of issues discussed at the international level has expanded significantly to a variety of areas that go beyond the immediate military and political remit of traditional diplomacy (i.e. immigration, environment). Second, the range of actors involved in diplomatic activities has expanded and the traditional lines between public and private actors are increasingly blurred. For instance, parliaments have become vocal on the international stage, giving rise to parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis & Jančić, 2016). Civil society actors have also come to play a more prominent role in international affairs and their role has often been central in the conclusion of agreements (Davenport, 2002; Hochstetler, 2013). As we shall see, the dialogues that the EU institutionalises with third countries involve this whole range of actors – from diplomats to civil society actors through parliamentarians. In this sense, the study provides a fine-grained analysis of the dialogical interactions in these different diplomatic frameworks – old and new.

Empirically, the thesis investigates the practice of dialogue conducted by the EU with third countries making two main contributions to the EU foreign policy literature. First, the precise analysis of the mechanisms at play during the dialogue constitutes an important contribution of knowledge on how the EU diplomacy works at the *micro-level* (Adler-Nissen, 2016; McNamara, 2015). It helps understand the practice of EU external affairs and important diplomatic aspects that remain otherwise under-appreciated: how do EU officials prepare the meetings? What is their purpose? What happens during the interaction? And afterwards? In other words, the analysis goes beyond the description of the formalities of the dialogues and invites the reader to enter the meeting room and understand how the EU does things and how it understands and interprets these things. Secondly, thanks to the investigation of this practice at such a granular level, the study reveals another rationale (beyond the attempt to influence) behind the extensive use of political dialogues – namely the quest for recognition as a relevant international player. Thirdly, this study reflects an ambitious effort to gather first-hand accounts from a wide variety of participants of these dialogues – both European and American – as it draws on an array of original interviews as well as on an exhaustive examination of existing primary and secondary sources.

In addition, new empirical data on the transatlantic relations is brought forth: the study provides an empirical analysis of recent developments in the realm of the transatlantic relations. In particular, it covers in depth the EU-US dialogues during the Obama administration and provides a glimpse of the changes introduced by the Trump administration. It also offers a new fine-grained perspective on the multiple interactions involving European and American diplomats, lawmakers, and actors of the civil society.

Last but not least, the results of the research can also be relevant in terms of policy implications/recommendations. The thorough analysis of the practice of the dialogue – from the preparation to the follow up phase – provides insights as to the potential and limits of this foreign policy instrument. It also helps generate practical advice on how to maximise the impact of the dialogue and how to set up discussions that will engender better results.

## 1.6. Roadmap: structure of the thesis

In this spirit of enquiry, the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the analytical framework used in this research and carves out the key theoretical notions that will later be used in the empirical analysis. More specifically, it outlines the relationship between dialogue, identity and recognition, and unravels the mechanism of recognition at work during the dialogue that anchors the EU's institutional identity. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 focuses on the EU's distinctive features and explains why this unique institution has specific needs of recognition of its institutional identity, especially vis-à-vis the United States. The two following chapters provide an overview of the practice of dialogue conducted by the EU across time (Chapter 5) and an overview of the architecture of dialogues in the transatlantic context (Chapter 6). Chapter 5 analyses the evolution of the use of dialogues in EU foreign policy, pointing to the incremental multiplication of dialogues and its rationale. It offers an up-to-date mapping of all the dialogues currently being conducted between the EU and the rest of the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Chapter 6 focuses on the evolution of the EU-US architecture of dialogues against the backdrop of different stages in transatlantic relations. Chapters 7 to 9 are devoted to the three key components of the transatlantic dialogue and de facto constitute three case studies: the case of the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue (TLD), which involves members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and members of the American Congress; the case of the executive dialogues between the European External Action Service (EEAS)/European Commission (EC) and the US State Department; and the case of the transatlantic civil society dialogues, i.e. the Transatlantic Business Council

(TABC) and the Transatlantic Consumers Dialogue (TACD). Finally, the concluding chapter (Chapter 10) will weave the threads of the thesis together. The findings across the different chapters will be compared and conclusions about the practice of dialogue and the EU quest of recognition for its institutional identity will be reached and contextualised in the literature. The implications for further research will also be drawn.

## Chapter 2 – A theoretical framework for the identity-based dialogue: recognition and anchoring of institutional identity

In this chapter, I will provide the theoretical framework of the study and present the propositions to be evaluated in the case studies. The main purpose of the study is to investigate the dynamics of the dialogical interaction at play at the micro-level and their significance at the macro-level in order to understand why the EU institutionalises and promotes so many dialogues. The concepts of dialogue, institutional identity and recognition form the analytical spine of this study.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section sheds light on the particularities of dialogue as a form of human communication and foreign policy tool, thereby specifying the key characteristics of this practice. The second section anchors the discussion in the realm of international relations theory by outlining the role of dialogue in the different logics of international action (i.e. the quest for security, profit, and recognition). Building on this, the following section explores the underlying layer at the base of the dialogue related to identity and recognition matters in socio-psychological terms. It shows how dialogue constitutes an instance in which recognition processes are at play, thereby reinforcing the identity of the institutions represented by the actors present. The theoretical framework is itself divided into several parts: (1) it first defines recognition, de-recognition and indirect recognition; (2) it then spells out the power of symbolism linking the recognition process at the micro-level with the macro-institutional level; (3) outlines how the process of recognition is brought about during the dialogue by pointing to the key symbolic elements present across the different phases of the dialogue; (4) and it finally assesses the outcome of the recognition process by delineating different shades of equality in various kinds of relationships.

### 2.1. The particularities of dialogue: spatial temporal immediacy and emotional display

As mentioned in the introduction, I define dialogue in this study as a *'face-to-face interaction in an institutionalised framework'*. Two key aspects of this definition deserve further analysis,

namely the non-mediated, direct physical character of the interaction and its institutionalised nature.

Looking first at the specific configuration of a ‘face-to-face’ interaction, its main distinctive feature relates to the fact that participants are in a state of *temporal and spatial immediacy* with their interlocutors (Markova, 1990, p. 6). This basic fact has far-reaching implications both in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication.

First, the fact that the parties are in a *temporal* immediate contact allows for an instantaneous reciprocal exchange. There are *real-time* constraints on production and comprehension under which participants in conversations operate, and it creates a very high degree of *responsiveness* that is not very easily obtained in other communicative configurations (Krauss & Fussell, 1996, p. 683; Markova 1990, p. 9; McHale 2004, p. 28). As a result of the instantaneous nature of dyadic or small group conversations, processes of arguing and persuasion are more likely to unfold (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008).

Second, the *physical spatial* proximity in which the participants operate enables the capture of non-verbal communications in direct visual contact (McHale, 2004, p. 18).<sup>1</sup> This makes possible the exploitation of the physical dimension of body language (gestures, dress code, venue, and setting) and of the social rituals that help to create the atmosphere in which messages are most likely to be sympathetically received, such as the handshake, the embrace, and displays of inconvenience and triumph (Berridge, 2005; Cohen, 1987). The importance of these gestures should not be underestimated as they convey meaningful political messages – and particularly so in the diplomatic setting. For Jönsson and Hall, non-verbal language is as important as what is spoken during diplomatic encounters, leading them to argue that ‘saying is doing’ and ‘doing is saying’ (Jönsson & Hall, 2002). In this respect, the proliferation of ‘handshake analysis’ is telling because this gesture has become the metaphor capturing the state of the relationship (Cohen, 1987, p. 91; Faizullaev, 2013, p. 106). At one extreme, the omission of the handshake conveys a deep sense of disapproval of the rejected party and of a disturbance of the relationship. For instance, at the peace conference on Indochina in Geneva in 1954, the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, deliberately refused to shake hands with the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai. This symbolic gesture rankled leaders in Beijing for years (Cohen, 1987, pp. 92-93). His refusal of any kind of physical contact with Communist leaders stemmed from his vision of the communist world as the embodiment of metaphysical

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the difference between a real face-to-face dialogue and video conferencing (as an advanced form of telecommunication), see Berridge (2005, pp. 113–114).

evil (Ibid.). Arguing against a US-Soviet summit in 1955, he mentioned that ‘the spectacle of Eisenhower shaking hands with Krushchev would destroy the moral image of the United States, have a bad effect domestically, and tend to weaken the Allies’ will to stand up to Communism’. Similar considerations have probably been applied to his encounter with Zhou Enlai (Ogoura, 2012, p. 27). This can be contrasted with the famous handshake between President Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong in 1972; that handshake came to symbolise the end of several decades of wary relations between the two countries. For the former US diplomat Winston Lord – who witnessed this event, this second-long handshake had the effect of a ‘geopolitical earthquake’ (BBC news, 2017), thereby emphasising the political significance of the gesture.

*This photo of the meeting between Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1972, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Often captured visually, these historic handshakes remain glued in our memory even if the peace or the reconciliation that they were supposed to bring about never materialised – as in the case of the famous handshake on the White House lawn between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat under the benevolent eye of President Bill Clinton.

*This photo of the handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Washington in 1993 has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

More recently, it is the unusual handshakes of US President Donald Trump that have been in the eye of the media storm: the tight-gripped hand-wrestling between Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron has been described as the ‘never-ending handshake’ where neither male leader seemed to want to be the first to let go during their first face-to-face meeting in July 2017. This gesture was far from being innocent: as Macron himself admitted on French television, this was a ‘moment of truth’ (Dettmer, 2018) when he did not want to come across as a leader ready to make concessions to the United States. Another distinctive feature of a ‘face-to-face interaction’ worthy of comment is the highly symbolic value that it entails, contrary to other forms of communication, such as letters (McHale, 2004, pp. 30-31). This is all the more true in the age of ‘digital’ diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Dizard, 2001), when traditional diplomatic tasks can easily be performed on the internet in a few clicks. In this virtual context, the physical presence of attendees acquires a strong symbolic value, conveying a sense of importance and priority, amplified by a high level of representation.

Related to the non-verbal cues of communication, the spatial immediacy characterising dialogues allows for the display of emotions that can have a critical role in the diplomatic process. Indeed, when state representatives meet, they mainly exchange words – but there is much more going on at the emotional level that also needs to be taken into account. Following Crawford’s (2000) call for greater interest in emotions, a burgeoning literature has convincingly made the case that ‘emotions matter’ in world politics. The bulk of the literature has tackled the broad question of how emotions and affective response shape international politics, focusing mainly on the emotions experienced by policy-makers and their publics as a large collective group and on their impact at the macro-level (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2008; Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Löwenheim & Heimann, 2008; Moïsi, 2009; Ross, 2006; Sasley, 2011; Saurette, 2006). A few studies have, however, showed that emotions matter at the ‘micro-level’ of face-to-face diplomacy as well. For Wong (2015), emotions enable practitioners to exchange individual-level expressions of intentions – and, by extension, the intentions of the government or institution they represent – that are otherwise lost, attenuated, or distorted if communications were to occur through other impersonal channels. Anecdotal evidence confirms this communicative function of emotions, whereby emotions on display during the dialogue allow practitioners to better comprehend the intention of their counterparts. For one EEAS official participating regularly in EU-US dialogues, ‘The emotions do tell you something about the level of importance of this issue for both sides. It does make a difference if you feel that it is very important to them (the United States), you are more ready to accommodate. Or sometimes

you are just more trustful that they will follow through, so you can actually agree on their proposal' (Interview no. 23).

In the framework of this study on recognition, the emotional aspect of the dialogical interaction is of primary importance. In fact, my contention is that the process of recognition of one's identity – whether personal or institutional – inevitably involves emotions that can more visibly be expressed in face-to-face encounters. As I shall demonstrate later, emotions are omnipresent throughout all the stages of the recognition process, from entering the room, being in the room and leaving the room. In this case, emotional displays are not only cues regarding the intentions of the others but also regarding the degree to which actors feel that their identity has been properly recognised. In this sense, the emotional display will serve as a useful indicator for the outcome of the recognition process at play during the dialogue. I assume that the most salient emotions in the case of recognition will correspond to trust and to a sense of pride, satisfaction, joy, and enjoyment (respect), while in the case of lack of recognition, expressions of anger, frustration, humiliation and discontent will be dominant.

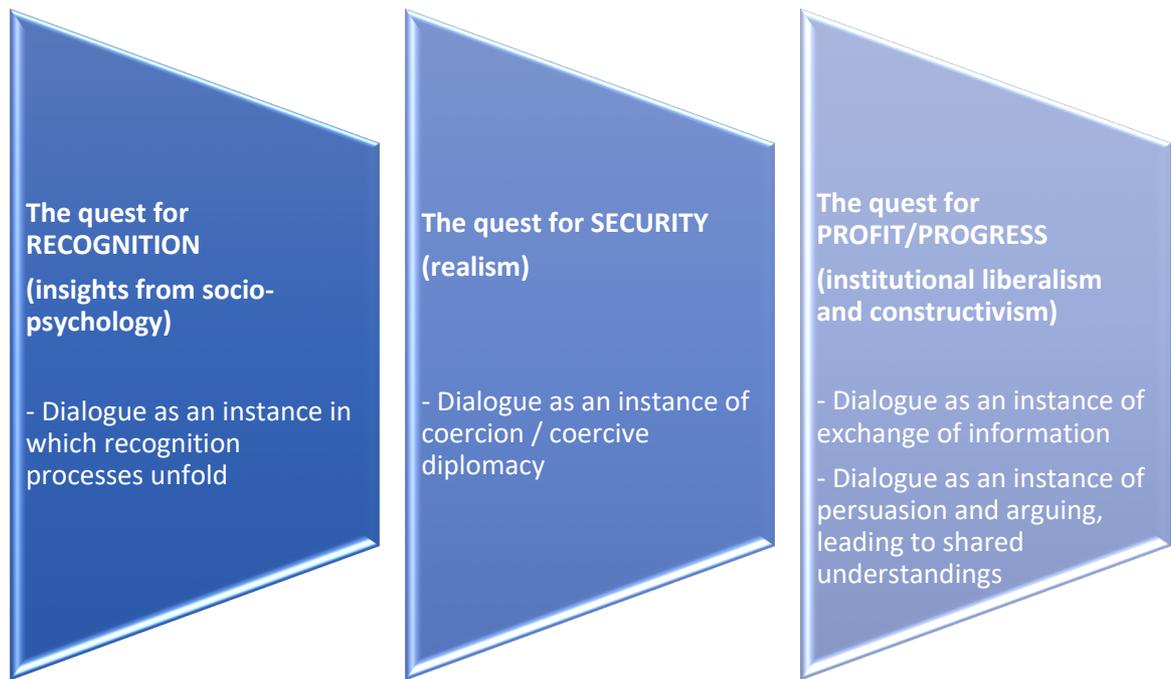
As to the institutionalised nature of the dialogue, it is of great import for several reasons. First, it is an effective way to distinguish the instances of dialogue under analysis from ordinary conversations that do not take place within the formal framework of interaction. In the context of this research, while acknowledging the existence of 'informal dialogues' conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, the analysis focuses mainly on the formal official dialogues set up by the European Union with the United States. The institutionalised framework also sets important parameters for the dialogue, both in terms of objectives and format, which have obvious consequences on the dynamics developing within the room. Secondly, the institutionalised character of the dialogue implies that the actors of the dialogue are expected to respect certain rules and norms of behaviour related to the context in which the social interaction takes place (in this case, diplomatic context), if only because they are likely to meet again in the future due to the repeated nature of their interactions. In other words, the actors of the dialogues operate under the 'shadow of the future' and will be therefore more inclined to engage in cooperative behaviours with their interlocutors (Axelrod, 1984; Axelrod & Keohane, 1986; Fearon, 1998) In this regard, the institutionalised nature of the dialogue is also what makes it symbolic and meaningful, and explains the intensity of the emotions that can be felt by the participants of the dialogue in their representative roles.

In short, the dialogue constitutes a framework of direct encounter in which temporal and spatial immediacy allows for non-verbal cues and emotions to take a prominent position alongside other forms of communication.

## 2.2. Dialogue in International Relations theories

There is today a wide consensus around the idea that there are three core motivational dynamics characterising international affairs: the search for security, the profit motive, and the struggle for recognition (Lindemann & Saada, 2012). Emphasising the specific quest for recognition, Ringmar (2002, p. 16) succinctly argued: ‘Not only physical, but also social survival is at stake in international politics’. My contention is that in each one of these modes of interactions – dialogues constituting a particular sort of social interaction – fulfils a distinct function. In this sub-section, therefore, I review these three core motivational dynamics and highlight the role that dialogue plays within each one of them – i.e. how dialogue is conceptualised in these three different contexts associated with traditional IR theories (realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism). While for realists, dialogue is conceived as an instance in which power relations are reflected and material interests advanced, for institutional liberals and constructivists it corresponds to an instance in which communication processes allow the promotion of cooperation and the emergence of shared understanding in a quest for profit and progress.

What has not been emphasised enough, however, is the specific role that dialogue plays in the quest for recognition in international politics, particularly through its socio-psychological dimension. The main argument developed here is that dialogue always encompasses an interactive process of recognition through which institutional identities are being anchored to different degrees. State representatives do not *only* engage in dialogue to coerce the other party (realist view) or to promote cooperation through the exchange of information (liberal institutionalism) and the emergence of shared understandings (constructivism), as traditional IR theories would argue. They are also sensitive to identity matters and use the dialogical interaction as an instance in which their institutional identity gets recognised and anchored. In what follows, I provide more details about how dialogues are conceptualised in main IR theories.



**Fig. 2.2. Scheme of the different core motivational dynamics in IR and the respective role of dialogue**

### **The quest for security through dialogue**

According to the realist school of thought, states are primarily animated by the quest for power and security and ‘force is the only language that states understand’ (Fierke, 1999, p. 28). Viewed through this theoretical lens, dialogues are extremely important because they constitute an instance through which coercion is exerted. In fact, for realists, the main mechanism at play during the dialogue corresponds to coercion often accompanied by bargaining. In this configuration, power differentials are very much present in the ‘room’ where the dialogue takes place and clearly inform the dialogical interaction to the benefit of the most powerful actor. Put differently, the most powerful actor approaches the dialogue from a position of superiority, trying to impose its view on the problem or issue at stake upon the other side (Lynch, 2005; Tocci, 2007). In this sense, dialogues are a full demonstration of power whereby the outcomes always reflect relative power and self-interest (Davis Cross, 2007, p. 5). As Langholz & Stout (2004, p. 3) explain, ‘Although at a superficial level, the psychology of diplomacy may be one of polite and ritualized discussion, the diplomats know that when they deal with their counterparts from other nations, they do so through a psychology that is at a fundamental level an adversarial one. It is the professional purpose of each diplomat to seek advantage for his or her nation’. Indeed, in this zero-sum game, agents enact given interests, trying to advance them in a game of give and take. When rational actors find themselves in such a strategic setting, the

goal of their action is to maximise or optimise their own interests and preferences, following the ‘logic of consequences’ very much as in rational choice theory (March & Olsen, 1989).

It is in this sense that dialogue matters in the realist perspective: it supports this coercive game as communication between actors aims primarily at affecting the expected utility calculations of the target, which might in turn inform the rational actor’s decisions and course of action. As the communication is mainly about the costs, risks, and benefits of compliance or non-compliance, if actors change their positions during this communicative interaction, they have most likely done so because they see some benefits in doing so and not necessarily because they were persuaded of the *merits* of the others’ views (Crawford, 2011, p. 29). A possible empirical illustration would be a dialogue whose content revolves around exchanges containing reminders of the sticks and carrots in the EU’s arsenal (the power to withhold or grant membership, for instance) and would involve establishing linkages between political reforms and the likelihood of, for example, securing membership or concluding an economic agreement. For instance, in the context of the EU dialogues with the Balkan states, it has been argued that the asymmetric negotiation power in favour of the EU explains the patronising nature of the authority relations between the EU and these states, with the EU unilaterally defining the rules of interaction: ‘The term partnership should not hide the fact that in reality the EU-South East European interaction is a one-way, didactic and patronizing process’ (Anastasakis, 2005, p. 82).

### **The quest for profit through dialogue**

The second kind of interaction mode to be considered corresponds to the quest for profit (and progress). In this respect, the rationalist institutionalist theory of international relations and the constructivist approach propose slightly different interpretations as to why states resort to the practice of dialogue and what is actually happening during dialogical encounters. While acknowledging the different ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying IR liberal institutionalist and constructivist approaches, both accounts consider dialogues and subsequent communication as a key tool in the pursuit of profit and progress under the form of better cooperation and understanding.

Rather than viewing dialogue as a way to clarify the demands of a ‘coercive power’ towards another party in the quest for security, the liberal institutionalist theory – as exemplified by Keohane (1988) – addresses the exchange of information in a more *cooperative* light. As our definition of dialogue encompasses a strong ‘institutionalised’ character, we can assume that the mutual benefits usually attributed to regimes and institutions resonate in this

context as well. In fact, liberal institutionalists consider dialogue as one of the forums in which participants engage in a fruitful exchange of useful information about the behaviours of the side involved in the regime/agreement and about the progress being made or any other compliance issues. During the dialogical interaction, the parties genuinely inform the other participants of a specific problem, have the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge of a given situation, and can come to share precious information that might allow them to rationally solve common problems and thereby enhance cooperation in the pursuit of profit and progress. In this sense, problem-solving appears to be a key mechanism corresponding to the pursuit of solutions that satisfy the interests of all the parties. In problem-solving, the focus is on mutual, absolute benefits – contrary to bargaining characterised by a zero-sum game, as described by realists (Hopmann, 1996, p. 89).

It also makes sense to assume that states engage in processes of political exchanges to learn more about the world, each other, and their joint expectations (Snidal, 2002). It allows them to clarify positions or avoid misunderstandings and this serves in turn to maximise their own interests in a rationalist vein. This function of the dialogue is particularly relevant in alliance relationships, like in the case of the EU-US relations: emphasising the importance of misperceptions, Jervis warns that while allies communicate much more extensively and openly than do adversaries, it creates a problem of its own whereby both elites and general populations are likely to overestimate the extent to which they understand each other (Jervis, 2009, p. 7). In this account, official representatives are conceptualised first and foremost as agents of cooperation, acting as transmission belts for ‘states’ (Pollack, 2003). This ‘informative’ function of the dialogue appears particularly relevant today, given the fact that one of the chief criticisms by the EU of the Trump administration is its contradictory signals. According to European officials, it is now even more difficult to discern ‘what they really think, how to react and even to distinguish between policy and rumination’ (Karnitschnig, 2017b).

The IR constructivist scholarship with its own sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions engenders a slightly different perspective on the role that dialogue can play, but nevertheless points to the same logic/quest for profit and progress. Constructivism is a social theory that theorises the way our known social world came to be. The constructivist stance is that the social world becomes constructed through social knowledge, defined as people’s inter-subjective understandings of their physical and human environment (Adler, 1997; Guzzini, 2000; Weldes, 1996). Broadly speaking, social constructivism ascribes significant importance to communication and social interactions. According to this approach, dialogue is perceived to be a means not only to acquire information, as pure rationalistic approaches would argue, but

more importantly to construct ‘collective knowledge’ through deliberation. In turn, ‘The knowledge acquired and constructed through deliberation may serve as a requisite for the transformation of actors, institutionalized patterns, political identities and interests’ (Adler, 1997, p. 348). To put it differently, the discursive interaction in the form of dialogue can be considered as a site of common production of knowledge. More specifically, the constructivist approach to dialogue has traditionally put the emphasis on argumentation and processes of persuasion inherent in communication with the potential to change the beliefs and preferences of the actors engaged in the dialogue.

There are however important nuances within the constructivist approach regarding the mechanisms inherent in the dialogue. At one end of the spectrum, one finds liberal constructivists, such as Thomas Risse and others (Keck, 1995; Müller, 1994; Schneider, 1994; Zangl & Zürn, 1996), who completely exclude power relations from their account of dialogical interactions. This research trend started as a fierce criticism of the rationalist game theories that failed to take into account the power of words and processes of argumentation, inherent in any negotiation process. More specifically, Risse drew on Habermas’ concept of communicative action to develop his concept of argumentative rationality (Risse, 2000). He defined argumentative rationality as a process that involves a ‘logic of truth-seeking or arguing’ through which actors try to figure out ‘whether their assumptions about the world and about cause-and-effect relationships in the world are correct ... or whether norms of appropriate behavior can be justified, and which norms apply under given circumstances’ (Risse, 2000, pp. 6–7). In contrast to the realist account, the participants do not seek to maximise their interests and preferences. The goal of argumentative rationality is to seek and reach a reasoned consensus about a situation that will symbolise the triumph of the better argument, embodying the reasons that are good for the collective and not simply for the most powerful actor. Arguments are assessed on the basis of their merit and reasonableness, not for the force or power that may back them politically (Ish-Shalom, 2011, p. 235). This is made possible in an ideal speech situation, because participants do engage in communication without using material power resources to impose their views on others and are open to persuasion by the better argument (*Verständigungsbereitschaft*).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For criticism of the ideal speech situation, see Crawford (2011, p. 30) and Mitzen (2005). This trend of research has reached a dead end with the realisation that it was empirically impossible to infer the real motivations of speakers (i.e. the logic of action being adopted), based only on the analysis of the utterances of speech acts enacted (Ulbert, Risse, & Müller, 2004, p. 352) leading to the conclusion that ‘a theoretical paradise was empirically lost’ (Deitelhoff & Müller, 2005).

While Risse refers to the works of Habermas, Checkel uses insights from social psychology and communications research on persuasion to develop a concept of ‘argumentative persuasion’ (Checkel, 2001). In his view, argumentative persuasion is ‘a social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes about cause and effect in the absence of overt coercion’, that is ‘a process of *convincing* someone through argument and principled debate’ (Checkel, 2001, p. 562). He further distinguishes argumentative persuasion from manipulative persuasion, which he argues is ‘asocial and lacking in interaction, often concerned with political elites *manipulating* mass publics’ (Ibid). Here again, it is the non-coercive nature of the process that is being emphasised. Yet as Kerr rightly points out, his reference to ‘the absence of overt coercion’ leaves open the prospect of covert, implicit, or background coercion and politics. By contrast, Risse appears not to consider such a prospect at all (Kerr, 2010, p. 243).

At the other end of the constructivist spectrum, self-labelled ‘coercive constructivists’ such as Krebs and Jackson (2007) adopt a more nuanced stance towards the relationship between power and communication. Downplaying the importance of the strength of arguments in persuasion, Krebs and Jackson argue that their concept of ‘rhetorical coercion’ or ‘skilful framing’ that leaves opponents ‘without access to the rhetorical material needed to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal’ and that results in them ‘being talked into a corner, compelled to endorse a stance they would otherwise reject’ has more explanatory value (Krebs and Jackson, 2007, p. 36).

As this short review on the liberal institutionalist and constructivist approach has shown, dialogue can also be harnessed in the quest for profit and progress more generally. In this account, dialogue involving either the exchange of raw information in a cooperative game or the transmission of knowledge, leading to the emergence of shared understanding and meaning, leads to a situation in which both parties are more likely to benefit. But in either case, the focus is really on the cognitive rational capabilities of the actors involved in the dialogue with little to no attention given to deeper socio-psychological dynamics.

### **The quest for recognition through dialogue**

Another key motivation of states relates to their quest for recognition on the international stage linked to identity issues. Research has shown that states might even go to war to gain recognition (Ringmar, 2008). Here again, I argue that dialogue is of primary importance because it creates a framework in which states (and institutions) can seek the recognition of their identities. By contrast to the two previously mentioned modes of interaction, which are

very much focused on the cognitive capabilities of the participants of the dialogue, here the dialogue entails a strong socio-psychological dimension that needs to be taken more seriously into account. In my view, the quest for recognition is the most important of the three (security and profit being the other two), because the social structure that underpins the two other modes of interaction assumes identity. In the case of the realist view on dialogue for instance, even if the dialogical interaction is very much based on an exchange of threats and promises processed in terms of benefits and costs, it also inevitably entails a message about the status and relationship identity between the two actors. In other words, the coercive dialogue also fulfils the function of granting an identity in addition to the delivery of provisions. Similarly, in the quest for profit, the participants of a dialogue display different degrees of openness when it comes to the exchange of information. This also carries an important symbolic message as to the kind of relationship identity shared by the actors. As such, the act of sharing exclusive information reinforces this understanding of the link between the actors present. Therefore, all the discursive dynamics identified by the other theories are meaningful in terms of identity recognition.

The quest for the recognition of identity has been firmly established over the last decade thanks to the emergence of the recognition literature in international politics. Indeed, the idea that ‘recognition matters’ in international relations has been advanced in a wide variety of studies, tackling war and peace issues in the context of inter-state dynamics (Bartelson, 2013; Honneth, 2012; Lebow, 2010; Lindemann, 2010, 2014a; Ringmar, 2008; Wolf, 2011), of conflict studies and peace making (Jamal, 2000; Möller, 2007; Strömbom, 2012; 2013), and a wide range of other topics, including works on the search for great power status, struggles between have and have-nots and more (Haacke, 2005; Lindemann & Ringmar, 2012; Lindemann & Saada, 2012; Ringmar, 2002; Wendt, 1999; Gustafsson, 2015, 2016). Traditionally, the literature on recognition in IR has mainly dealt with the formal modes of recognition used by states to grant or withhold recognition from other states and collectives, such as recognition acts enacted in the legal realm (Fabry, 2010) related to the notion of ‘thin recognition’.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars have looked at more informal modes of recognition, dealing with ‘thick recognition’, such as public statements at the international level (Gustaffson, 2016). However, my contention is that states and institutions also actively use the practice of dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Thin recognition’ is fundamentally about common identity with other actors – i.e. about being recognised as a fully autonomous member of a community mainly from a legal point of view (Wendt, 2003, p. 511). By contrast, ‘thick recognition’ acknowledges difference and uniqueness of a particular identity in the form of specific qualities (Gustaffson, 2016, p. 258).

in their quest for recognition. Recognition can also be played out at the micro-level of diplomatic practices, such as regular dialogues and meetings with implications at the macro-level for the whole institution.

Two different perspectives on the motivations behind the quest for recognition exist in the literature. According to the utilitarian approach, recognition is a desirable good to possess in order to get a solid reputation that can be used both internally and externally (instrumental view). There is, therefore, a strategic motivation behind the desire to be recognised in terms of prestige, of the political survival of the leader, or resources and funds in the case of an organisation. By contrast, the non-utilitarian perspective emphasises the importance of socio-psychological factors: ‘Our desire to be recognized relates to the concept of ontological identity and to the emotional component of self-esteem. Even if there is a strategic calculation behind any move, there are also emotional dynamics at play, with a logic of self-esteem as an end in itself and not only as a means to achieve a wider objective’ (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, p. 15). Actors might therefore have different recognition needs.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to highlight that the quest for recognition and its rationale hold true to institutions as well. In fact, the literature has shown that institutions – like states – are not only pursuing material gains but are also seeking the satisfaction of identity needs involving processes of recognition by others (Mitzen, 2006; Oelsner, 2013). As Albert et al. (2000) remind us, ‘Whether an organization, group or person, each entity needs at least a preliminary answer to the question: “who are we?” or “who am I?”’ in order to act and interact effectively with other entities over the long run, implicitly referring to the concept of ontological security.

This point relates to the key concept of ‘institutional identity’ at the core of this study. In a seminal article in organisational studies, Albert and Whetten defined institutional identity as ‘the identity which is the most central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization’ (1985, p. 410). Following a series of criticisms on the ambiguity of this concept, Whetten (2006) proposed a ‘strengthened version’ of institutional identity in which he specified further how to distinguish *bona fide* organisational identity claims from a larger set of claims about an organisation. In particular, he mentions that the distinguishing characteristic of institutional identity means that if an organisation fails to honour its distinguishing commitments, it risks becoming unpredictable and untrustworthy. As to the central and enduring attributes, they refer to those identity claims – in the form of organisational elements – that have withstood the test of time (Whetten, 2006, p. 224).

While this clarification was in fact much needed, it still lacks concrete empirical examples of such identity claims lying at the core of institutional identity: are we talking only about organisational forms and practices? Or is there also a content-related dimension whereby a distinct set of values would also qualify as an enduring and central feature of an organisation, as Selznick (1957, p. 17) and Scott (2000, p. 24) suggest? For Mitzen, institutional identity definitely encompasses the values for which the organisation stands. In her research, she emphasises how the ‘civilizing identity’ of the EU draws on the values of multilateralism, ‘diplomacy first’ and with commitments to pursuing representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and human rights in foreign policy. She argues that intra-European routines of multilateral security cooperation *anchor* the collective identity of ‘civilizing power’ as it permits deliberation and reflection (Mitzen, 2006, p. 272). Therefore, in my view, the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent distinguishing one organisation from another organisation (i.e. institutional identity) relate both to the specific procedures unique to the organisation as well as the values for which it stands. This is especially true, as both are often intertwined.

In this study, I identify two institutional identity claims for which recognition will be sought during the dialogical interaction – namely relevance and distinctiveness. The first dimension relates to the relevance of the institution (in the case of the EU, relevance as an international actor). It echoes Ringmar’s point about the fact that states are generally looking for the recognition of their ‘social status’ (Ringmar, 2012), often associated with the concept of ‘great power’. The quest for recognition of this aspect is often expressed through claims such as ‘we want them to recognise that we matter’, ‘that it is worth talking to us’, or simply ‘we want to be taken seriously’ (power symbolism). The quest for relevance is also associated with the relationship identity (relationship symbolism). In fact, this idea of relevance includes the demonstration of ‘capabilities’ and ‘efficiency’ in ‘delivering results’ as it would be expected in a partnership type of relationship. Similarly, the sub-themes of reliability and coherence are also linked to the wider idea of relevance of one’s identity.

The second dimension of institutional identity deals with the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the institution in line with the socio-psychological literature (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Franklin, 1980). This implies giving respect to the differences of the other both in terms of interests and values, as mentioned by Selznick (1957), Scott (2000), and Mitzen (2006). This can entail the respect for differences in terms of organisational practices, which is not necessarily detached from the previous aspect because the way we do certain things are informed by the values we hold. As Missoni (2014, p. 370) further specifies, institutional

identity encapsulates the essential characteristics of an organisation such as its missions, values, expertise, and qualities – as well as its procedures.

Based on the case of Mercosur, Oelsner explains why a strong sense of institutional identity is essential:

Internally, it projects its image onto member states and their public opinion, which are the source of its political legitimacy. Internationally, the projection onto regional and international actors of a defined image constructed (partly) upon its institutional identity contributes toward the organization's credibility, recognition, and reputation. Finally, temporally, a solidly structured institutional identity helps to convey internally and externally the idea of the organization's continuing relevance into the future; that its continuity will transcend mere inertial permanence (Oelsner, 2013, p. 115).

Following in the footsteps of Oelsner and adopting the 'social conception of institutional identity' proposed by Whetten and Mackey, institutions are considered in this study to be social actors, authorised to engage in social intercourse as a collective, and possessing rights and responsibilities, as if the collective were a single individual (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395). Reinforcing this point, Missoni mentions that 'organizations exist with their identity, their values, their mission, their activity and history before communicating them' (Missoni, 2014, p. 364). In this view, institutions are agents in their own right and build their own institutional identity for which they seek recognition in interactions with others. In the next section, I elaborate on the recognition process of institutional identity at play during the dialogues and explain how this outcome is then being anchored and projected to the outside world.

### 2.3. A theoretical framework for the identity-based dialogue

The main argument developed here is that dialogue provides an instance in which institutional identity is possibly recognised and anchored. More specifically, dialogue is a performance during which actors project an image and act in line with the institutional identity for which they seek recognition. To back this argument, this section first defines the concept of 'recognition', 'indirect recognition' and 'de-recognition' and its effects. It then emphasises the power of symbolism inherent in diplomatic dialogues to explain how the recognition process in the meeting room at the micro-level has far-reaching implications related to the macro-institutional level. It then unpacks the process of recognition and anchoring of institutional identity unfolding during the dialogue following three main stages: (1) entering the room (including the preparation and the setting); (2) communication and interaction within the room;

and (3) leaving the room. For each one of these stages, precise indicators are given in order to better ‘recognise recognition’ at play.

### **2.3.1. Recognition, indirection recognition, and de-recognition**

Traditionally, the literature on recognition in IR has made the distinction between recognition and mis-recognition (Gustafsson, 2016). For Lindemann – one of the key scholars in the field – recognition is granted when the nature of the interaction confirms the actors’ self-ascribed value and importance. In other words, for recognition to be granted, there needs to be a match between the self-image of the actor seeking recognition and the treatment it deems appropriate to receive by the recognising party (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, pp. 17-18). Thick recognition acknowledges difference or uniqueness, for example, in the form of specific qualities (Wendt, 2003, pp. 511–512). Conversely, the denial of *thick* recognition (i.e. misrecognition) entails not recognising an actor’s particular identity. In this configuration, the actor in question is recognised in a way that differs from its own understanding of itself and this is expressed by a mismatch between the self-image of the actor and the *perceived* inadequate treatment it receives from the actor granting recognition. In my view, the term ‘mis-recognition’ is misleading because it implies a form of mistake by the ‘recogniser’ that did supposedly not fully comprehend the identity of its interlocutors. It suggests the existence of a ‘right or wrong’ form of recognition. This is not necessarily the case. The recogniser does recognise the other in a way that might not live up to its expectations but a recognition process is going on anyway.<sup>4</sup> In terms of effects, institutional identity is reinforced in this recognition process. Rather than creating a ‘common and collective identity’ as Wendt suggests in his works, the recognition process actually strengthens processes of ‘othering’, of ‘constituting in-group and out-group relations’ (Greenhill, 2008). For instance, as one member of the EP delegation to the United States recalled: ‘During the TLD, we really came to develop a “delegation identity”: we (MEPs) are all together and the “other” is not the socialist MEPs anymore but the Americans’ (Interview no. 2). This is a reminder that dialogue is fundamentally about engaging the ‘other’ and the self at the same time. In the words of Blaney and Ayatullah (1994, p. 41), dialogue can be seen ‘as a source of critique and reaffirmation, a process of mutual criticism that allows each civilization to rediscover and reinvigorate its own vision, including the recovery of lost or submerged knowledge’. Moreover, regardless of the quality of the interaction with their

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<sup>4</sup> This echoes Steele’s critique of Lindemann’s definition (Steele, 2014, p. 2).

counterparts, the preparation of the ‘team performance’ itself contributes to reinforce institutional identity. The prospect of the dialogue triggers intense preparation within the institution itself and acts as a ‘bureaucratic catalyst’ whereby the different actors need to come to a unified position in line with their overall institutional identity, as I will explore in greater depth when examining the preparation of the dialogues in section 2.3.2.1.

Typically, international recognition is provided by actors who are themselves state actors – particularly so when it comes to thin recognition. However, more recent research on recognition suggests that it can also be provided by actors who are themselves not widely recognised states or by entities which do not at all aim to become states, such as multinational companies, labour unions, and private individuals. For states or institutions in quest for recognition, their recognition by this latter type of actor can also be important (Geis et al., 2015). To illustrate the importance of non-state actors recognising states, Bailes (2015, p. 260) gives the glaring example of the power of credit ratings agencies, recalling how the EU and its governments scrambled to deal with the damage done by such agencies ‘changing their categorization of states’ like Greece and Spain during the Euro crisis. As it will be shown in chapter 8, the vitality of the transatlantic civil society dialogues created by the EU and the United States eventually reinforces the EU’s institutional identity both by providing it with instances to demonstrate its attachment to democracy and transparency and by making it more efficient and relevant.

Can identities go unrecognised? Research in socio-psychology has shown that the concept of identity is multiple and context-bound – and that the process of being, or identity, is *constantly* re-created in each new situation corresponding to the individuals’ or institutions’ active engagement with the social world. Particularly influential in this respect has been Charles Taylor’s seminal work on the politics of recognition and multilateralism in the domestic sphere, in which he argues that ‘the making and sustaining of our identity remains dialogical *throughout our lives*’ (1994, p. 25) [emphasis added], stressing the infinite nature of this process. Because identities are formed inter-subjectively, the process of establishing and maintaining an identity is wrought with insecurity as interactions always holds the possibility that an actor’s self-understanding will not be recognised by others (Murray, 2012, p. 135). In other words, there is always a possibility of ‘backtracking’ in terms of institutional identity, or what I call ‘de-recognition’. This corresponds to a situation in which a certain institutional identity has long been recognised and that suddenly is subjected to a ‘reversal’, whereby actors do not get the recognition they were accustomed to getting in line with their self-image.

Thus, what happens when the identity claims are not recognised and accepted? At the macro-level broader level, Ringmar (2012, p. 7) suggests three possible options as a response: (1) a state can accept that its stories were inaccurate and that those ascribed to it by others were accurate. In that case, it needs to refashion its story about itself and hope that the new narrative will be accepted; (2) the second option is for the state (or institution) to accept that its narrative was incorrect but argue that it can change in order to become what it has claimed it is. In our study, this would amount to: ‘We, the EU, accept what the US denial suggests – i.e. the EU does not live up to its self-image – and we decide to work harder to be what we consider ourselves to be; (3) finally, the third option is to stick to its stories without altering its behaviour. To that end, the state (or institution) can then try to persuade those that do not share their belief that their narrative is accurate.

In these two last scenarios where recognition does not fit the self-image of the ‘recognisee’, institutional identity might actually be reinforced. In other words, in case of recognition not aligned with the self-identity of the actor, the institutional identity of the actors seeking recognition can be eventually strengthened by reifying differences. Consider for instance the reaction of the president of the EU Council, Donald Tusk, (2017) following the provocative statement of Donald Trump regarding the future of Europe:

Mr. Trump has personally sought to undermine the unity of Western European nations. Let us show our European pride. ... If we pretend we cannot hear the words and we do not notice the decisions aimed against the EU and our future ... global partners will cease to respect us. Today we must stand up very clearly for our dignity, the dignity of a united Europe – regardless of whether we are talking to Russia, China the US or Turkey. Therefore, let us have the courage to be proud of our own achievements, which have made our continent the best place on Earth.

As the journalist Karnitschnig (2017a) ironically put it, ‘Trump makes Europe (feel) great again’. Here clearly, the explicit statements denying recognition of the EU triggers a fierce counter-reaction that only reinforces the sense of being European. In a similar vein, a high-level European official mentioned that ‘the new preferences and priorities of the Trump administration led us (Europeans) to understand even more how attached we are to certain principles. When we see in America things that we don’t like and that are important to us, it helps us build a narrative in Europe. What are we doing together? What is European identity versus other identities in the world? This kind of big event obliges us to think collectively about our project’ (Ripoll, 2018). Translated at the micro-level, the possible mismatch between the self-image and the treatment received during the dialogue might lead the actors to leave the

room with a reinforced sense of who they are – in this case, more ‘European’, with a greater sense of ‘Europeanness’.

A thorny debate in the literature centres on how to recognise thick recognition under the label of ‘the recognition of recognition’ (Gustafsson, 2016, p. 257; Lindemann, 2012, 2014b; Steele, 2014). In this study, I follow Gustafsson’s approach focusing on thick recognition, which is generally straightforward. To start with, he recommends identifying a specific self-identity that the actor wants recognised. For instance, in his study of the Sino-Japanese relationship, he shows how China actually denied Japan’s self-identity as a peaceful country. In this research, the so-called ‘self-identity’ corresponds to the institutional identity composed of the relevance and distinctiveness aspects detailed earlier. Once this institutional identity has clearly been defined, Gustafsson suggests looking for four different ways through which thick recognition can be granted or denied: (a) explicit recognition; (b) explicit denials of recognition; (c) implicit acts, behaviours, or statements interpreted as recognition; and (d) implicit acts that are interpreted as denials of recognition. In his account, explicit recognition refers to statements to the effect that: you are X when the target’s self-identity is constructed as X (Gustafsson, 2016, p. 260).

While this approach fits well with the analysis of recognition and mis-recognition at the broader level such as in the case of public statements, some adjustments need to be made for recognising recognition at the micro-level of interaction, i.e. at the dynamics developing behind closed doors.

First, in the face-to-face encounter, I expect more acts of implicit recognition and non-recognition than explicit ones. As Honneth (2012, p. 30) argues, ‘The aim of avoiding public embarrassment prevents a people desire for recognition of its collective identity from being directly and openly expressed by its political representatives. This recognitional dimension of IR is thus typically expressed indirectly and symbolically’. Accepting the fact that the dialogue setting is one of these states in which both protagonists engage in an implicit game of recognition to save face, the analysis at the micro-level has to focus on the *subtle and inter-subjective understandings* specific to the context and to the participants of the dialogue. This involves the analysis of all cues present at the different stages of the dialogue and how they are interpreted by the participants of the dialogue: as they are well-aware of the symbolism of these aspects, they pay particular attention to these elements as indicators of recognition for their institutional identity. *Emotions* will also be scrutinised and taken into account in the analysis because identity is closely linked to emotions (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015; Lindemann & Ringmar, 2012). Denial of recognition is often understood as humiliating and disrespectful

(Gustafsson, 2015; Wolf, 2011) while acts that recognise or confirm an identity, by contrast, are typically seen as respectful and thus induce pride and make actors feel ontologically secure (Gustafsson, 2015). Therefore, the emotional aspect will also be taken into account as a key component of the anchoring of institutional identity.

Secondly, the analysis of the emotions and non-verbal cues needs to be adapted to the specific ‘scenery’ of the dialogue as a specific social setting of interaction. Lindemann & Saada’s definition of recognition on which this study is based refers to ‘the match between the self-image of the actor seeking recognition and the treatment it deems appropriate to receive by the recognizing party’ (2012, pp. 17-18). It is thus necessary to disentangle the different aspects of the term ‘treatment’ in this specific dialogical context. Moreover, all the indicators that will be detailed below can be exploited in the performance of both those seeking recognition (recognition-seeking behaviour) and of the recognisers. In other words, these symbolic elements can either be used to project and perform a certain identity or to grant recognition /or deny recognition to others.

### **2.3.2. Symbolism as the link between the micro and the macro-levels**

While the recognition process at play during the dialogical interaction takes place first and foremost among individual actors at the micro-level, my contention is that its dynamics and outcomes have more far-reaching consequences due to the power of symbolism inherent in the diplomatic setting at the macro-level. In this sub-section therefore, I explain how the recognition process experienced by individuals (i.e. the participants of the dialogue) during the interaction transcends the wall of the meeting room to reinforce the identity of the institution as a whole. While the individuals participating in the dialogue might apparently do little, what they do actually has major implications in terms of institutional identity. But how is it possible that an actor enters the room and an institutional identity is anchored? To answer this question, I elaborate on the link between the micro and macro levels by conceptualising the dialogue as a symbolically framed interaction. In line with the ‘social conception of institutional identity’ mentioned above, this research does not problematize the identity of the participants as individual actors but puts the onus on the symbolic function they fulfil as representatives of political entities, as *carriers of institutional identity seeking recognition on behalf of their institutions*.

The *symbolic* nature of the diplomatic encounter is key to understand why the interaction at the micro-level has far-reaching consequences beyond the meeting room in terms of institutional identity. Following the symbolic interactionist tradition à la Goffman (1959)

and echoing the works of Raymond Cohen (1987), I argue that the dialogue is a performance during which actors project a certain image of themselves (i.e. of the identity of the institution they represent). It is during this performance that recognition will be sought and possibly granted. Performers have only a short lapse of time in the other's immediate physical presence to show their relevance and this often involves more than one individual. The actors of the dialogue are well aware of their role in the interaction and its meaning. That is why they engage in what the sociologist Erving Goffman calls a 'team performance' – defined as a collection of individuals cooperating to project and maintain a certain impression or definition of a situation upon the others (Goffman, 1959, p. 47). In the preparation phase (or 'rehearsal'), they go to great length to come across as serious interlocutors – as a concerted effort – because they know that their performance in the dialogue will be extrapolated to the EU as a whole. In fact, the participants of the dialogue do not interpret nor react to the dialogical interaction *personally or individually*. They tend to display a high level of identification with the institution they represent and tend to interpret the American attitude as responsive to the EU at large (and vice versa) and not to them as individuals. As one EU diplomat succinctly put it, 'Personally, I don't try to gain recognition from the Americans but for the EU as a whole, this is definitely an issue' (Interview no. 23).

Turning now to the performance itself, Goffman distinguishes two parts: the first relates to the 'setting' – i.e. the scenic part, involving furniture, décor, physical lay-out, and other background items that constitute the scenery. The second part, i.e. 'the personal front', refers to items identified with the performers themselves, such as clothes and facial expressions (Goffman, 1959, p. 13). The bottom line is that 'if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express during the interaction what he wishes to convey. In fact, the performer may be required not only to express his claimed practices during the interaction but also to do so during a split second in the interaction'. To do so, 'the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure' (Ibid., p. 19). This is possible because the social setting in which the actors interact is wrapped with meaning and governed by shared understandings and behavioural expectations related to the practice of diplomacy. This is why every single word and gesture matters in this context. The performance is imbued with symbolism based on common understandings: from the timing, place, and design of the venue to the food offered to the guests through the seating arrangements in the meeting room. All of these elements count due to their symbolic character and they all carry important messages in terms of recognition.

That is why symbols are so important in world politics. They make the relationship between abstract entities more concrete and tangible. For Faizullaev (2013, p. 92), the very abstract nature of the state and by extension of any political institution requires a certain degree of objectification in order to allow meaningful and concrete interactions. ‘When no one can see the state, and international politics does not present itself directly to our senses’ (Wendt, 1999, p. 5), the use of symbols becomes indispensable to make the state and other institutions, such as the EU visible and more tangible. The organisational studies perspective makes the same point. As Missoni highlights, the image of an organisation (or institution) is the result not only of its activities but also of the behaviour of those who represent it. A negative image of the organisation will be generated if their attitudes are not coherent with the values and aims that the organisation declares (Missoni, 2014, p. 370). This concern regarding how the institution is perceived via the performance of its representatives during the dialogue is confirmed by evidence gleaned from my interviewees. For instance, an EEAS official complained about the poor performance of a higher official representing the EU during a meeting with US representatives where the lack of knowledge and determination conveyed the image of the EU as a weak and incapable actor: ‘Why would the Americans bother engaging with lower-ranking diplomats if this the image they get from a key representative? This reflects poorly on the EU’ (Interview no. 23). Conversely, the positive behaviour of the representatives of an institution and the way they perform during the dialogue can also project an image emphasising the positive features of institution’s identity as a whole. The anthropomorphic discourse equalises the characteristics of the diplomats with the institution they represent and is telling in this respect. The anthropomorphisation of the political entity points to the fact that we can *experience* it (Faizullaev, 2007, p. 532). Consider, for instance, the words of this US official: ‘The dialogue triggers more desire to work with the EU because it proves that it is effective. We learn a lot from the EU’ (Interview no. 14). In this case, it is clear that the level of preparation and the ensuing quality of the discussions held between the EU and the American representatives is interpreted in a way that applies to the value of the institution as a whole (i.e. the EU). The dialogue can therefore be seen as an instance in which the state or institution represented is experienced first-hand.

To conclude, the dialogue is a performance during which actors project the institutional identity they are carrying. As such, what happens in the meeting room is much more than an ordinary discussion – it has a wider significance at the macro-level due to the symbolism inherent in the interaction.

### 2.3.3. The process of recognition

Delving into the intricacies of the process of recognition at play during the dialogue, I distinguish between three main stages of this symbolically framed interaction: first, ‘the entry to the room’, including the level of preparation of the participants and the format of the dialogue (i.e. the setting of the room); second, ‘the interaction within the room’, corresponding to the bulk of the dialogue in which the participants experience the relationship while talking about it; and third, ‘the leaving of the room’, referring to the symbolic actions and elements taken out of the dialogue to the outside world. This third phase is particularly important because the participants of the dialogue do not only want to be recognised in the room but are also looking for this recognition to be celebrated outside the room. This is where the anchoring of the institutional identity is clinched. For each one of these crucial stages, I identify the main *symbolic* elements, implicit statements, and acts that amount to the recognition of the institutional identity of the other party relying on the work of Faizullaev (2007, 2013). They refer to the material setting and to the features of the dialogical interaction both in its verbal and non-verbal form.

#### 2.3.3.1. Entering the room: preparation and setting

First, even though the analysis focuses on the face-to-face dialogical interaction, the main features of the preparation beforehand are worth taking into account as they have repercussions on the dialogue itself and therefore cannot be viewed as a separate element. To keep the theatrical metaphor of the dialogue, the preparation of the dialogue corresponds to the ‘rehearsal’ of the performance. It is at this stage that the actors of the dialogue coordinate ‘their team performance’ à la Goffman (1959, p. 47). A few indicators point to the recognition-seeking behaviour of the participants at the preparation stage such as the fact of taking the lead in the preparation vis-à-vis the other partner, or the considerable efforts invested in the preparation with the aim to come across as a reliable and competent interlocutor in the eyes of the other. In the case of complex institutions, the preparation phase entails a phase of intense coordination among relevant bodies in order to send a unified message and come across as a coherent actor, thereby projecting the image of a relevant actor. This is particularly relevant in the case of the EU, which has traditionally been criticised for being incoherent and contradictory (Chapter 4). As mentioned earlier, one of the side effects of this coordination exercise triggered by the prospect of the dialogue is the ‘bureaucratic catalyst’ that reinforces the institutional cohesion regardless of what is going on during the interaction with the external

actors. Moreover, it is often in this preparation phase that the key parameters of the dialogue are set among both sides such as the date, the topics on the agenda, or the choice of speakers for specific sessions. The way this process is conducted also carries a symbolic meaning. For instance, when choosing the topics on the agenda, a high degree of importance is given to respect the concerns and wishes of the other side as a way to recognise its own specificity and identity.

Alongside the preparation, a first important parameter of the dialogue is the frequency with which the sides convene. Obviously, the more one meets, the more relevant one is. Conversely, the cancellation of a meeting or the reduction in the number of meetings send a message in terms of recognition – signalling among other things that the relevance of the actor has changed in light of other priorities and that it does not warrant an investment of time and resources. For instance, the refusal of the US President, Barack Obama, to attend the EU-US summit in 2010 was obviously not warmly received by the EU and, in particular, by Spain, which hosted this high-profile transatlantic event (MacAskill & Watt, 2010). The timing of the dialogue is also highly symbolic. The fact that European chief diplomat Federica Mogherini's first visit to the United States happened relatively soon after the election of Donald Trump has been interpreted as a clear sign of the EU and US's foreign policy priorities. As she declared in a press conference, 'I was received quite early in the beginning of the work with the new administration and this gives me a sense of priority that is put in working with the European Union as such' (Mogherini, 2017b).

The size and composition of the delegations physically attending the meeting is highly relevant as well. From the perspective of the host country/institution, the ability to attract influential politicians or organise high-level meetings is a symbolic demonstration of power and prestige (Faizullaev, 2013, p. 109). The large size of a delegation or/and the presence of high-level personalities are often interpreted as a sign of recognition of the importance of the hosting country, because it shows that foreign delegates are showing interest and willingness to invest time and resources to make the visit. The composition of the delegation can also be used to project a certain institutional identity in terms of distinctiveness. This is exemplified by the fact that the composition of the EP delegation to the United States deliberately represents all political parties of the EP (Interview no. 2). The composition of the delegation is also telling in terms of inclusion and exclusion. In the transatlantic context, the exclusive 'transatlantic dinner' on the margins of the UN General Assembly representing the whole international community is dedicated to the 'West' only – that is, representatives of the EU's member states, NATO, and the United States. The symbolism behind this meeting is very strong: with all the

world representatives gathered in the same physical space, the leaders of the European states and the United States chose to isolate themselves to talk about priorities for the year ahead. They perform a joint ritual that highlights the wall separating insiders from outsiders. This is a strong symbolic act, physically and symbolically setting them apart from the Rest as in the ‘West versus the Rest’ (Mahbubani, 1993).

As a key part of the ‘scene’, the place of the meeting is highly telling in terms of recognition of the ‘status/importance’ of the guests and their hosts (Cohen, 1987, p. 119). This choice is never random and always entails an implicit message. In the case of the political dialogues institutionalised by the European Union, it is interesting to note the systematic emphasis put on the notion of ‘equality’ and ‘co-ownership’ when it comes to the location of the meeting. The EU clearly insists on having the meetings take place alternatively between the EU and the partner country, with the aim of instilling a spirit of respect, equality, and partnership through the practice of dialogue. Simultaneously however, the location of the meeting can also be telling in terms of distinctiveness. In the framework of the TLD, the meetings are held in the EU presidency country. This is a way to show the Americans that the EU is much more than Brussels and to reflect the rich diversity characterising the EU (Interview no. 6).

The venue and the design of the room where the meeting takes place are also important symbolically charged elements that need to be taken into account in assessing the recognition granted of the participants’ identity. From the perspective of the host country, the splendour of the ceremony and the buildings in which the meetings take place is a strong manifestation of power and status but it is also being exploited to honour and recognise the power and importance of the guests (Faizullaev, 2013). The luxurious room in which the ‘Transatlantic Dinner’ is held annually is a fine illustration of this point: ‘the ‘transatlantic dinner’ is one such great experience. ‘Our secretary of state hosts all the EU and all the NATO Foreign ministers – everyone is super busy with the UN conference and they are running around doing individual meetings and it’s a nice opportunity to come together and talk about the biggest priorities that will be of the year: what’s pressing on the world stage? It’s a lovely atmosphere – this past September, it was at the Morgan library in New York, such a nice setting, such a nice atmosphere. It’s just so positive’ (Interview no. 39).

*This photo of the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry hosting the Transatlantic Dinner on the side-lines of the 70th regular session of the UNGA in New York, 30 September 2015 has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Sometimes, even entrance to the room itself needs to be carefully orchestrated in order to create a sense of equality among the participants, as exemplified in the delicate case of the last meeting between the Chinese President and the Representative from Taiwan who insisted on entering the stage at exactly the same time (Ramzy, 2015).

The design of the room is also significant. For instance, disagreement over the shape of a conference table might be enough to postpone a conference. In fact, the shape of the conference table was the major stumbling block in the peace talks between the United States, the government of South and North Vietnam, and the National Liberal Front (Viet Cong), which were supposed to start in November 1968 but were postponed for 10 weeks for that reason (Morgenthau, 1993, p. 88). The seating arrangements can also point to varying levels of power and, as such, are often planned in such a way as to reflect the idea of equality among states and institutions participating in the meeting. Historical precedents have shown that when these basic rules are not respected, a strong emotional reaction with important diplomatic consequences can ensue. In December 2010, newspapers and websites in the Arab world extensively reported on a meeting between the Turkish Ambassador to Israel, Ahmet Oguz Celikkol, and the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Daniel Ayalon, in which the Turkish representative felt deeply humiliated because he had been invited to sit on a low chair that physically conveyed a clear position of inferiority compared to his Israeli counterpart (Nahmias, 2010). The same rationale holds true for the so-called ‘flag interaction’. As Faizullaev explains, ‘Diplomatic protocol has elaborated rules for utilizing flags in diplomatic intercourse. Diplomatic meetings require equality in the number and size of the represented state’s flags which corresponds to the idea of the equality of the states’ (2013, p. 98). In the picture below depicting the meeting between the Israeli and Turkish representatives, these rules have clearly been violated: the seating arrangements are asymmetrical and the absence of the Turkish flag on the table has also been interpreted a sign of disrespect for Turkey.

*This photo of the meeting between the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Daniel Ayalon, and the Turkish Ambassador to Israel, Ahmet Oguz Celikkol, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Finally, while often taken for granted, the dress code is another symbolic element through which respect for the status and culture of the other is conveyed. The existence of the dress code in the international/diplomatic community signifies that the costume is a means through which one can express the acceptance of the prevalent norm of the community to which

one wants to participate. It implies the intention of the willingness to participate and accept the norms (Cohen, 1987; Ogoura, 2012, p. 45). Other scholars, such as Iver Neumann, point to the inadequacy of certain outfits that can cause reputational damage, such as in the case of the Norwegian Ambassador who wore the traditional Norwegian ostrich-feather cap thinking he was respecting the local culture but eventually created an outrage and was consequently fired (Neumann, 2008, p. 691).

### 2.3.3.2. Communication and interaction in the room

Having described, the ‘décor’ on the stage, I turn my attention now to the play itself – that is, to the dialogical interaction unfolding both during the formal meeting and informal activities organised in the framework of the meeting, such as dinners and excursions. I detail the different indicators related to the verbal and non-verbal communications that can possibly be interpreted as acts of recognition for institutional identity both in terms of distinctiveness and relevance.

#### *The dialogical interaction itself*

Regarding first the recognition of the ‘distinctiveness’ component of institutional identity, here are the different ways through which it can be sought and granted, or alternatively denied.

One typical recognition-seeking behaviour consists of taking advantage of the dialogue first and foremost as an opportunity to ‘voice concerns’, ‘re-affirm priorities, values and interests’ in a way that cannot be ignored by the other side. This relates to the most basic sense of the word ‘recognition’ – from the Latin *recognitio* – which, in domestic and international law, has traditionally meant the legal permission to be heard. However, in the context of IR, recognition tends to convey the meaning of acceptance or acknowledgment of having something worth hearing – of being entitled to consideration or to attention (Doran, 1991). Typically, the recognition-seeker will emphasise the importance of ‘being heard’ and ‘being understood’ by the other, suggesting that one’s interests, values, or ideas have so far not been taken into account with due respect. Similarly, the recognition-seeker will go to great length to emphasise the value of a given approach to a problem – particularly so if this is a reflection of deeper values that are part of its institutional identity.

An additional way through which the distinct aspect of institutional identity can be projected and performed during the dialogue is through the procedure of the dialogue itself. For instance, the practice of ‘turn taking’ can be exploited to reflect the whole diversity of views represented in the meeting itself. This is the case for the TLD whereby the chairman

makes a deliberate effort to give the floor to many different MEPs in order to reflect the composition of the European Parliament (Interview no. 2). The European sense of know-how in terms of dialogue is also particularly discernible in this anecdote. During the 77<sup>th</sup> TLD in Washington, many members of Congress unexpectedly left the room in the midst of the energy meeting to vote in their chamber, thereby interrupting the dialogue for more than an hour. This led the former President of the EP, Jerzy Buzek, who chaired this work group, to tell his American counterparts: ‘As you know, we are probably better organized in terms of parliamentary work. We know exactly at what time, on which days, many days before, when we have to vote. So, there are a lot of improvements to make on your side. We can even teach you if you need something like that. There is no problem. But we understand that voting is important’ (American Congress, 2015).

As to the recognition of the ‘relevance’ component of institutional identity, it includes two different aspects that are often intertwined. The first one deals with ‘power’ in the sense of social status while the second one relates to the ‘relationship identity’ as described by Faizullaev (pp. 108-110). While ‘power symbolism’ is mostly focused on the characteristics of the actor itself independent from the others, ‘relationship identity’ defines the kind of relationship that it has with the interlocutor (including different degrees of enmity or amity, or relationships characterised by partnerships, for instance). These two aspects are intertwined because, to be recognised as a partner (relationship identity), the state/institution inevitably also needs to prove its relevance and expertise (related to power symbolism). By the same token, Bailes mentioned that ‘states can and do also recognize each other as “worthy opponents”, as dangerous competitors, as asymmetrical threats (“rogue states”), or as weaker brethren suitable for bullying and blackmailing’ (2015, p. 255). In what follows, I list the characteristics of the dialogical interaction interpreted as acts of recognition of the relationship identity as partners because it is the most dominant one in the case of the EU-US relationship.

First, the interpretation of the rationale behind the meeting is very important. Here special attention is paid to the way through which the participants of the dialogue interpret what they are doing together. For example, advancing common objectives with the most ambitious aim of setting world-wide standards in terms of world governance clearly signifies that the interlocutors consider and recognise each other as partners bound by the same ambitious goal that sets them apart from the rest. This description of the aim/rationale of the dialogical interaction implicitly entails a strong affirmation of partnership and recognition of great power status in the case of the EU-US dialogue. In fact, in sociological terms, the status of great power is associated with rights and duties; one of them being to play a leading role in

determining the direction and shape of international affairs (Bull, 1995, p. 196). Therefore, framing the rationale of the interaction in terms of world governance is an implicit statement of recognition of a great power status.

Secondly, the kind of discursive engagement that develops among the representatives also entails meaningful indications of the kind of relationship they maintain vis-à-vis each other and the sort of recognition they are granting and being granted in this process. For instance, in the jargon of diplomats, the very act of ‘strategizing’ – i.e. brainstorming, thinking together as one team of the best strategies to change the behaviour of a third actor – cements the relationship identity as partners. By contrast, a face-to-face interaction in which hectoring and hard-headed bargaining are the prevailing discursive style contributes towards creating a more confrontational relationship identity.

By the same token, the degree of self-disclosure and openness prevailing in the dialogical interaction constitutes a vital symbolic element of the kind of relationship that both states or institutions – through their representatives – maintain. For instance, one can recognise friendship in international relations when ‘friends’ (i.e. representatives of states or institutions) expect each other to reveal more information to each other than to others, as well as display a higher level of tolerance towards ‘bad news’ (Oelsner & Koshut, 2014, p. 21).

The quality of the discussion in terms of ‘flow’ is also an important element of the dialogical interaction that can be interpreted as a recognition for one’s relevance and positive relationship identity. The high quality of the exchange is often related to a high level of expertise and to a certain degree of complicity (possibly related to the same cultural background). The level of expertise displayed during the interaction on a variety of topics is not only considered essential for an effective discussion; it is also interpreted as a way to project the seriousness and competency of the institution represented. The more often the discussions are serious and to the point, the better the image of the institution represented, and the higher the chances for the counterparts to recognise the institution as relevant and competent.

Finally, the tone of voice and the general atmosphere characterising the dialogical interaction can also play an important role in terms of recognition. These aspects are in fact highly symbolic and say a lot regarding the recognition dynamics at play during the dialogue itself. For instance, in her study of the Human rights dialogue with China, Kinzelbach (2015) reports that the Chinese delegates would laugh overtly over the demands formulated by the EU to make clear that they did not intend at all to cooperate on these issues. This attitude has probably been perceived by the EU as a blatant lack of respect and a clear statement regarding the lack of recognition for their authority. Similarly, in the case of Iran, some MEPs recall

particularly confrontational inter-parliamentary meetings reflecting the general state of the relationship characterised by tensions and distrust: ‘Compared to the US, with Iran it’s a very different kind of discussion. We have much more tensions and these meetings are extremely difficult. They are screaming at us, it’s terrible’ (Interview no. 6).

*Informal activities: on the importance of “sharing the coffee and the cookie”*

In many instances of dialogue, the interaction among the participants is not restricted to the discursive exchange taking place within the meeting room during the formal sessions only. In fact, there are also informal moments, such as coffee breaks, sophisticated dinners, and other social activities that are worth mentioning in our discussion about the recognition of institutional identity. While the informal activities do build trust among the dialogue’s actors, they are also perceived as an integral part of the performance in the quest for recognition.

Informal activities in the framework of diplomatic meetings have mainly been associated with the mechanism of trust-building. Any activity in the framework of the dialogue allowing a strong degree of ‘liminality’ matters (i.e. the temporary dissolution of order creating a fluid, malleable situation that enable a different kind of interaction to emerge). In fact, research has shown that it is in these informal spaces that trust is most likely to develop, as different communicative and effective dynamics can unfold:

Humans have developed various conventional practices of speaking and communicating. They differ according to specific local situations, institutions, traditions, rules, and norms that are framed by social positions of interlocutors and their personal interrelations. These conventional practices of speaking or organized styles of communication differ in respect to how much they are conventionalized, how culturally fixed they are and what purposes they serve. In other words, each social situation requires a different style of communication (Markova, 2012, p. 8).

Therefore, by breaking with the rigid framework of formal talks, new communicative possibilities open up – ones that are not necessarily seen as appropriate or simply possible in the regular official setting. This idea has already been well-exploited in all kinds of dialogical contexts, including the most high-level contentious ones as illustrated by this anecdotal account of the Oslo Agreements’ negotiations:

Abu Allah, the key Palestinian negotiator – used to recall a crucial moment in the negotiations – precisely when he and Uri Savir, the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, took a walk in the forest, encouraged by the Norwegian facilitator Larsen, who gambled “that a personal conversation outside the formal context of the negotiations would create a human relationship between us, and that some chemistry might have time to develop between us, which would help overcome whatever obstacles might have arisen” (Savir, 1998).

It does not matter whether the dialogical interaction takes place in the forest, on boats, or near the water fountain – the most important point is to have it outside the formal framework of exchange, because it is in this kind of context that the affective component of trust is most likely to develop. The trust developed during these informal moments matters because it contributes towards reinforcing the quality of the exchange back in the formal meeting room and thereby further enhances the relationship-identity component of institutional identity. Contrarily, distrust is a powerful mechanism of neutralising communicative efforts of the Other (Gillespie, 2012), thereby constructing a different kind of relationship-identity. Furthermore, the personal relationships developed during the informal moments are also very important because they have the potential to become institution-to-institutional relationships, practically anchoring the strong partnership identity. Indeed, the personal links forged during these informal moments are harnessed by the participants of the dialogue to thicken the institutional relationship once the formal dialogue is over (through consultation on a regular basis and other ad hoc informal meetings).

The choice of informal activities in the framework of the encounter, including the type of wine served during the dinner, are never insignificant. They are all part of a performance designed to project a certain image and to grant or deny recognition for this identity.

First, the activities on the ground planned during certain encounters can be used to prove the institutional relevance in certain fields in terms of its achievements and capability to deliver. The use of extra-gestures (such as an exclusive visit to a sensitive political or security site normally forbidden to the wider public) can also be interpreted as an implicit act of recognition for the relevance of the other and the trust characterising their relationship. For instance, the unique opportunity given to the MEPs to go to the balcony of the Speaker of the House (in the American Congress) that is normally closed/inaccessible was interpreted as a clear demonstration of exclusiveness and privilege (Interview no. 2).

Secondly, particular attention has traditionally been given to the practice of ‘sharing meals’. Far from being a trivial practicality, sharing food has long been a meaningful diplomatic practice dating back to the times of Ancient Greece and the Bible, and being further enhanced in the age of the Renaissance (Constantinou, 1996, p. 128). Central to this practice is the concept of ‘commensality’ – from the Latin ‘the act of sitting at the table together’ – that creates commonality and a ‘bond of solidarity’ like the one created in the family unit, thereby strengthening ties and reducing antagonism (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 162). In other words,

engaging in a ritual of joint eating reinforces the sentiment of togetherness between the hosts and their guests, and constitutes one of the oldest forms of ceremonial expressions of good relationships (Neumann, 2013, p. 45).

More specifically related to the quest for recognition, the type of food being served can expressly signify the relative status of the honoured guest and be exploited to manifest one's prestige (Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Morgan, 2012; Ogoura, 2012). For instance, in the case of the TLD, the European hosts clearly strive to honour their American guests through special gestures and fancy meals. During my fieldwork, I had the chance to attend a long discussion about the choice of the meal that would be offered to the American hosts for one of the IPMs, and the most favoured option was the most ornate one, i.e. lobster with wine of the best quality (Participant observation no.1). These practical details are not trivial: they are part of the diplomatic practices and gestures attributing respect. As Neumann reminds us, 'Meals are like a display of crown jewels, where the point is to show distinctive character and grandeur' (Neumann, 2013, p. 71). As such, these dinners literally 'give the taste' of the specific culture of the country in terms of its distinctiveness.

#### 2.3.3.3. After leaving the room: the celebration of recognition outside the room

Thus far, the analysis has focused on the setting of the dialogue and on interactions behind closed doors, pointing to the various symbolic elements carrying a meaning in terms of recognition. The next question to address deals with the extent to which the recognition of institutional identity can be carried outside of the room. My argument is that recognition (of one type or another) inevitably unfolds during the dialogical interaction within the meeting room. Yet in order for this identity to be effectively anchored, the granted recognition must transcend the walls of the meeting room and be projected outside. In other words, because the recognition process unfolding within the meeting room is a very intimate experience, it needs to be externalised and publicised in some way in order for the institutional identity to be properly anchored. In this respect, I identify three different forms of anchors of institutional identity directly emanating from the dialogue: (1) visual; (2) discursive; and (3) practical anchors.

First, visual images are particularly compelling and effective in anchoring institutional identity. They are more than illustrations and objective reflections of reality. They have their own agency in the sense that they can do things (Lisle, 2016). In our context, images act as visual anchors of institutional identity. They are part and parcel of a 'visibility strategy' that

aims at making tangible an institutional identity. As Faizullaev rightly points out (2013, p. 106), ‘Sometimes the symbolism of shaking hands, making bows or giving pats on the shoulder provides far-reaching indications of the state of the bilateral relations between countries’. These symbolic gestures clearly express willingness for joint endeavour and closeness (Ogoura, 2012). As such, they are worth being documented by the lens of the camera from the perspective of the dialogue’s actors. In the context of a high-level meeting, for instance, the signing ceremony is often visually captured as it symbolically represents the ‘culmination’ of the meeting, i.e. the fruit of a common endeavour. It portrays the two signatory parties as partners advancing common interests, and thereby captures visually their identity relationship as partners. The photograph below constitutes a great illustration of this point. The exact same number of European and American representatives in the picture, their respective flags displayed in the background at the exact same length as well as the honourable position in which they stand are all part of the same strategy of symbolic equalisation. Regarding the body language and the emotional expression of the EU chairman of the Delegation, they clearly project a positive emotion of pride, related to the solemn moment of the signature of the Joint Statement between the EP and the Congress. Lastly, the frame of the picture includes the famous chandelier of the Latvian parliament, featuring the coats of arms of cities in Latvia. This can be seen as a symbol of the cultural distinctiveness of the European country holding the presidency of the EU at that time.

*This photo of the Signature of the Joint Statement of the 76Th EP-US Congress, 26-27 June 2015, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

The photograph can also say a lot about the distinctiveness in terms of values of the actors in presence. For instance, in the case of the EU, which likes to define itself as a defender of human rights, this quote by a member of the European parliament in the context of the parliamentary dialogue with Iran is telling: ‘We had a meeting where we happened to be four women out of five MEPs to participate. It was very good for photos because the whole EU delegation except one was women. I was very happy because all the pictures on the Iranian newspapers were just ‘women, women, women’. It was very good for Iranian women to see how we do politics, because in Iran only a few women are now in the parliament’ (interview no. 6). This is a great example of how normative power is being projected through the lens of the camera. Moreover, the fact that ‘family photographs’ are systematically taken at each single occasion and instantaneously publicised to the media (both traditional and digital) confirms their use as

anchors of institutional identity, that is as the evidence of the recognition that has taken place within the room. In this sense, the institution takes advantage of the ‘circulability’ inherent in the visuals: in fact, the main distinctiveness of the visual resides in the belief in its capacity to transgress linguistic boundaries. Visuals can be read by all and they can reach more audiences than words (Hansen, 2011, p. 53). This is particularly powerful in our post-literate world in which visual media are the main source of information about the world (Callahan, *forthcoming*). While in the past, few people could observe diplomatic interactions with the use of symbols and rituals, this is now available for millions of television viewers and internet users. In the case of the EU, tremendous efforts have been made in recent years to increase the digital presence of the institution. Every single achievement is now automatically reported and disseminated across all kinds of social media platforms: from the official website of the EU to the Twitter of European diplomats/ MEPs and Facebook.

*This tweet by a MEP depicting the beginning of the TLD Session in the Hague, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

In addition to visual anchors, the dialogue also generates discursive anchors of institutional identity in the form of communiqués, joint statements, and other documents issued at the end of the interaction. As Oelsner (2013, p. 119) points out, ‘Institutional identity crystallizes in a series of normative and discursive statements that define what the institution is: what its purpose, goals and limits are; how it plans to achieve them’. Following this logic, the documents emanating from the dialogue capture the recognition process that has taken place and serve to anchor the institutional identity of the actors participating in the dialogue. In this regard, it is important to remember that these communiqués and other documents are often the result of a negotiation process and constitute a compromise resulting from a joint endeavour between the two parties. As such, these documents are particularly telling and highly symbolic.

The language of the statements – even in its most restrained and legalistic official form – expresses both bold messages and nuances that are important to decipher (Faizullaev, 2013, p. 102; Neumann, 2012). For instance, particular attention needs to be paid to the wording of these statements: words of praise and congratulatory remarks are a way to give credibility to the other side and to recognise its achievements. They say a lot regarding the recognition process that has just taken place during the interaction and allow institutional identity to be anchored along the two dimensions previously mentioned.

With regards to the ‘relevant’ aspect of institutional identity, the text usually serves to emphasise the commonality of values and interests between the actors present, revolving around a discourse of partnership and commonality. Insofar as these declarations are then disseminated and publicised in the world, they also aim at projecting a certain image of the two dialogical partners together (‘projection of the image of the two of us together’, as in the use of the visual photograph). In this respect, it is worth emphasising that these declarations stressing a ‘common agenda’ and presenting a ‘unified front’ are used by the institutions to send strong signals to third countries as well (Interviews no. 13, 23, and 24).

Furthermore, these statements are the result of a negotiation process in which each institution attempts to integrate into the text the ideas and values that are the most crucial to them as part of their institutional identity. The insistence on having these ideas integrated to the declarations and their acceptance by the other party also constitute a way to reinforce and anchor the institutional identity. This is particularly visible when the actors of the dialogue demonstrate pride in having managed to impose their own interests and values, which might be different from the others. For instance, in one of my participant observations of the TLD, the American staff expressed great satisfaction for ‘having the EU jargon of multilateralism’ taken away from the text while the EU representatives celebrated that they had managed to negotiate an emphasis on the respect for human rights in the privacy debate (Participant Observation no. 2). This is not simply the result of a compromise. This negotiation around language is also a way to imprint its identity. Therefore, these discursive statements systematically issued at the end of the dialogues reiterate both the essence of the relationship between the parties as well as their respective specificity as institutions, thereby anchoring these two components of institutional identity. Similar to the use of compelling symbolic images, these discursive statements are also extensively disseminated, feeding into the institutional memory of the institution and anchoring the EU identity even further.

Finally, the third way through which institutional identity is anchored is through practices that develop out of the dialogue as a logical step following the dialogue – or what I

call ‘practical anchors’ of institutional identity. Part of the anchoring mechanism is when the participants leave the room and immediately commit to re-convene for the next meeting as in ‘let’s meet again soon’. In other words, they leave the room knowing that they will re-enter the room in a few months. In this sense, this specific dialogical interaction is different from negotiations that are supposed to come to an end. Here there is a continuous, on-going engagement that makes this anchoring mechanism potentially endless. This practice of immediate and unconditional re-commitment to the dialogue is enshrined in the final documents mentioned above, which explicitly call for another meeting of the same kind without any attached conditions. Another practice worth underlining is the ‘consultation reflex’ that develops as a result of the personal contacts created during the dialogue itself. This consultation reflex corresponds to the ‘Pavlovian habit’ to consult counterparts regularly and also involves the incremental formation of informal and ad hoc meetings in between the formal meetings. As one high-level American official put it, ‘Through these inter-personal connections, you want to create an institution-to-institution relationship’ (Interview no. 29), making clear the direct link between the individual and institutional level of relationship. This practice of ongoing and regular consultation in between the formal dialogues anchors institutional identity because it firmly establishes a partnership relationship in which both institutions are regarded as relevant and necessary interlocutors. It anchors the relationship identity as partners and equals. In the words of one American diplomat, ‘The dialogue is not a magical event; it is a self-sustaining relation’ (Interview no. 15).

## 2.4. The outcome: recognition comes in different shades of equality

Eventually, these three anchors contribute to the outcome of the dialogue in terms of recognition of institutional identity. This final part deals, therefore, with the outcome of the dialogue in terms of recognition of institutional identity. It is crucial to stress that this will only constitute an artificial summary of the process, as the dialogue is a *repeated* pattern of interaction and the quest for recognition on-going. There is a flow and it is in constant evolution. Thus, for the sake of this study, I will artificially stop this process and look at the outcomes of the dialogues so far, with a focus on the dialogues conducted under the Obama administration.

The quest for the recognition of institutional identity along the two components of ‘relevance and distinctiveness’ hides a deeper desire to eventually be recognised as *equals* in the sense of being respected for one’s social status (relevance) and respected in one’s differences (distinctiveness) through the treatment received. Yet the outcome cannot simply be

reduced to the dichotomy of ‘recognition versus non-recognition’. It is better conceptualised as different shades of equality taking the form of different kinds of relationships. These are not watertight categories but only expressions of equality with some overlap. First, equality can be achieved (or approached) by the suspension of hierarchy, as in a friendship or familial relationship. If the actors of the dialogue assess their interaction with their counterparts as a ‘friendship relationship’ or talk about feeling part of ‘one big family’, it is fair to argue that they feel respected in who they are and what they stand for. Second, equality can also be achieved by mentioning equality within the hierarchy. The relationships of ‘partners’ and ‘rivals/associated rivals’ are by themselves expressions of equality but *within* the hierarchy. Furthermore, what also differentiates partnerships from friendships relates to the degree to which the interaction between the actors is ‘result-oriented’: in the case of a partnership relationship, the emphasis is put on the idea of performance and concrete deliverable actions. In the case of a friendship relationship, this seems to be less the case: more time can be dedicated to informal moments, for instance, and less pressure is put on achieving a concrete actionable goal at the end of the interaction. In this section, I am therefore interested in the analysis of the prevailing discourse across the different stages of the process of recognition in order to assess the extent to which the participants of the dialogue succeeded in their recognition endeavour. Focusing on their subjective feelings and assessments of the interaction, I bring evidence as to: How do they *feel* about these encounters with their American counterparts? Do they express any sense of satisfaction or frustration? Would they have liked to achieve more? What kind of relationships do they feel they are in? In order to give a balanced and accurate perspective on the outcome of the dialogues, I also bring in the American perspective that should help determine the extent to which the European representatives ‘live in a bubble’ or if their impressions are confirmed by their American counterparts. In other words, I will consider the extent to which the American representatives better appreciate the EU’s institutional identity in terms of its relevance and distinctiveness.

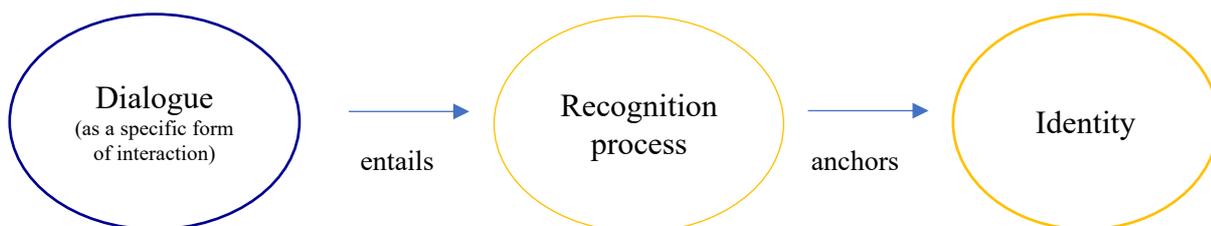


Fig. 2.3.2: Scheme of the identity-based dialogue

## Conclusion

This chapter has presented the analytical framework which will be used in the analysis of the case studies. The main purpose of this thesis is to understand why the EU promotes and conducts more dialogues with third countries than any other political actor in the world. It puts forward a socio-psychological explanation according to which the practice of dialogue serves to anchor the EU institutional identity through an on-going and iterative process of recognition unfolding in the face-to-face interaction between representatives of the participating institutions.

First, the chapter emphasised the particularities of the dialogue as a form of communication to explain why it constitutes such a rich setting favourable to the development of recognition processes among the actors present. More specifically, it showed that it is the temporal and spatial immediacy inherent in the dialogue that allows the participants to take full advantage of the emotional and other non-verbal cues and engage in a symbolic recognition game.

With these basic features of the dialogical interaction in mind, the chapter then made the point that organizations – like states – are after the quest for recognition of their identities. This quest for recognition can be motivated either by socio-psychological factors related to self-esteem and ontological security, or by more materialistic considerations of prestige and reputation. In either case, institutions need to have a sense of ‘who they are’, i.e. of what their institutional identity is. Drawing on the literature on recognition, I differentiated between two main components of institutional identity: relevance and distinctiveness. While the former relates to the recognition of ‘social status’ and of a subsequent specific privileged relationship (identity relationship), the latter is about the need to have one’s distinctiveness as an institution recognised in terms of values, interests, and procedures.

Thus, in order to gain recognition and anchor their institutional identity, institutions engage in regular dialogues in which they project their institutional identity. It is during this interaction that actors seek recognition for, and can possibly get, their institutional identity recognised by the other in a complex recognition game. In fact, these dialogical encounters are conceived as a performance in which the representatives of the institutions get to *experience* the other institutions and vice versa. Thus, actors seeking recognition go to great lengths to display the qualities that are part and parcel of their institutional identity and for which they wish to be recognised. Recognition is granted if the actors seeking recognition ‘feel that there

has been a match between their self-image and the treatment they deem appropriate to receive by the recognizing party' (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, pp. 17-18).

Therefore, the theoretical framework details the various cues – both verbal and non-verbal – that can be interpreted as implicit acts of recognition. It does so along three crucial moments in the dialogical interaction: (1) the preparation of the dialogue and its setting; (2) the communication and interaction during the dialogue itself (including both the formal and informal moments); and (3) the stage where the participants leave the room and carry with them the recognition process that had taken place behind closed doors. It is at this stage that the anchoring of the recognition is clinched and projected to the world thanks to various types of anchors: visual, discursive, and practical. All this is possible thanks to the power of symbolism that links the micro-level of interaction to the macro-institutional level. Finally, the final part of the theoretical framework considers the overall result of the recognition process based on Lindemann and Saada's definition and introduces nuances regarding the different shades of equality that can possibly be achieved: they can take the form of friendship or partnership relationships, or correspond to the relationship characteristics of family members or associated rivals in a more business/competition-orientated framework.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

In order to answer the key research question at the heart of this research – namely, why does the EU promote and conduct more dialogues than any other actor in the world? – a suitable methodology has been devised. This short chapter aims at describing my methodological choices and at pointing out the merits of the chosen approach for my research question. It is divided into two parts: the first section details my data-collection strategy focusing on ethnographic data-collection tools while the second section turns to the specific method used, i.e. thematic analysis conducted with the support of the qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software NVivo 11.

### 3.1. Data-collection strategy

In order to collect the relevant data necessary for my research, I used ethnographic data-collection tools – specifically, qualitative interviewing and participant observation – as they best allow an understanding of social settings, relationships, and practices.

#### *Semi-structured interviews*

I used semi-structured interviews, consisting of open conversations around a set of core questions that were designed to obtain information on more specific and personal issues while leaving some room for dialogical dynamics in my own practice. The semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2015 and July 2017 and the questions evolved slightly through the interview process, which stretched over more than 21 months. A few interviews were followed up with email and telephone contacts, and, in some cases, second interviews. As I honed the analysis, I re-contacted key participants to check my theoretical developments and changed my analysis based on their inputs in a cyclical fashion. Each interview lasted between 30-90 minutes. Nearly all of them were audio-recorded and fully verbatim transcribed afterwards (on average 6000 words per interview). They were conducted either in English or in French and an informed consent form was signed by all participants before the interview. To preserve the anonymity and traceability of the interviewees, interviews are numbered consecutively and referenced as interview no. X, description of the institutional role, place, and

date. Appendix 1 lists the number of interviews conducted by the author by location, date, institution, and frequency.

Interviews are overall highly valuable for the purpose of my research, because they allow obtaining the participants' perspectives on specific issues. The interview guide based on the research question and a comprehensive review of the literature had three sections dealing with: (1) the interviewee background; (2) the description of the process of dialogue in which they took part; and (3) the participant's perception of the added value of the dialogue. More specifically, I drew upon Bogner et al.'s article on elite and expert interviews (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009, p. 52), that advises researchers to articulate the topic guide around a set of core questions dealing with three distinct type of knowledge: first, 'technical knowledge' containing information about operations and events governed by rules that are specific to their field (in this case, practical information about the dialogues); second, 'process knowledge' relating to the specific process and practical activity in which the interviewee is directly involved; and thirdly, 'interpretative knowledge', corresponding to 'the expert's subjective orientations, rules, points of views and interpretations'.

Overall, I carried out 45 semi-interviews with a selected representative sample of people participating in the dialogues under study. I used a combination of convenience, snowball, and purposive samplings (Coyne, 1997), which allowed my interview-based data collection to reach 'theoretical saturation' (Morse, 2004), which was basically the moment when additional interviews did not yield significantly new insights compared to what was learned in previous meetings. In terms of inclusive criteria, I interviewed actors that have attended, at least once, one of the dialogues under study. Furthermore, a deliberate attempt was made to reach out to a wide range of participants with different backgrounds in terms of experience in order to get as many perspectives as possible. As dialogue is an incremental process, the time dimension is extremely important. Therefore, in order to capture the effect of repeated interactions among the participants, I made sure to conduct interviews with both former staffers with great institutional memory as well as young people familiar with the most recent developments. Furthermore, my interviewees included both European and American participants of the dialogues (either diplomats, lawmakers, or civil society actors) to allow for the comparison of their respective assessments of the dialogue and others' perceptions. As a way to anticipate criticism, I would like to stress that I am well aware of the vested interests of the interviewees – particularly in the case of elite interviews. They might give a certain account that matches their interest without reflecting the reality. Thus, by diversifying the experiences of the interviewees (from high-level MEPs to parliamentary assistants), I constantly tried to

probe discrepant views across my interviews and thereby had the opportunity for counter-interpretations – which is also a form of triangulation in itself.

### ***Participant observation and video analysis: data collection beyond talk***

An additional method of data collection that I resorted to was participant observation. The main advantage of participant observation lies in the fact that it helps get a real sense of what is going on during the discussions, which is at the heart of my research. The data, translated into field notes, is ‘in-situ’, i.e. naturally occurring. In this sense, participant observation delivers insights not only on what the agents under observation ‘say’ but, most importantly, on *what* they do and *how* they do it. In fact, observing the very social interactions first hand as they occur gives valuable insights (in terms of the tone, setting of the meeting, behavioural, and emotional elements) that are not being reported in the protocols of the meetings, which focus exclusively on the content of the discussions. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, this non-verbal aspect of dialogue is what distinguishes it from other forms of communication, and as such is particularly important to take into account. In sum, participant observation enables the researcher to develop thick descriptions of social interactions<sup>5</sup> and to capture practical, non-verbal knowledge. Observation tries to understand practices, interactions, and events that occur in a specific context either from the inside as a participant or from the outside as a mere observer.

Yet the main challenge in this respect deals with the official and often confidential nature of the dialogues that I wished to observe, thereby constituting a serious obstacle in terms of accessibility. In spite of this difficulty, I managed to attend key EU-US meetings at the inter-parliamentary level, including the preparatory meeting of the D-US delegation of the EP in Strasbourg in December 2015 and the 78<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Meeting in The Hague in June 2016. I also analysed a session of one of the TLDs made available by the US Congress (video analysis)<sup>6</sup>. These cases were selected for their extrinsic validity (that is, as a case of a transatlantic dialogue). It allowed me to grasp both how European and American representatives interact with each other as well as how they think about these interactions and practices. As Burawoy (1991, p. 2) accurately put it, ‘it’s not just about how people act but also

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of ‘thick description’ has been coined by Geertz (1973), who emphasized the crucial need to understand context and practices as people understand them.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion about the advantages and limitations of video analysis, see Knoblauch et al. (2006) according to which ‘video allows studying minute details of a particular dialogue/meeting, serving as a microscope of interaction’.

how they understand and experience those acts'. Particularly insightful in this respect was the opportunity given to me to take part in the informal debriefing of the 78th TLD meeting in a pub with European and American staffers, just a few hours after the end of the formal meeting. It enabled me to grasp their own perception of the success of the dialogue they had been working on for months. Regarding my role during the dialogue themselves, I fall into the ideal-type of the 'pure observer' described by Gold (1958) where the focus is on 'non-interventionism' compared to a participant-observer taking part in the very activities under study. This status of observer allowed me to take field notes composed of three types of comments: running a rich description of what was happening in a chronological manner, analytical ideas of a more interpretative nature ('why' questions), and personal impressions related to my own feelings and reflexivity about my own positionality.

### *Primary sources*

Last but not least, careful and balanced documentation is critical if the significance of the dialogues conducted by the EU is to be accurate. Therefore, evidence has been gleaned from the careful analysis of other primary sources. I collected a corpus of documents including the regular reports published by the EU and the United States, communiqués at the end of the meetings, written protocols/transcripts of the meetings when available, press releases, and newspaper articles to get as incisive a grasp as possible of the added value of the multiple dialogues under study. More specifically, for the study of the TLD, I used the Joint Statements published at the end of the meeting, the internal reports from the EU Secretariat, and the confidential dossier with background knowledge distributed to the MEPs beforehand, as well as newspaper articles, tweets on the account of MEPs depicting the dialogue, and video clips. As to the executive dialogues (between the EU commission/EEAS and the State Department), I dealt mainly with the official press releases on the internet but could not have access to the internal reports due to the 'veil of secrecy' surrounding these issues. Lastly, the analysis of the civil society dialogues covered the adopted resolutions and recommendations published online.

The official documents released both by the European Union and the United States following the meetings of the dialogue under study have been scrutinised comparatively (pre- and after-meeting material) and over time to evaluate the outcome in terms of policy output and to spot any continuity or change in the discourse. An important comment is in order. I am fully aware that these official documents are far from being 'objective information containers'. They are rather the means for constructing a specific version of an event or process and as such, cannot be considered as a bias-free data. Documents in institutions are mostly designed to

record institutional routines and at the same time to record information necessary for legitimising what and how things are done. This often explains the vagueness in documenting institutional practices (Flick, 2014, p. 357; Philippart, 2001, p. 58). Hence in my analysis of these documents, I carefully took into account who produced them, for what purpose, and with which implications. In addition, in order to counter the problem of authenticity, I managed to gain privileged access to the confidential material being distributed to MEPs before the actual meetings setting out the clear European position on a variety of issues as well as to the internal reports of the meetings written by the Chairman of the delegation. To complete this more subjective assessment of the dialogues, it was instructive to analyse unofficial documents, such as personal declarations of participants published in the press before and after the dialogue. This is a valid way to gain a better understanding of the expectations held by the participants and their reactions after the actual happening of the dialogue. The main basic idea here is to triangulate across multiple data stream to gain in validity, or what Denzin (1989) calls 'data-triangulation'.

### ***Visual data***

As data, images can provide a means of moving beyond written descriptions and provide a richer access to the people, places, and practices being studied. In this sense, they aid the creation of a 'thick description' of the setting and activities unfolding during the dialogues complementing and reinforcing the insights drawn from the interviews with the participants. (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p. 81). This type of data is particularly relevant in the context of this study on dialogues. As Neumann vehemently reminds us, 'diplomatic meetings are documented in a variety of ways with visual images taking prominence amongst them. And yet most analysts of IR choose not to avail themselves to this material. That is indefensible, for any scholarly discipline is under an imperative to draw on as wide a sample of data as possible' (Neumann, 2016, p. 120). Responding to his call and contributing to the emerging 'pictorial and visual turn' (Bleiker, 2015), I thus engage in the 'deconstruction of the visuality of the dialogue' by critically analysing the visual representation of these meetings between American and European representatives.<sup>7</sup> Visual imagery is never innocent: it is always constructed through various practices, technologies, and knowledges (Gillian, 2012, p.17) and it is up to the researcher to decipher both the *rational* and *emotional* messages that these visuals convey. While Hansen (2011) looked at how 'images speak security' in her study on securitisation, I

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<sup>7</sup> For more studies on the use of visual data in world politics, see Schim (2013) and Hansen (2011).

look at how ‘images speak recognition’. For instance, the visual representation of the asymmetry in terms of the number of participants, the majesty of the rooms in which the dialogues take place, and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere on the excursions in the framework of the TLD all constitute elements worth analysing in this context. Yet the sample rationale for the pictures has to be clearly articulated. As I am interested in the rationale behind the use of these dialogues by the EU, I mainly analysed the official pictures of the different dialogues that were made public on the website of the European Union to document these meetings (30 pictures analysed in total). I also included in the analysis the visual data of these meetings shared on social media by official participants in the forms of tweets (15 tweets were analysed). To conclude, the triangulation of data-gathering methods provides a check against the weaknesses of one specific approach and allows for comparison between data types, thereby reinforcing the validity of my findings.

### 3.2. Method: thematic analysis

After having specified the data-collection tools used, I turn now to the specific method by which I analysed and exploited the data, namely thematic analysis.

#### *Thematic Analysis of the data*

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text through the systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Put differently, it is a process for encoding qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998). Its ambition is to classify qualitative data through a transparent, coherent, and consistent coding strategy. In turn, these classifications allow researchers to capture the richness of the phenomenon under study in a systematic way. Throughout this study, I rigorously applied the different stages of the thematic analysis, as recommended by Boyatzis (1998).

**a) Defining the units of analysis and the coding units:** For the purpose of this study, my units of analysis were individual interviews, single official documents, pictures, and videos. As to the units of coding – defined as those parts of the units of analysis that can be interpreted in a meaningful way with respect to the categories – they were mainly sentences in the case of textual data and entire pictures for visual data. I then proceeded to the segmentation phase, meaning that I divided my material into units, such that each segment fits into one category of

the coding scheme. This stage is extremely important as it helps ensure that the entirety of the material is taken into account.

**b) *Development of the coding scheme:*** To proceed further with the qualitative thematic analysis, I developed a coding scheme that reflects the essence of my study. It features categories based on existing theories and was built in a deductive way. Yet throughout the rigorous exploration of my empirical data, I added new categories and themes stemming from discovery emerging from the material itself. For instance, working with the transcribed interviews, I have coded all the segments of text that go under the specific categories of ‘friends, partners, family’, etc. By oscillating between these two approaches, I came up with a mixed approach coding scheme featuring both theory-driven nodes and data-driven nodes. Dealing with another aspect of the coding scheme, it features themes of different natures: descriptive themes which entail little interpretation (at the manifest level) and interpretative themes (at the latent level). For each one of the themes, I applied Boyatzis’s criteria for a good code – namely a clear label, a definition, a description, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and examples drawn from the transcript are given to eliminate possible confusion (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 31). In order to make sure that my judgment was consistent and my findings reliable, I coded several passages of text at different points of time to see if I did it the same way.

**c) *Main analysis - Identification of patterns within the cases and across cases***

As Boyatzis emphasises (1998), conducting a thematic analysis requires from the researcher an ability to see patterns in seemingly random information. I therefore paid particular attention to repetitions, similarities, and differences, and relationships both within and across cases. Following the systematic within-case analysis of the three different types of dialogues, I proceeded to the *cross-case analysis* advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994). This is a method that involves the in-depth exploration of a specific bound unit – the case – using multiple sources of evidence and the examination of similarities and differences across cases so to reinforce validity, support generalisability, and promote theoretical predictions. Following Bazeley and Jackson’s recommendation (2013), I used numerous query functions of the QDA NVivo 11 to help find patterns and to check initial ideas. More specifically, I ran text search queries for specific words or combinations of words and nodes, as well as word frequency queries to generate lists of the most frequent words in a particular source. The matrix query function also allowed me to generate interesting comparison depending on the attributes of the interviewees (such as the type of dialogue in which they participated or their nationality).

### *Within-case comparison*

In the framework of the single case study of the EU-US dialogues, I conducted ‘an intra-case/within-case comparison’ across three types of dialogues occurring at different levels of representation and involving various issues. In order to capture the rationale behind the multitude of dialogues that the EU promotes with non-EU countries, it is necessary to scrutinise and compare the mechanisms and outcomes across this mega-structure of dialogues. Therefore, the three case studies correspond to different kinds of EU-US dialogues involving a variety of actors: (a) The Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue (TLD) between European and American parliamentarians; (b) The ‘executive dialogues’ conducted by members of the EEAS/EU Commission and US officials from the State of Department; and (c) civil society dialogues – particularly the Transatlantic Business Council (TABC) and the Transatlantic Consumers Dialogue (TACD), which are the most active civil society dialogues today. They are composed of European and American business representatives and consumer organisations respectively. A critical reader might rightly question the lack of analysis of the dialogues at the inter-governmental level (i.e. ministerial meetings). My decision not to delve into this level of analysis is motivated by several reasons but, primarily, it has widely been acknowledged in the literature that these very high-level meetings boil down to rubber-stamping of decisions taken at lower levels of representation and are important mainly due to their symbolic relevance (Steffenson, 2005). The micro-analysis of this format of dialogue is thus less interesting. In addition, gaining access to such high-ranking political actors (including the US president and President of the EU Commission) to get relevant data for the research constitutes a serious challenge.

From a methodological point of view, the differences characterising this level of dialogue fits my research design. Drawing on Mill’s method of difference, I suspect that the absence or presence of representativeness of the EU in the dialogical interaction is key to understanding the absence of recognition dynamics. Therefore, the fact that the main actors are not formal representatives of the EU should lead to different results compared to the other dialogues studied: ‘If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance save one in common, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon’ (Mill, 1843, p. 455).

Finally, ethical considerations have been central all through this study. Following Brinkman and Kvale (2008), ‘in order to grasp the ethical intricacies of qualitative research in the wider cultural and social context, a distinction between micro and macro ethics is relevant’.

According to their analysis, micro-ethics is the ethics of the concrete research situation and relates to issues like content and confidentiality. Macro-ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with what happens when the methodologies and knowledge produced circulate in the wider culture and affect people and society. Regarding the first aspect of micro-ethics, the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees have thoroughly been respected. I systematically required the consent of the people I interviewed and respected the legal regulations regarding data protection policy set by the LSE. As to the macro-ethics, I think that the findings of this research can only benefit the wider society in the sense that it draws attention to the importance of the socio-psychological dimension underpinning the dialogue and the valuable potential inherent in this practice if conducted in full respect with others.

## Conclusion

The research question at the core of this study centres on exploring the added value of the dialogues being promoted and conducted by the EU with third countries. Thus, it appears that ethnographic data collection tools are the most appropriate to capture the thickness of the social setting, in which crucial relationships develop and practices unfold. The combination of semi-structured interviews and field notes from participant observations, coupled with the collection of relevant visual data and other primary sources, have provided me with a solid corpus of relevant data to analyse. Methodologically, the thematic analysis of the data supported by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 11 allowed me to systematically explore the subjective interpretation of the content contained in this precious material in a transparent and consistent manner. The analysis of the three case studies was conducted in full consideration of ethical concerns from the collection stage to the interpretation stage.

## Chapter 4 - The quest for the recognition of institutional identity: the EU as a special case

As explained in chapter 2, all social actors, including institutions, seek recognition for their identity in interaction with other entities. While the quest for the recognition of institutional identity is constant, it can nonetheless be more or less salient depending on the institutional identity's stability, history, stage of development, and more. This chapter takes a closer look at the case of the European Union and explores the extent to which its recognition needs are different from other international actors. Drawing on the definition of institutional identity, proposed by Albert and Whetten as 'consisting of the most central, enduring and distinctive traits about an organization' (1985, p. 410), the chapter shows that the EU constitutes a gripping and special case facing peculiar challenges in the recognition of its institutional identity. To back this argument, the chapter proceeds in four steps. First, it argues that the EU has a particularly complex and unstable institutional identity in constant flux that makes it difficult for non-EU countries to fathom. It highlights the EU's unique hybrid nature as a political actor, its complex machinery of decision-making in constant evolution, and the ambiguity surrounding its end purpose as an institution. The second section zooms in on another unique aspect of the EU: that of an institution yielding a distinct kind of power with the practice of dialogue being its key signature as a foreign policy actor. It shows that the practice of dialogue has by itself a meaningful importance for the EU. The third section gives an overview of the internal and external challenges that the EU currently faces, making its needs for recognition even more acute. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the recognition needs of the EU's institutional identity in the specific context of transatlantic relations.

### 4.1. The European Union: "an unidentified political object" (Delors)

First, the EU faces an acute challenge in terms of the recognition of its institutional identity due to the fact that it is not a traditional international relations actor. It is a hybrid actor in constant evolution and, as such, it is particularly difficult to grasp. In the words of Jacques Delors (2001, p. 2), the former president of the European Commission:

[W]hat we (EU) are doing is trying to invent a form of political organization quite unlike anything achieved up to now anywhere in the world. The EU is not a State

which has identified its boundaries, form of organization and democratic rules. It is a permanent building site on which we should heed the sign ‘work in progress’.

The EU complex machinery of decision-making is constantly evolving, the support by its constituting member states fluctuating not only over time, but also across policy issues. Within the multi-level governance structure of the EU, it becomes hard to locate not only the process which policy-making undergoes, but also which actors at the national or European level are relevant. The preeminent challenge for the EU on the international arena is the difficulty to clearly define the type of international actor that the EU constitutes; the EU is neither a state nor a non-state actor... neither a conventional international organization nor an international regime (Ginsberg, 1999, p. 342). Within a governance system where international relations and diplomacy is dominated by the Westphalian state, the EU is often perceived as alien.

In a systematic study comparing the EU with other major powers, such as China, Russia, and the United States by Zielonka (2011), it becomes evident that the EU’s uniqueness lies in its peculiar governance system as a kind of post-modern (or neo-medieval) polity with no centre of government but with a distinct ‘pluri-lateral’ or ‘polycentric’ structure of governance (Ibid, p. 288; Whiteman, 1998). The EU has a *sui generis* political structure corresponding to a combination of supra-nationalism and inter-governmentalism, which is arguably difficult to comprehend by external actors and constitutes a challenge for the EU in terms of its institutional identity. The European institutions themselves are well aware of this issue; as the European Commission’s White paper on the future of Europe testifies: ‘The EU is not an easy construct to understand as it combines both the European level and Member States. Who does what is not well explained enough’ (European Commission, 2017f).

An additional aspect that makes the institutional identity of the EU difficult to fathom for others is its constantly evolving institutional structure. Indeed, since its inception with the creation of the EEC in the 1950s, the European project has not ceased to evolve, but rather has become more and more complex. Each treaty brings new institutional set ups and rules, with the last one being the Lisbon Treaty in November 2009 which introduced far-reaching changes in order to address the long-standing lack of continuity, coherence, and leadership in European foreign policy (Smith, Keukeleire, & Vanhoonacker, 2016, p. 4). This not only means that the institutional identity of the EU is in constant flux, but it also creates challenges vis-à-vis ‘the outside world’ that has a hard time making sense of this complex peculiar entity and identifying the relevant bodies and interlocutors. In the specific transatlantic context, for instance, Michael Smith explains that the contentious question of ‘who speaks for Europe’ has significantly

influenced the problem of perception that exists in the Euro-American relations, referring to the back then EEC as a ‘rapidly moving target’ (Smith, 1978, p. 35).

The constant institutional development of the European Union is closely related to the ‘existential discussions’ regarding its end purpose and *raison d’être*. The ontological uncertainty and raging debates between its member states about the long-term objectives of the EU adds another layer of complexity to its institutional identity. In fact, one of the components of institutional identity is the mandate and purpose of the institution itself. Hence the absence of a shared vision regarding the final goals of EU integration makes the definition of the institutional identity difficult in the first place and its recognition by the others even more so. Andrew Schonfeld (1974) nicely captured this problem in the title of his book, *Europe’s journey to an unknown destination*. This controversial issue of ‘an unfinished union of states’ was then further developed in the framework of the ‘European finality debate’ (Serfaty, 2003), which continues to resonate. As Vimont (2017) argues, the EU still needs to define its ambition: EU countries do not manage to define what they plan on doing together in the future beyond the remit already acquired on the European level. In March 2017, the leaders of the European Union came together to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, reflecting on past achievements and debating what their shared future could and should look like. The comments of Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, regarding the informal meeting that took place before the event aptly convey the deep disagreements regarding the way Europe should be heading in the near future: ‘Some [Member States] expect systemic changes that would loosen intra-EU ties and strengthen the role of nations in relation to the community. Others, quite the opposite, are looking for new, deeper dimensions of integration’ (European Council, 2017). This happens in the backdrop of a multi-dimensional crisis experienced by the EU in recent years that potentially shakes the whole essence of the EU to its core (‘identity crisis’) and makes the EU’s need for recognition as a relevant power even more acute. In addition to being a misunderstood power and cumbersome organisation, it must now debunk the claims that it is a political organisation on the brink of disintegration. Indeed, the difficult recovery from the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent Eurozone crisis, the ensuing split between North and South on austerity, the rise of populism across Europe, the migration challenge and the split between West and East on refugees, and, as a *coup de grace*, Brexit have led certain commentators to question the very future and continued existence of the institution (Menendez, 2013; Tosun, Wetzel, & Zapryanova, 2014).

This section has shown that the EU institutional identity in itself is particularly complex and unstable: the hybrid nature of the institution, coupled with its complex and constantly

changing decision-making process, and the uncertainty regarding its end purpose, make it difficult for others to fathom this institution. Due to its unique structure as an international actor, the components of the institutional identity – such as mandate and procedures – are more difficult to grasp and be recognised. Arguably, this complexity has turned the EU into a misunderstood power that needs therefore to dedicate a tremendous amount of time and resources to explain how it functions and what it stands for in an attempt ultimately to get recognition for its relevance both internally and in the eyes of other international players.

## 4.2. The European Union as a different kind of power with a strong “dialogical component”

The difficulty capturing the specific identity of the EU is also reflected in the breadth of the literature on the topic and in the multiple labels given to the EU to qualify it as an international actor. Alternately labelled as a ‘civilian power’ (Duchêne, 1972), ‘normative Power Europe’ (Manners, 2002), ‘ethical Power Europe’ (Aggestam, 2008), ‘Model Power Europe’ (Ferreira-Pereira, 2010), or ‘Market Power’ (Damro, 2012), the EU has been the focus of a plethora of studies that have attempted to characterise its nature as an international actor and the specificities of its foreign policy. Yet the majority of the research mentioned above interpret the EU as a relevant actor in international politics, whose power and influence are not so much based on military might and other coercive means as on the attractiveness of its example, reflecting such diverse practices, norms, and values as shared sovereignty, welfare-state arrangements, multilateralism, democracy, human rights, and environmental policies. From such a normative perspective, the promotion and institutionalisation of dialogue appears naturally to be the privileged option chosen by the EU in its interaction with the world because it stands in contrast to overt coercion and is in line with the ‘soft power’ that the EU is supposed to yield. Yet dialogue is not only a privileged means to promote normative goals. It is also a practice constitutive of the European Union itself, as will be shown below.

### 4.2.1. Dialogue as the EU’s privileged foreign policy tool and as a distinct interaction style

First, the European Union is a unique creator of dialogues. As will be explained in greater depth in chapter 4, it has an incredible ability to put in place dialogues with third countries on an extraordinary scale. In the early 1970s, when the EEC brought to life the EPC to deal with external affairs collectively, their diplomatic contacts were quite limited. Today,

40 years later, political dialogues have grown to a quite comprehensive set of institutionalised contacts, consisting at present of more than 100 different dialogues with almost all the countries in the world, as well as international organisations. This relates to the fact that when it comes to the conduct of EU's foreign policy, the EU has a clear preference for 'soft methods' based on joint ownership, engagement, persuasion, and cooperation rather than coercive methods, such as sanctions or military action, referring to Holsti's (1995) famous continuum of foreign policy means. This proclivity for dialogue goes beyond the traditional framework of diplomatic negotiations and consultations. In fact, the EU has strongly promoted the idea and practice of inter-cultural dialogues (ICD) both within the EU and with its external partners, such as in the case of its Euro-Mediterranean policies, which put a strong emphasis on civil society dialogues (De Perini, 2018; Pace, 2007).

Second, the literature on Normative Power Europe (NPE) introduced by Manner in 2002, according to which the EU is distinctive from traditional great powers due to its normative character, implicitly portrays the practice of 'dialogue' as a crucial means to exert normative influence. Indeed, when one considers the different mechanisms through which normative influence is exerted, it becomes clear that they occur in a dialogical interaction, as this quote from Forsberg (2011) demonstrates: 'The EU relies on normative power by activating existing commitments, and by persuading by referring to the general rules and practices, as well as to the future mutual gains, that are made possible through cooperation'. Similarly, when considering the different mechanisms of norm diffusion at the heart of Normative Power Europe, many of them unfold during the dialogues themselves (Manners, 2013). Thus, even though no explicit reference is made in this literature about the practice of dialogue itself, it qualifies as a non-negligible tool for the exercise of normative influence, revolving around persuasion and arguing mechanisms. As Karen Smith puts it, political dialogues are the key forums in which the EU exercises persuasion (Smith, 1998, p. 71).

Furthermore, studies focusing on the EU as a diplomatic actor recurrently attribute to the EU a specific style of interaction with its partner countries when it comes to dialogue, depicting the EU as a 'benevolent/ideal interlocutor'. In fact, the EU's diplomatic power has been referred to as a 'style of interaction' relatively more engaging than dictating compared to other great powers (Chaban, Elgström, Kelly, & Yi, 2013, p. 245). Echoing this claim, Manners argues that 'methods based on joint ownership, cooperation and dialogue in principle hedge against the dangers of imposing allegedly "universal" norms through sheer power and against the needs and desires of local populations in third countries. These methods are supposed to allow for and are driven by motivations which are empowering others' (Manners, 2006).

Following the unexpected Arab uprisings in 2011, the European Union itself re-committed to ‘switch to a listening mode’ that would take more seriously into consideration local voices in the different states of its Southern neighbourhood (Balfour, 2012, p.30). This recognition of the need to move from a ‘preaching mode’ to a ‘listening mode’, at least as far as the Mediterranean neighbourhood is concerned, is an additional testament to the fact that the EU is cautious and well-aware of the way through which it ‘talks’ with its partner countries. This aspect is important because research has shown that diplomatic style, as a diplomatic trade mark, contributes to international identity and diplomatic reputation (e.g. treaty-drafting skill, mediation, quiet diplomacy, and more) (Barston, 2006, p. 37).

#### **4.2.2. Dialogue as the DNA of the European Union**

Going a step further, *more than simply being a privileged foreign policy tool or a distinct interaction style*, it has been argued that the practice of dialogue is even part of the EU’s DNA, i.e., that it is constitutive of the EU. This argument relates to the reasons behind the EU’s pronounced preference for this mode of action. For staunch critics of NPE like Robert Kagan (2003), the EU systematically resorts to diplomacy less by choice but because of its structural weakness. For other scholars, however, the practice of dialogue in the European context is much more than a default option – indeed, it forms an integral part of the EU’s DNA (Mitzen, 2006). Even policy-makers like to use this powerful metaphor to describe the inherent importance of dialogue for the EU. In the words of the former president of the EU Commission Barroso, ‘collective bargaining and consultation are part of Europe’s DNA’ (Barroso in Andor, 2013). In fact, before being used as a foreign policy tool, dialogue has first and foremost been the *modus operandi* of the European Union and of its constituent member states. Historically, it is through an intense process of dialogue that Europe eventually became a peaceful continent. In the words of Fernandez Sola (2009, p. 90), ‘Europe only was able to reach a durable peace through dialogue, mutual understanding, institutionalized cooperation, and through processes of bargaining and sometimes deliberative reasoning typical of a continental “multi-perspectival” polity’. In its external relations, the EU acts consistently and also puts a great emphasis on processes of cooperation and interaction that occur at multiple levels and across the whole range of policy areas. Commenting on the transatlantic relations, a Commission official explained that ‘the logic of the New Transatlantic Agenda (i.e. institutionalizing the transatlantic relationship) is similar to the thinking behind the EU. If we are constantly talking, it is less likely that we will be fighting’ (Steffenson, 2005, p. 47).

The fact that the EU particularly cherishes this practice of dialogue is clearly shown by the way in which EU diplomats talk about it. For instance, one EEAS official highlighted that ‘generally, in the EU, we are more talking because of a “talking mindset”: having a dialogue is important because of its symbolic value and everything ...’ (Interview no. 23). Similarly, a high-level EU diplomat conveyed the idea that the United States very much dictates the intensity of the dialogue, while the EU unconditionally cherishes the practice of dialogue: ‘The intensity of our conversations in all of these dialogues depends on the extent to which the US thinks that they can use the EU to further its political objectives by having the dialogues with the EU. I’d like to say that we look at things in the same way – in other words that we step up or step down our commitment to certain dialogues in light of our priorities, but we do tend to see the utility of maintaining a constant dialogue with a largest part of the US administration’ (Interview no. 32).

### 4.3. The European Union: a challenged and contested actor that constantly needs to prove its worth

In addition to having an institutional identity of a complex kind, the EU must face a myriad of internal and external challenges that make the recognition of its institutional identity (in relevance terms) very important.

Internally, the relevance of the European Union is regularly challenged both by the wider public of European citizens and by its constituent members, i.e., the 28 Member states. In fact, one of the challenges the EU must deal with relates to its legitimacy, not least due to the growing public aversion to the European Union and/or European integration (Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, & De Vreese, 2011; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, 2010; McLaren, 2007; Vimont, 2017). The rise of ‘Euro-scepticism’ in recent decades has been notable and it is now widely acknowledged that integration efforts hinge on support from EU citizens, who are increasingly sceptical about and disapproving of the EU (Hobolt, 2009). In this respect, the words of the former European Commission president, Romano Prodi, still resonate today and describe well ‘ordinary people’s widespread fears of a union that is allegedly not properly subject to democratic accountability, is centralist in nature, and includes very opaque decision-making structures’ (Prodi, 2002). According to a recent white paper by the EU Commission on the future of Europe, dated March 2017, ‘around a third of citizens trust the EU today, when about half of Europeans did so ten years ago’ (European Commission, 2017f). Arguably, this disenchantment and lack of popular support for the European venture

make the institutional identity of the EU more fragile and exacerbates its needs to be recognised as relevant vis-à-vis the outside world.

The ambivalent relationship of the European Member States constitutes an additional challenge for the institution's projection of a strong institutional identity. The fact that member states often stand hypocritically vis-à-vis the EU by either support and/or scapegoating the institution(s) does not facilitate the creation of a homogeneous image that is supported by all European actors involved. This duality is not only used by third countries, such as China, which might adopt the 'divide and conquer' strategy, but also by, for instance, the Big Three which will use the EU channels when it is in their advantage (Balfour, 2015, p. 3). The wide-spread practice of 'blame-avoidance' towards the EU by member states does not make the situation any better (Bickerton, 2016). Furthermore, the fact that Europe sometimes 'fail to act in unison, singing like a choir from the same hymn sheet and does appears more like a cacophony of different voices cancelling each other out' projects the image of an actor that is neither unified nor effective in foreign and security affairs (Christiansen & Jorgensen, 2011). The disunity among the Member States in foreign affairs was well exemplified in the 2003 Iraq War (Menon, 2004), or more recently in the case of intervention in Libya (Marchi, 2017). For Orenstein and Kelemen (2017), the current Ukrainian crisis shows that the EU is not yet able 'to rein in Russia's Trojan horses within the EU'; the EU still lacks the power to prevent member states from pursuing divergent pro-Russian policies, despite the strong sanctions regime that has been put in place. In addition to this specific problem of disaggregation, another trend has been observed in recent years, corresponding to a 'mini-lateral drift' running the risks of fragmentation in the long-term (Balfour, 2015).

On the international scene, the EU has traditionally had difficulties translating its huge economic and financial clout into effective foreign policy. This has led Ginsberg to define accurately the EU's performance as a foreign policy actor as 'an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm' with limited influence in world politics (Ginsberg, 2001). There is indeed no doubt today that the EU has clearly acquired the status of economic power: The institution's economic power and performance in the areas of trade and finance have warranted the EU the label of 'formidable trade power' and 'powerful bargainer in the multilateral trading system' (Debaere, 2014; Meunier & Nicolaïdis, 2006; Senti, 2002). As Nicolaïdis and Meunier (2006, p. 907) explain, 'the sheer size of the single European market and its more than forty-year experience of negotiating international trade agreements have made the EU the most powerful trading bloc in the world'. More recently, it is its global regulatory influence that has expanded, as testified by studies referring to the EU as the 'global pacesetter' in regulation

(Buck, 2007) and as the world's 'regulatory superpower' (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, p. 71). Moreover, the EU and its member states are the world's leading aid donor, reaching €75.5 billion in 2016 (European Commission, 2017c).

Yet this economic clout has hardly been translated into foreign policy influence – and that is why the EU remains a 'partially-developed' international actor in the field of security (Ginsberg, 2001, p.9; Lehne, 2017). In spite of recent progress in foreign and defence policy, the persistence of institutional challenges hampers the EU from becoming a fully-fledged foreign policy actor. As such, its performance remains contested in this policy area, making its needs for recognition more acute in this field. In his famous article, 'The capability-expectations gap', Hill pointed to the unrealistic expectations put on the EU's role in the world and its incapacity to meet them successfully due to its actual capabilities in terms of *its ability to agree, its resources, and the instruments at its disposal* (Hill, 1993, p. 315). More than 20 years later, the EU's capability-expectations gap has narrowed considerably, with remarkable improvements in terms of resource availability and instruments at his disposal. Therefore, for Toje (2008), the heart of the problem lies not so much in the lack of material capabilities but rather in the so-called 'consensus-expectations gap'. According to him, if Member States sanction action, they do so by 'cherry-picking' those issues where consensus can be achieved, rather than where intervention might be most effective or necessary. This line of argumentation relates to the issue of the 'lowest common denominator' that can possibly be achieved in a situation where member states have typically different interests at stake. In other words, the lack of consensus among the different European actors – in particular the member states – when it comes to foreign policy decisions constitutes an institutional hurdle that continues to hamper the EU's performance world-wide.

The EU has also been frequently criticised for its lack of coherence in the management of its external relations, particularly when it comes to the implementation of sanctions or development aid (Carbone, 2008; Portela & Raube, 2012, p. 11). In a similar vein, the ambiguous application of the principle of conditionality has engendered strong accusations by third countries, which have reproached the EU for having double standards in the execution of its foreign policy, such as the enlargement process for instance (Grabbe, 2002). It is noteworthy that EU diplomats are well-aware of this problem and use the dialogue to counter these claims. For instance, in the words of an EEAS diplomat, 'We do have a human rights dialogue with the United States in order to show to certain countries, like Russia or China that we have no double standards when it comes to the respect of human rights. We engage in such a dialogue with our allies as well' (Interview no. 24). For Juncos (2017), the new operating principle of

EU foreign policy – called ‘principled pragmatism’ and detailed in the EU Global Strategy – is likely to generate more criticisms of double standards, as it practically encourages the EU to promote democracy and human rights while simultaneously doing so on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, the wide-spread description of the EU as a ‘military worm’ deserves more attention. While certain observers tend to minimise the progress made by the EU on this front (Zielonka, 2011, p. 290), the EU clearly aims at strengthening its military/defence capabilities and seeks to have these achievements recognised by others. In fact, over the past decade, the EU has acquired military capability and has become involved in several military/civil-military operations around the world. There has also been a proliferation of various EU military institutions, such as its Military Committee, Military Staff, and the European defence agency. While it is true that these institutions remain small and individual EU missions have involved only small contingents of soldiers (Zielonka, 2011, p. 290), the more recent signature of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), described by the President of the EU commission Juncker as the ‘Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty’ (European Commission, 2017d), the increase to the European Defence Agency’s (EDA) budget, and Coordinated Annual Reviews of Defence (CARD) are all testaments to the fact that the EU aims at identifying potential for synergies and reinforcing the defence cooperation of its member states. The creation of the so-called Defence Fund represents a historic push by the EU into a new phase of cooperation on military and security policy (Barigazzi & Cooper, 2017).

In a recent study, Youngs (2014) examines the legacy of the Eurozone crisis and its potential implications for the EU’s international role (or what he calls, ‘the external spillover of the crisis’). His nuanced assessment points to different trends at work. On the one hand, the crisis undermines even further the EU’s foreign policy capacity, tarnishes its normative power, and compels some Member States to focus on their own national-level policies. On the other hand, it is right to see this as an opportunity to enhance European cooperation, develop greater international ambition, and deepen the commitment to the values of the liberal world order. In addition to the changes in the field of CSDP, the recent European Global Strategy (June 2016) repositions the EU as a more pragmatic actor, willing and capable to face internal and external threats. All these changes make the recognition of the EU’s institutional identity as a relevant actor in foreign policy even more challenging.

## 4.4. EU-US relations: a dialogue between equals or between “unequal equals?”

### 4.4.1. An asymmetric relationship from day one

In the specific context of the transatlantic relations, the quest for recognition of the EU as an equal power is all the more pronounced due to asymmetric military power and security dependence of the EU vis-à-vis the United States. In fact, since the birth of the European integration project, the massive imbalance in power and the strategic dependency by the Europeans on the Americans to ensure their security have become fundamental features of the transatlantic relationship (Cox, 2012, p. 72). This has remained a constant feature in the backdrop of the remarkable transformation of Western European countries and of the EEC. Throughout decades of competition and cooperation (Smith, 1998; 2005), European institutions have tried to impose themselves as a relevant, distinct, and independent international actor. The desire to anchor institutional identity as an equal power has been reflected, for instance, in the emphasis put on the concept of ‘equality’ in many of the formal interactions between the two political entities: already under Kennedy, for example, a discourse articulated around ‘the transatlantic partnership of equals’ and the ‘declaration of interdependence’ emerged. This idea was taken up again in the introduction of the Transatlantic Declaration of 1990, stressing ‘a partnership on an equal footing’ and noting the European Community’s ‘own identity’ in economic and monetary matters, in foreign policy, and in the domain of security (Burghardt, 2013). Similarly, in the 1998 Bonn Declaration, both sides explicitly committed themselves to a ‘full and equal partnership’ in economic, political, and security affairs, unequivocally conveying the aspirations of the EU to be recognised as an equal of the United States.

This desire of the EU to be perceived as an equal of the United States has a special significance in the transatlantic context. In fact, the identity of the ‘recogniser’ is particularly important: depending on ‘who is the recogniser’, the whole process can have more or less significance. By introducing the concept of ‘circles of recognition’, Ringmar emphasises that some actors’ recognition matters more than others, particularly those considered to be friends (Ringmar, 2008). Applied to this study, it is vital for the EU as a whole (and for its distinct institutions) to have its peculiar identity recognised by the United States, as a fellow democracy and powerful traditional alliance-partner. Yet despite this equalising discourse, some asymmetries do persist across different policy areas, as mentioned in the sub-section below.

#### **4.4.2. The EU as the economic equal and politically “would-be equal” of the US**

Standing on equal footing is not a given: distinguishing between the EU’s performance in the economic realm versus the political foreign policy fields is necessary so order to better grasp the intricacies of the transatlantic relationship. In economic terms, it has largely been accepted that the United States and the EU are now equals, as reflected in the description of their relationship as ‘a partnership of equals’ (Smith & Steffenson, 2005). Similarly, Elgström (2007, p. 954) argues that ‘the growing economic presence of the European Union has ensured that *in many respects* it can be regarded as a great power rivalling the US’ [emphasis added]. These different aspects include: (1) the ability to compete with the United States in international trade negotiations; (2) the size of their respective internal markets and their shares of world’s trade in goods and services; and (3) their ability to lead international regulatory governance.

First, the EU’s capacity to catch up with the United States economically is partly due to the historical process of European integration that has been first and foremost focused on internal trade liberalisation and external trade policy. As a result, the sheer size of Europe’s single market combined with the collective character of European trade policy have enabled the EU to become a true rival to the United States in international trade negotiations beginning in the 1960s. As Meunier explains, until the birth of the European Community in 1958, the United States was the unchallenged hegemon in world trade. But the first two multilateral trade negotiations in which the Common Market participated as a single entity – the Dillon and Kennedy Rounds of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in the 1960s – immediately established Europe as a rival to the United States in terms of market power and negotiating leverage. As the EU has become more coherent in the field of trade, it has been in a better position to compete with the United States (Wright, 2011).

Secondly, the size of the EU’s internal market – specifically, the market access that can be bargained away for both foreign direct investors and exporters from the rest of the world – is a key source of power that allows it to compete economically with the United States (Meunier & Nicolaïdis, 2006, p. 908). Indeed, the economy of the 28-member EU is equal to that of the United States. While American per capita income is higher, in terms of human capital, technology, and exports, the EU is very much an economic peer (Nye, 2016). More specifically, in 2016, the EU share of the world trade in goods was 15.1 percent compared to 14.4 percent for the United States and the EU share of the world trade in services was 22.6 percent compared to 17 percent for the United States. Overall, the EU’s share in world

trade in goods and services was 16.8 percent in 2016 while the US's share was 15 percent (European Commission, 2017a, p. 24).

Third, equality has also been achieved in international regulatory governance. According to Evenett and Stern (2011, p. 83), both market size and institutional characteristics have made the EU and the United States leading and roughly equal powers in global as well as bilateral regulatory cooperation. For certain observers, the EU is even on the verge of taking the lead in this field and in shaping world standards at a speed that may leave the United States lagging behind. As 'the EU-linked trade agreements are piling up (i.e. recently with Vietnam, Canada and Japan and soon with Mercosur), the US is retreating from the world stage with Trump's decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and to re-negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement' (Hanke, 2017).

Yet the challenge remains in the political and military realm, where there is a persistent imbalance/asymmetry between the two actors. For Serfaty (2005, p. 13), 'Europe stands as a power in the world, with capabilities that are competitive in most dimensions of power except for military force. Lacking the political unity and military capabilities for action when necessary, Europe is not, or not yet, the world power that it claims to be'. To give a rough idea of the relative American dominance in the military realm, 'collectively, NATO Europe spent about 45 percent of what the United States does on defense. But even that disparity understates the difference' (Gordon & Shapiro, 2004, p. 57). Certainly, the EU sometimes has a comparative advantage in certain fields of cooperation compared to the United States; this is true when it comes to soft security issues such as conflict post-management and relations with Africa and more (Smith & Steffenson, 2005). In spite of the EU's expertise in these areas, however, the EU is still struggling to be recognised as an equal actor when it comes to the political-security realm. According to a recent study on the perception of the EU and EU's policies in the United States both at the elite and public opinion levels, the EU is widely seen as a rather effective, coherent, and visible actor in economic terms but less so in the political and security realms (PPMI, 2015; Eliasson, 2010). This point is confirmed by Allesandri (2012, p. 32) for whom a tendency to dismiss or denigrate Europe as a negative model and as the invariably weak partner has acquired a non-negligible dimension in the United States in recent years, particularly so during the Bush administration. By the same token, Serfaty (2005, p. 13) emphasises that some in the United States think that most of Europe is too old, too divided, and too compromised to be relevant; and in those few instances when it may be relevant, such as the war in Iraq, Europe is too hostile, too slow, and too weak to be helpful.

From Bush's stance on 'Old Europe' to the Obama administration's 'new Pacific pivot', the existing European fears about Europe's 'downgrade' have been reinforced with the arrival of Donald Trump in power in January 2017. As journalist Ryan Heath put it, 'while in the past American policy-makers may have wondered: who do I call when I want to speak to Europe?' in reference to Kissinger's famous locution, US President Trump today wonders, 'Why should I call Europe at all?' (Heath, 2017). The fact that Trump sees Europe as a 'sick and ageing agent' on the world scene rather than a privileged partner in the liberal world order (Bednarczyk & Whitworth, 2016) has led Federica Mogherini in her first visit to Washington to re-state explicitly the fundamental importance of the partnership between the United States and the EU. As she outlined, 'it's the *first time* that my visit to Washington focuses on the bilateral relations rather than crises we have around us – this is telling us the new era we are entering in (...) If it is necessary to recall the need for a friendship to be in place, the added value of the EU to the US, we are ready to do so' [emphasis added] (Mogherini, 2017b). The emphasis on the necessity to remind the United States of the value of the transatlantic relationship, which was supposedly taken-for-granted, indicates that the quest for recognition of the EU vis-à-vis the United States is still very much relevant and that the processes of anchoring institutional identity during the dialogues might be even more visible. This is also the perception that many diplomats have when it comes to the current American administration: 'We need to affirm even more forcefully our legitimacy vis-à-vis the United States under the leadership of Donald Trump who regularly questions the value of interacting with the European Union' (Interview no. 24 and no. 23).

Finally, it is fair to say that the EU faces a 'reluctant/difficult recogniser'. The mixed perceptions held by the American people and elites relate to the wide-spread US self-image as a 'superpower' that sees itself as a global leader. In this scenario, the EU is imagined as a trusted partner, with similar values, but not the leading international actor. The role of an international leader resides – in the American public and elite perceptions – with the United States only. The US worldview, which has traditionally been inward-looking, is often characterised with a low interest in the outside world, the EU/ Europe included (report PPMI, 2015). This insularity of the worldview also limits the consideration of EU ideas, experiences, and achievements, and as such makes the recognition of the EU's institutional identity more challenging.

## Conclusion

This chapter has exposed the challenging features which makes the EU's recognition needs in terms of institutional identity particularly pressing. First, the *sui generis* nature of the EU and its constant institutional evolution coupled with the lack of a shared vision regarding its 'final destination' constitute hurdles to reach a stable institutional identity in the first place. It makes its projection and recognition to the outside world even more challenging. Being in constant flux only reinforces the difficulty to project and to be recognised by outsiders. Another distinctive feature of the EU's institutional identity relates to the peculiar type of power it exerts – i.e. normative power. It does so mainly through the practice of dialogue, that constitutes both one of the most privileged foreign policy tools of the EU and a strong component of its identity. The EU's attachment to this practice is thus sometimes difficult to fathom by others – who like to depict the EU as a 'talking head' without understanding the importance it attributes to this practice. Beyond this inherent complexity of the EU's construct, internal and external challenges make the recognition conundrum even more salient. While the EU does not internally benefit from the unconditional support of the European citizens nor from its constituent member states, it has also to prove externally that it is a relevant international player in the realm of foreign policy. Finally, the chapter has shown that these concerns resonate strongly in the transatlantic context. The special historical circumstances in which the European project was born created an asymmetry in the transatlantic relationship from the very beginning. While the EU and the United States are now widely considered on an equal footing economically, that is not yet the case when it comes to the political and security realms where the EU is arguably not yet the equal of the United States. As a result, the EU takes advantage of any single opportunity (including the multi-levelled dialogues established with the United States) to redress this situation and gets its institutional identity recognised and anchored. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of the practice of dialogue conducted by the EU across time.

## Chapter 5 – From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe: an historical review and mapping of dialogues between the EU and the world

While the European Union is well known for its marked preference for diplomacy, the remarkable growth of different kinds of dialogues covering an ever-increasing number of topics with a multitude of actors is not as well documented and hence less appreciated. The fact that the European Council regularly issues documents to EU Delegations around the world with instructions on how to better manage the multiplicity of political dialogues is yet another testament to this exponential increase of dialogues (Council of the European Union, 2008). However, capturing in a succinct and comprehensive way the complexity of the practice of dialogues conducted by the EU is admittedly not an easy task. Ideally, a typology of dialogues would consist of defining exactly how many dialogues of each sort formally exist today and how big the phenomenon is in real terms. It would require data as to the degree of representation of the actors involved (ranging from high level to non-official actors, such as civil society actors), the issue areas discussed, the size of the delegation attending the meetings, their frequency, and duration. Such a mapping exercise of *all* EU dialogues with the rest of the world in *all* its variants is a titanic and challenging work as the form, level, and frequency of contact with different countries is constantly changing. Therefore, rather than tracking every single change in the format of the dialogues, the aim of this chapter is to provide an in-depth analysis of the development of this entire ‘dialogue system’ (Monar, 1997, p.272) from the early days of the European Economic communities through today. The analysis revolves around three main axes: (1) time-wise, it follows a chronological order, stressing the different stages of the EC/EU institutional development as these have direct consequences on the conduct of external relations; (2) issue areas covered by the different types of dialogues; and (3) the initiation of the dialogue, looking at which actor requested to engage in these dialogues in the first place (the EC/EU or third country/regional institution).

The chapter identifies key turning points in the development of this system of dialogues. While in the early days of the EEC, the dialogues set up were mainly functional and served to monitor and administer the trade agreements signed between the EEC and third countries, the situation started to change with the launching of the EPC in the 1970s. The two following decades of EPC (1970s and 1980s) saw the proliferation of political dialogues in a non-

systematic and pragmatic manner, with the request coming mainly from third countries that saw in the economic strength of the EEC/EC an attractive partner and the EEC/EC initiating dialogues with regional institutions. With the Treaty of Maastricht, a third phase in the development of the dialogue system began, leading to an exponential increase in the number of dialogues enshrined in a more rigid institutional framework. At this stage, the EU clearly took the lead in the initiation of these dialogues by making ‘political dialogue’ a part and parcel of most of its agreements signed with non-EU countries and by setting up new kinds of dialogues covering a whole new range of issues including human rights and sectorial issues.

To begin with, the chapter clarifies how the core concept of ‘dialogue’ has been used in EU parlance. Then, following a chronological approach, it traces the establishment of dialogues as a key component of the relations between the EC/EU and the rest of the world over three distinct periods: starting from the first days of the European Communities when its external relations were confined to the economic realm, moving on to the two decades of existence of the European Political Cooperation (EPC), and finally looking at the 1990s and beyond. Last but not least, the chapter will conclude by giving a ‘visual snapshot’ of the system of dialogues as it stands today (February 2018).

## 5.1. The notion of dialogue in EU parlance

Before engaging in the overview of the EU dialogues with the world, it is first necessary to clarify how the term ‘dialogue’ has been used in EU parlance so far and to point to the kind of dialogues that this study is precisely investigating.

As noted previously, we need to distinguish between ‘dialogue’ as a broad generic term for ‘partnership’ and a narrower definition of dialogue, corresponding to the specific instance of direct encounter involving face-to-face communication between participants in an institutionalised framework. Almost automatically, Dialogues (with a big D, as a broad framework for cooperation) are themselves composed of, or prescribe the setup of, many dialogues (with a small d) fulfilling different functions and covering various policy areas. In EU parlance, the term ‘dialogue’ is used in these two different contexts: while the so-called ‘regional dialogues’, like the Euro-Arab dialogue, refer to broader frameworks of cooperation with grouping of states, the terms ‘political dialogue’, ‘economic’, or ‘sectorial dialogues’ designate more specific instances of face-to-face interaction in the form of actual meetings that are themselves supposed to be the motor of cooperation and the cement of the relationship.

The agreements signed between the EU and third parties are useful as they provide details on the contours of the framework of cooperation, its content, and procedures. They also generally prescribe instructions as to the specific convening of ‘dialogues’ (or regular meetings), understood in a narrower sense. In this respect, one needs to further differentiate between two sorts of institutionalised face-to-face interactions often specified in the EU agreements with third countries.

First, there are dialogues specifically set up to manage the agreement and administer the relationship. These dialogues are created within the framework of the agreement and allow the parties to widen their relationship if they wish to do so. According to Flaesh-Mougin (1990, p. 29), ‘these joint institutions represent a constant in the external policy of the Community in so far as all the global agreements and even certain important sectorial agreements provide for them’. Yet these dialogues and their modes of functioning vary in terms of composition, frequency of meetings, internal organisation, and powers set under the agreements (Ibid.). In the transatlantic context, it is the Senior Level Group and the NTA task force that help drive, coordinate, organise, monitor, and implement the agenda of the EU-US summits (Steffenson, 2005, p. 58). It is also in these high-level meetings that ‘history-decisions’ are taken and the scope for cooperation defined (Ibid).

The second kind of dialogues covers matters of policy substance and are less administrative in nature. These dialogues deal with precise policy options and provide for important input to the upper level of dialogues as policy-shapers and setters (Steffenson, 2005). They can occur at different levels of representation and treat of economy and trade, political and security issues, cultural and social affairs and the like. For instance, many agreements with third countries feature the term ‘political dialogue’. In the terminology and practice of the EU, ‘political dialogue’ covers major subjects of concern in the field of foreign and security policy. Depending upon the partner country, this may pertain to issues of conflict and crisis management, weapons of mass destruction, and political values such as Human Rights and democracy (Emerson, 2007, p. 9).

## 5.2. Historical Review of the EU dialogues with the world

### 5.2.1. Pre-EPC: regular meetings to monitor trade agreements

First of all, it is important to underline that proper common European cooperation on matters of foreign policy emerged only in the early 1970s with the launching of the European Political Cooperation. Prior to this initiative, the European Communities’ external relations were

confined to the economic realm. In fact, the EEC had exclusive competence on external economic relations and concluded trade agreements with third countries as defined by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, mainly providing a schedule for lifting trade restrictions on imports to the EU on a non-reciprocal basis, with no reference at all to any political issues (Nuttall, 2000, p. 87). In 1971, following a judgment by the ECJ that interpreted broadly the powers of the European Commission, trade agreements enlarged their scope to include ‘cooperation’ on other issues under Community competence such as transport and agricultural policy: this development gave birth to the so-called ‘trade and cooperation agreements’ (Smith & Webber, 2008, p. 76). A cursory examination of these types of agreements signed in the early days of the European Communities suggests that the only provision featuring a ‘dialogical configuration’ corresponds to the decision to establish ‘a joint committee’ to monitor the functioning of the agreement and to take stock of the progress made, bringing together representatives from the EC and from the governments of third countries. The direct contacts were, however, very limited: this mixed/joint committee was supposed to convene only once a year or more under extraordinary circumstances.<sup>8</sup> The regular meetings set up in the framework of the trade agreements were therefore functional and did not have any wider significance in terms of the EC’s role in the world.

### **5.2.2. EPC 1969-1990: “let’s talk politics in a non-binding flexible format”**

During the two decades of European Political Cooperation, an interesting trend emerged, namely the establishment of political dialogues with a growing number of states and regional organisations – based upon pragmatism, flexibility, and adaptability (Pilgaard 1993, p. 103). As there was at the time ‘no philosophy about how to organize relations with third countries, member states invented whatever procedures seemed most appropriate as each case arose’ in an *ad hoc* manner (Nuttall, 1992, p. 282). As a result, a multitude of formats and regular consultation procedures have arisen over the years (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 162), with no homogenous institutional set up recommended to conduct these talks on political issues. Over these two decades, the EPC engaged in regional diplomacy taking the lead in the initiation of group-to-group dialogues. When it comes to dialogues with individual countries, the EC became a particularly sought-after interlocutor in the 1980s with more and more countries requesting to engage in regular political dialogues. To reflect this shift, this section is subdivided between the first and the second decade of the existence of the EPC.

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance Article 6 of the Trade Agreement signed between the EC and Israel in 1964 (EC, 1964).

### 5.2.2.1. The 1970s: Establishment of the first political consultations with the world

The launching of the EPC did not generate clear provisions regarding the institutionalisation of dialogues with third countries on political matters. The EPC's goals, as formulated in the Luxembourg Report (1970), were actually quite modest: they entailed regular consultations, coordination of national positions (harmonisation of views), and where possible common action. The first objective for the member states in this endeavour was 'to provide themselves with ways and means of harmonizing their views in the field of international politics' (Luxembourg Report, 1970). As Smith (2014) rightly observes, the founding document of the EPC did not actually state what member states intended to do together in foreign policy in terms of action directed towards the external world. At this early stage, European member states were mainly concerned with setting out the basic modalities of cooperation, coordination, and possible collective action among *themselves* and consequently did not invest much thought on the actual conduct of the relations with the rest of the world.

The absence of provisions on the effective conduct of external relations persisted with the first codification of EPC practice in 'the second report on the strengthening of European Political Cooperation in matters of Foreign Policy', also known as the 1973 Copenhagen Report. While a few qualitative changes were codified concerning internal EPC procedures, the Copenhagen report did not provide any guidance regarding the conduct of the Twelve's relations with the outside world in the 1970s (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 163). After all, only four years after the launching of the EPC, the *acquis politique* was still to a great extent immature, rendering difficult a more audacious and commonly agreed line of action.

Yet the initial absence of clear provisions for the conduct of external relations did not prevent the *ad hoc* emergence of some remarkable dialogues (as partnerships) with a political dimension with a few countries and regional organisations. This political dimension is often referred to in the literature as 'political dialogue' or as 'regular political consultations'. What is worth emphasising at this point is that unlike the economic agreements signed in the EC framework, the political dialogues established between European member states and third countries/regional groupings were not enshrined in any formal binding treaty basis. Indeed, the EPC had no legal basis until the Single European Act (SEA) (Dehousse & Weiler, 1991). The agreement with the third state concerned could take the form of an informal arrangement between the presidency and the third state or emerge out of a common understanding through an exchange of letters. Even a joint declaration at the end of a meeting could suffice to establish a political dialogue (Flaesch-Mouglin, 1990, p. 30; Monar, 1997, p. 264). These arrangements

committed both sides only to more or less regular contacts at one or several levels – not to any common political position – and even the commitments made in respect to contacts could be handled flexibly according to interests and time constraints. Also, each dialogue could easily be intensified through additional *ad hoc* meetings, an increase in the number of regular meetings, or meetings at higher level – or alternatively, ‘frozen’ or ‘suspended’ with relative ease (Monar, 1997, p. 266). Thus, one can safely argue that at that stage, the institutionalisation of the dialogues was quite limited: the arrangements were usually confined to a few commitments on the *regularity* of meetings (every 12 or 18 months)<sup>9</sup>, their location (alternating between the two entities), and their level of representation (in general, at the level of foreign ministers with a representative from the Commission). In addition, the subject matter of the discussions was rarely fixed (Flaesch-Mougin, 1990, p.30), contrary to future human rights dialogues for instance, in which clear items had to be systematically discussed (European Council, 2001). In what follows, I provide greater details regarding the first interlocutors of the EC in the 1970s with an emphasis on the initiation of the political dialogue and the political topics discussed in its framework.

In the very first years, member states in the framework of EPC talked mainly to ‘friendly and allied states’ (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 166). From the launching of the EPC onwards, the first political contacts that the EC established with third countries can be divided into three main categories: (1) the countries that were formally recognised as potential members of the Community due to their geographical proximity (Norway, Turkey and Greece); (2) the United States; and (3) some NATO partners, such as Canada, Denmark, Iceland, and Portugal (Ibid).

First, the Six gave their attention to the countries that could expect in the near future to become members of the Community. Almost from the beginning, the four candidate countries were closely associated with EPC (Nuttall, 1992, p. 283). For instance, in the case of Turkey, arrangements were made in 1972 for the Presidency to inform the Turkish Foreign Minister of developments in Political Co-operation. The bi-annual meetings of the EEC-Turkey Association Council was used for this purpose as well (Ibid). Second, at an early stage in the development of the EPC, relations with the United States came to the fore, making this dialogue one of the oldest. According to Nuttall (1992, p.284), the first occasion on which policies –

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<sup>9</sup> The issue of regularity here is primordial as it is a clear indicator of the institutionalization of the dialogue (to be differentiated from *ad hoc* contacts or normal diplomatic relations).

rather than geography – obliged the Nine to give thought to the form of their dialogue with a foreign country was in 1973-74, following Kissinger’s ‘year of Europe’ speech. The EC and the United States had already established normal diplomatic relations in 1953. However, Kissinger’s complaint about the fact that he did not know whom to call to get the common European voice, combined with significant international events, prompted the United States to pressure the EC to institutionalise a proper dialogue. It was a very sensitive area because of European apprehension of potential US domination, so this pressure mainly resulted in irregular contact between the EPC and the United States, a constant dissatisfaction with Europe’s refusal to consult, and additional US attempts to get the most of its normal diplomatic and political contacts with the individual member states (Pilgaard, 1993, p. 105). In the 1980s, the situation incrementally developed against the backdrop of tensions between the two actors, leading to a new structure of dialogue in 1986 at the request of the Europeans this time, ultimately culminating with the declaration on Trans-Atlantic relations of November 1990, also named ‘the Transatlantic Love Letter’ (Nuttall, 1992, p. 286). Last but not least, another group of ‘friendly countries’ with which the EPC started to develop structured diplomatic relations at a relatively early stage corresponds to the NATO partners (Regelsberger 1991, p. 167).

The first decade of the EPC also marked the first steps in regional diplomacy with the launching of the first group-to-group dialogues (or regional grouping dialogues)<sup>10</sup>, the three most prominent ones being the Euro-Arab Dialogue, the EEC/EC-ACP relations institutionalised by the 1975 Lomé Convention and the EEC/EC-ASEAN Dialogue. As Nuttall explains (1992, p. 288), the dialogues with regional groupings mainly came at the initiative of the then Twelve in response to specific international events but also because the Twelve saw themselves particularly well suited for this type of dialogue due to their own institutional experience. Moreover, in a world showing a growing tendency towards regionalisation, the EEC/EC realised that inter-regional cooperation was the best way to deal with global interdependence and at the same time to secure a greater consistency in the relationship to these countries than one would expect from bilateral relations (Regelsberger, 1990a, p. 11).

### *The Euro-Arab Dialogue: the first “group to group” dialogue*

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<sup>10</sup> Regarding the definition of ‘group-to-group dialogues’, I follow Regelsberger (1991, p.14): groups can be either deliberately organised to play an international role (e.g. the GCC or ASEAN) or loosely tied together for the sole purpose of dealing with the EC, like in the case of the ACP group.

The Euro-Arab Dialogue was the first regional dialogue established by the EEC/EC vis-à-vis the Arab countries which formed one block due to the Palestinian representation issue. Established in 1974 on the wake of the oil shock between the member states in the context of EPC and the 22 members of the Arab League, the Euro-Arab Dialogue has constituted a very particular form of dialogue from an institutional perspective. In fact, official EEC/EC documents placed the EAD in the section of the Community's external relations while also referring to it in part on EPC. Most of the members of the Arab League were previously linked on a contractual basis with the European Community, whether through the EC's global Mediterranean Policy, the Lomé Convention, or the Cooperation Agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, dealing mainly with economic issues. Yet the commitment to cooperate in the EAD lacked a solid legal framework (i.e. lack of any treaty basis) (Regelsberger, 1990b, p. 63). It has therefore been described by the participants of the dialogue as an 'informal political-economic dialogue', conducted at both the Community and EPC level (Regelsberger, 1990b, p. 57). The EAD is also interesting as far as its content is concerned. Indeed, after long and difficult negotiations revolving around the Arab quest and European reluctance to incorporate a strong political dimension to the dialogue, it was finally agreed to complement the initially limited approach and to establish a political dimension – almost 10 years later (Ibid., p. 60-64). Yet due to the staunch reluctance of some European Members – notably, the UK – to sit together with representatives of governments involved in terrorist activities, group-to-group conferences at ministerial level were to be held only in exceptional cases while the regular dialogue should be conducted with restricted high-level participation (Regelsberger, 1990b, p. 62). As to the composition of the Ministerial delegations, the meetings were to be held by the full representation of the 22 members of the Arab League and by the Troika for the European side. Besides the thorny issue of the existence and substance of the political dialogue, other deliberative bodies were created in the framework of the EAD, namely the General Commission and more than 50 working groups and sub-committees dealing with non-political issues (Ibid. p 62-63).

*EEC/EC-ACP countries: adding a political dimension to an exclusively economic dialogue*

Since 1975 the EC has had a close contractual relationship with the now 68 ACP countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific in the framework of the Lomé Convention.<sup>11</sup> The dialogue with the ACP countries had both an economic and political dimension. The political

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<sup>11</sup> Beforehand, these states were linked with the EC through the Association Agreements of Yaundé I and II (1963 and 1969) and of Arusha (1968-1969) (Regelsberger, 1990a, p. 4).

cooperation started only from 1988 and referred to human rights and the fight against the Apartheid. Institutional arrangements were put into place so that discussions could take place in joint ACP-EC bodies at ministerial, ambassadorial, and parliamentary levels (Schmuck, 1990, p. 50). More specifically, the ACP-EEC/EC Council of Ministers sets guidelines and decides on all matters affecting the framework of cooperation. The Council meets normally once a year alternatively in the EC and in one of the ACP countries. According to Article 269.6, it can institute committees or ad hoc working groups (Schmuck 1990, p.51). The ACP-EC Committee of Ambassadors meets at least twice a year, normally in Brussels. It supports the Council of Ministers and deals with every-day work (Ibid.). Last but not least, the ACP-EC Joint Assembly is composed of one parliamentarian from each ACP country and the same number of members from the European Parliament. It meets twice a year, alternately in the EC and in the ACP and constitutes a forum for the discussions of new ideas (Ibid.). Over time, significant changes have been put forward by the European Union to renew the partnership with the ACP countries. Compared to its predecessor, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) features a deeper and wider political dialogue based notably on Article 8 covering a broad range of topics, most notably the respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law, and good governance (Bossuyt, Rocca, & Lein, 2014).

#### *EEC/EC-ASEAN Dialogue: a success story*

By the end of the 1970s, the EC extended its relations to East Asia, embarking on one of the most successful regional dialogues with ASEAN that became an example for similar arrangements of a political and economic nature. The year 1978 is often referred to as the real date of the birth of this group-to-group dialogue, corresponding to the first ministerial conference between ASEAN and the EC/Nine (Regelsberger, 1988a, p. 253). Two years later, a formal EC-ASEAN Cooperation Agreement, a Joint Statement on Political Issues, and a Joint Declaration on the possibilities of economic and technical cooperation were signed in Kuala Lumpur (Mols, 1990, p. 6). The political dialogue between the EC and ASEAN has been singled out as one of the most extensive, mature, and valued – testified by the numerous fora of dialogue, their high level of representation, frequency of meetings, and the widened scope of meetings dealing with political and security issues (Mols 1990, p.68). The level of familiarity was so high that the German Foreign Minister dramatically suggested that in the ministerial talks between the EC and ASEAN, ‘an outsider could not distinguish whether a Foreign Minister from ASEAN or an EC country was talking’ (ASEAN Committee, 1988). Regarding the content of the discussions, the EC/ASEAN came to talk about East-West

relations, Disarmament and Arms Control, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Southern Africa. Yet one important topic of discussion was missing from the agenda, namely the human rights issue, which had otherwise been a strong factor in other EC-third countries discussions. The reason for the absence of dialogue on this issue deals with the fact that it would have focused the attention on a weak point in practically all ASEAN countries and antagonise the ASEAN countries that were deeply reluctant to let the Europeans interfere in their political internal affairs (Mols 1990, p.73). Yet eventually this thorny issue ended up being addressed at the inter-parliamentary level of dialogue, as the European Parliament – particularly attached to the respect of human rights – did not refrain from raising this sensitive subject and criticising the practice of certain states (Regelsberger, 1988b, p. 263).

#### 5.2.2.2 The 1980s: the EC becomes a “sought after interlocutor”

This decade is characterised by a significant growth in diplomatic contacts between the Twelve and the rest of the world (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 162), materialised in the spectacular proliferation of dialogues (with a political dimension). This happened in the aftermath of both the 1981 London Report and of the Single European Act that led to increased requests from different partners in the world to enter into structured relations with the attractive European Community (Monar 1997, p. 267; Flaesch-Mougin, 1990, p. 30). Using a metaphor to describe this phenomenon, Nutall (1992, p. 282) argued that ‘the trickle of requests for dialogue started earlier became a flood after the London Report of 1981’.

While there was no formal mention of the conduct of the Twelve’s relations with the outside world in the 1970s, the situation began to change slightly over the 1980s. The 1981 London Report, which codified the accretion of procedure since the Copenhagen report, constitutes an important benchmark as explicit reference was made to the actual interaction of the Twelve with the rest of the world. It was the first genuine EPC provision with an ‘outward-looking’ character, i.e. oriented towards the world rather than internally. In fact, article 7 (Part II) of the report is entirely dedicated to the procedures for EPC/Third country contacts. Based on the belief that the intensification of the EPC was turning the Ten into an attractive interlocutor, the Foreign Ministers predicted that ‘third countries will increasingly express the desire to enter into more or less regular contact with them’. Thus, ‘it is important that the Ten should be able to respond effectively to these demands, in particular vis-à-vis countries of special interest to them’ (London Report, 1981). To achieve this aim, the report recommended, that the Presidency could respond to requests from third countries for contacts and organise

meetings with the Troïka<sup>12</sup> or in the margins of EPC ministerial meetings (if necessary and with the previous agreement of the Ten). The limits of this prescription, however, are particularly striking: in fact, it deals only with the very first point of contact between the Ten and third countries, without giving any details on how these contacts should further be developed (from an institutional, legal, and substantial points of view).

An additional institutional change occurred in 1987 with the coming into force of the Single European Act (SEA), which altered the legal status of the EPC and formalised further the existing EPC practice.<sup>13</sup> Until then, the absence of legal foundation of ECP created doubts regarding the obligations and constraints accepted by member states as well as ambiguous relations with community activities and relations (Regelsberger, De Schoutheete de Tervarent, & Wessels, 1997). Focusing on the modalities of the conduct of external political relations with the world, particular attention needs to be paid to Article (30) of the Single European Act of February 1986 detailing the treaty provisions on European co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy. In fact, Article 30(8) specifies that the member states ‘*shall organize a political dialogue* with third countries and regional groupings whenever they deem it necessary’ (emphasis added). It was the first time that the term ‘political dialogue’ appeared in the EC official documents but it remained here again ill-defined: it contains no precise indications either on the procedures or on the content of these political dialogues. There is also a blatant lack of information regarding the conditions under which the EC should agree to enter into such a political dialogue. The phrase ‘when deemed necessary’ is indicative of the great leeway left to the discretion of the member states and thus further encourages an ad-hoc approach to political dialogues. This ambiguity coupled with a high level of demands coming from third countries led to the continuation of a ‘confusion patchwork’ of dialogues in terms of format and substance. (Nuttall, 1992, p. 283).

The implicit invitation formulated in the London Report as well as the reference to ‘political dialogue’ in the SEA were met with a steadily growing number of third countries requesting to enter into regular contacts with EPC (Nuttall, 1992, p. 292). Indeed, after 10 years of intense diplomatic activities taking the form of numerous diplomatic *démarches* and policy statements agreed upon by all members, the EPC started to appear as a valuable partner with which to consult and associate (Regelsberger et al., 1997, p. 3).

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<sup>12</sup> The Troïka consists of the current Presidency and representatives of the preceding and succeeding Presidencies (Pilgaard, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of the changes introduced by the Single European Act (SEA) to the EPC, see Dehousse and Weiler (1991).

From the perspective of third countries, it was worth entering into regular contact with the EC for several reasons. First, in an era of global interdependence, Europe's backing of a foreign policy initiative is regarded as a positive asset by many third countries eager to preserve or even increase their international standing (India or Australia) (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 162). In this sense, they considered advantageous 'to be seen in a formal dialogue with EPC' (Nuttall, 1992, p. 282; Monar, 1997, p. 268). Secondly, those countries that are the target of the Twelve declarations or *démarches* may feel an increased need to enter into some sort of contact with EPC especially when this has involved criticism or condemnation by the EC (Regelsberger, 1991, p. 162). In other words, third countries are keen to know what the then Twelve are thinking and may try to influence their positions in the framework of a dialogue. The multiplications of demands and increased pressure put on the EPC to play a greater role in international politics at a time when the EPC was not fully mature and functional had led some observers to portray EPC as a 'victim of its own success'. In the words of Nuttall, 'the member states found themselves having to run when they would have preferred to walk, and rather sedately' (Nuttall, 1997, p. 20). In the next sub-section, I turn to the practice of political dialogues (or regular consultations) that developed during the 1980s.

In the 1980s, major powers expressed their interest in entering into contact with the member states in the framework of EPC. In 1983, the EC established regular contacts with China, Japan, and India in the form of political consultations in the framework of the EPC at the ministerial level. The political dialogues established with these countries have followed different paths in terms of intensity: in the case of China, for instance, the high-level consultations were suspended for a significant period of time because of the authorities' crackdown on student demonstrations in June 1989 (Pilgaard, 1993, p. 106). On the contrary, the dialogue with Japan has known a constant and steady intensification: starting from *ad hoc* basis political meetings, the European Members and Japan agreed to two annual meetings at ministerial level in the framework of EPC, which further evolved into more regular meetings at the level of Political Directors. The political relationship has gone through an additional level of institutionalisation with the Joint Declaration of 18 July 1991 (Bulletin of the European Communities, 1991, 7-8:109) that committed both sides to annual meetings between the President of the European Council, the president of the Commission and the Prime Minister of Japan (Pilgaard, 1993, p. 106). Finally, the case of India featured a rather difficult start in the development of its political dialogue with the European members. Following the Political Committee's acceptance of the Indian request for regular political talks, a first meeting took place in 1985 at the Ministerial level. Since then, however, contacts have not been as regular

as foreseen (Ibid.) This irregularity in the frequency of the dialogues reflects the varying degree of interests that the European states had in talking with third states. In this regard, it is interesting to recall the peculiar way through which the Chinese, Japanese, and Indian dialogues were put in place. China was the first country to request regular contact with the EC, followed quickly by Japan and India. Due to their rivalry, Japan could not let China improve its ties with the EPC without reacting; the same dynamic was at play behind India's request, aiming at countering the Chinese formalisation of contact with the EPC. On the one hand, this action-reaction phenomenon sheds light on the political value that the dialogues with the EC had already acquired but on the other hand, this delicate situation greatly reduced the EPC's margin for manoeuvre and made it unable to decline India's request (Pilgaard 1993, p. 106). During the same period, regular contacts were also established with some NATO partners, like Canada, but also Australia and the New Zealand, as well as with smaller states (Malta, Cyprus, and Switzerland), which were economically and politically very close to the then Twelve (Regelsberger 1991, p. 173). According to Pilgaard (1993, p. 108), the EU accepted because of factors such as equal treatment, therefore being 'dragged' into a dialogue with these countries to a certain extent. A European Community reinvigorated by the SEA also extended cooperation with the EFTA countries beyond the existing bilateral agreements and opened political consultations with the non-EC members of the Council of Europe in 1983 (Regelsberger, 1990a, p. 5). Besides the multiplication of regular dialogues with third countries, inter-regional cooperation continued and entered an additional remarkable period of growth in the early 1980s (Regelsberger 1988, p. 253).

*The San Jose Dialogue with the Contadora Group: encouraging peaceful conflict resolution*

An important group-to-group dialogue initiated by the EC in the 1980s has been the dialogue with the six Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama). The ongoing economic and social deterioration in Central America coupled with the tendency to consider the Central American crisis as part of the East-West confrontation led the EC to propose a long-term solution to tackle the root problems of these countries (Nuttall, 1997, p. 32; Regelsberger, 1988b, p. 264). The result was the San José Dialogue, launched in 1984 in Costa Rica and composed of both a political and an economic dialogue. The overall agenda of the group-to-group dialogue has varied very little: its main characteristic was the linkage between progress in the intra-regional cooperation and democratisation on the one hand, and the EC's economic commitment to Central America on the other hand (Grabendorff, 1990, p. 87). In terms of format, an annual meeting of the

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EC and of the Contadora Group was institutionalised to deal with political issues while a mixed commission was created along with sub-commissions to prepare and implement the projects in the framework of the cooperation agreement of 1985 (Ibid.). Contacts at parliamentary level have taken place since 1974 between the European Parliament and the Latin American Parliament (Regelsberger, 1988b, p. 265).

### *Gulf Cooperation Council*

Responding to an earlier proposal by the EC, the GCC finally approached the EC in 1984 to start exploratory talks that eventually led to the conclusion of a cooperation agreement four years later, covering cooperation in the fields of industry, energy, environment, science, and technology (Regelsberger, 1988). In parallel, the political dialogue most favoured by the Europeans took shape and a Joint Political Declaration was passed (Nuttall, 1992). The Agreement provided for the creation of a Cooperation Council, annual joint councils/ministerial meetings (between the EU and the GCC foreign ministers), and for joint cooperation committees at senior official level (EEAS, 2015b). The political dialogue meetings are held in tandem with the annual meetings of the Joint Council and in addition, Ministers continue their tradition to meet for lunch in New York (Nuttall, 2000, p. 291). The political dialogue has remained limited, however, not going beyond strictly regional questions, with the Gulf pressing its case on Iran and the Palestinian issue (Rhein, 1990, p. 115).

### *Eastern Europe*

Last but not least, contacts between the European Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or COMECON) started in the 1970s, but it is only with the redefinition of global Soviet foreign policy in the mid-1980s that the relations became formalized in a very minimalist way though. Besides the conclusion of bilateral cooperation Agreements<sup>14</sup>, the joint declaration signed in June 1988 established official relations between the two organisations and mainly placed on a legal footing what had been practised for some time in the diplomatic realm. It did not provide for any institutions but referred only to ‘means of contacts and discussions’ between representatives of both parties. Furthermore, the level at which meetings might take place, as well as their frequency, was left open. The substance of

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<sup>14</sup> Each one of the Cooperation Agreement signed provides for the establishment of a Joint Committee that meets at least annually to manage, discuss and develop all questions touched on by the Agreement (Lippert, 1990, p. 27).

the discussions also remained very vague and limited; both parties should ‘develop cooperation in areas which fall within their respective spheres of competence and where there is common interest’. In light of these limitations, some observers have called the essence of the EC’s dialogue with the CMEA nothing more than ‘normalization’ (Lippert, 1990, p. 125). However, in hindsight and bearing in mind the enlargement process, the progress has been rather spectacular.

To sum up, when the member states established the EPC, they focused on setting up the framework for coordination of their foreign policy, and little thought was given to the need for formalised relations with third countries (Pilgaard 1993, p. 104). It is only in the 1986 Single European Act that the idea of ‘political dialogue’ with third countries and regional groupings were formally endorsed, albeit with little precision as to its use and format. In parallel, political dialogues were actually taking place but constituted no systematic and binding practice at all. Political dialogues were optional and most of the time came at the request of partner countries that were interested in establishing contacts with the EC to advance their own interests. In this sense, the political dialogues of the 1970s and 1980s were mostly ‘optional’ for third countries. It is also important to bear in mind that over this period of time, the economic relations continued to flourish between the EC and the member states, with the conclusions of further trade and cooperation agreements. The political dialogues described in this part could precede or complement these intensified economic relations but were not directly linked one to another (Monar, 1997, p. 266). As Flaesch-Mougin explains (1990, p. 31), the existence of a dialogue on economic issues did not automatically entail the existence of a political dialogue – and even if the dialogues were conducted in parallel, they were not always adjusted.

### **5.2.3. The 1990s and onwards: the EU taking the lead in the institutionalisation of dialogues**

The 1990s marked a further important shift in the evolution of the dialogues put in place by the EU in its dealing with third countries. This section depicts and analyses two notable developments in this context that emerged under the EU impulse: first, the systematic institutionalisation of political dialogues on a legal mandatory basis and, second, the creation of new kind of dialogue, namely the ‘human rights dialogue’ and sectorial dialogues. Before turning to each one of these distinctive trends, I provide a short background on the changes

operated by the CFSP as they are important to understand the following institutional developments.

#### 5.2.3.1. Institutional development at the EU level: from EPC to CFSP

With the end of the Cold War, European integration entered a decisive phase marked by the signature of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) that brought into being the successor of EPC, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the Union (Nuttall, 1997, p. 19). For a few observers, the collapse of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe and the experience of the European response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990-1991 had definitely precipitated ‘the New European Structure’ in the form of the Maastricht Treaty (McGoldrick, 1997, p. 139; Nuttall, 2000). The scale and rapidity of these events proved too great for the machinery of EPC to master and therefore new institutional arrangements became absolutely necessary (Nuttall, 1997, p. 22). In parallel, there was a growing understanding that the EC approaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century, could not afford to retreat into itself: its economic weight demanded that it plays a commensurate political role in world affairs (Regelsberger et al., 1997, p. 3).

However, according to Smith (2004, p. 176), ‘the specific institutional reforms of EU foreign policy that materialized in the creation of the CFSP largely reflected endogenous, path-dependent processes. Rather than a decisive break with the past, the CFSP represented a natural, logical progression both by clarifying what had been achieved by the EPC and building only a few truly innovative goals and procedures onto that mechanism’. To him, CFSP should always be considered part of an on-going, evolutionary process of institution building, based on the EPC, and some informal practices that had grown up between the SEA and the Treaty on European Union (TEU) (Smith 2004, p. 177).<sup>15</sup> In the words of McGoldrick (1997, p. 140), ‘CFSP is thus evolutionary rather than revolutionary’. Maastricht actually established a single institutional framework to govern all the policies, whether involving the Supranational Community Method (for foreign economic policy) or the intergovernmental methods (EPC/CFSP) and Trevi/Schengen (for Justice and Home Affairs, JHA). One of the main rationales behind this tri-partite architecture introduced by the Maastricht Treaty was to improve the effectiveness and coherence of the EU’s external relations. This involved the application of multiple EU external policy tools or competencies (such as development aid,

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<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive analysis and comparison of the provisions of the EPC and CFSP, see Michael E. Smith (2004), chapter 7: towards governance: The Common Foreign and Security Policy.

tariff concessions, and political dialogue) towards a single external goal, and therefore stronger linkages between the economic and political dimensions of cooperation with third countries (Smith, 2004, p. 209). This point is particularly relevant for the following discussion on the legal institutionalisation of political dialogues.

#### 5.2.3.2. Political dialogues become “compulsory”: formalisation of political dialogues

The 1990s heralded the EC/EU’s shift from an incremental pragmatic approach to political dialogues without a clear blueprint towards a much more systematic framework for holding political dialogues with third countries. Political dialogues as such cannot be found in the TEU but are established on the basis of general association treaties, decisions, declarations, or simply on the basis of an exchange of letters. Since the entry into force of the TEU, political dialogues take place in the framework of CFSP. They are seen as a means of attaining the objectives in Article 11 of the TEU<sup>16</sup> and may cover:

- an exchange of views and information on political questions of mutual interest;
- the identification of areas suitable for an enlarged cooperation on the basis of a greater confidence between the different actors on the international scene;
- the adoption of joint positions and actions in relation to existing international problems (Wessels, 1999, p. 114).

In the post-Maastricht era, the term obtained a formal meaning and was only used by the Union if three conditions were fulfilled: (1) there had to be a formal decision by the Political Committee and/or the ministers to engage in a ‘dialogue’; (2) there had to be a formal agreement with the third state(s) concerned, which could take the form of an informal arrangement between the Presidency and the third state(s) of a common understanding through an exchange of letters (e.g. Australia) or a joint declaration (e.g. Japan) or a formal treaty obligation (e.g. ‘Europe Agreements’ with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe); (3) the dialogue had to provide for regular political contacts at one or several levels, in addition to the normal diplomatic relations (from the highest level of the Presidency, ministerial level, the

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<sup>16</sup>Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union defines the following five objectives of the CFSP: (1) To safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter; (2) To strengthen the security of the Union in all ways; (3) To preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders; (4) To promote international cooperation; (5) To develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

level of political directors, the senior official or expert level, and the parliamentary level) (Wessel, 1999, p. 114–115). As Monar mentions, these conditions show that the dialogues had become a quite specific form of contact with third countries that went beyond occasional meetings and normal diplomatic business (1997, p. 264).

More importantly, a new trend has been to include *obligations* to enter into political dialogue in association treaties concluded with third countries (Monar, 1997, p. 270). In other words, the provisions for regular political dialogue have become part and parcel of a growing number of agreements signed between the EU and third countries – both in the case of previous agreements upgraded or innovative ones launched with new partners around the world. All of the EU’s political dialogues, both bilateral and regional are supposed to cover issues relating to human rights and democratisation (Smith, 2014). In some cases, a dedicated sub-committee on human rights can be formed under the rubric of an agreement with the third country, as in the case of Cambodia, Egypt, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, and Vietnam (European Union, 2011, p. 13). This should not be confused, however, with the ‘structured human rights dialogue’ on which I will elaborate later. To back the claim according to which political dialogues have become ‘unavoidable’ for third countries, I list the different types of agreements that include the ‘compulsory’ provisions for political dialogues.

#### *Association Agreements (AA)*

For instance, one way through which political dialogues have further been institutionalised and put on a legal basis has been their systematic inclusion in the Association Agreements signed by the EU with third countries (under Title 1: Political Dialogue). In terms of the multiplication of Association Agreements (and their subsequent provisions for political dialogues), one can mention several outstanding developments. First, in the mid-1990s, in the context of the Barcelona Process, a series of Association Agreements have been progressively signed between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean neighbours, all of which covered substantial political issues (Pieters, 2006, p. 403). In the 2000s, an Association Agreement was signed with Chile (European Commission, 2015a). And more recently, at the regional group level, the EU and six Central American countries concluded Association Agreement negotiations in 2010, during the EU-LAC Summit in Madrid. They included Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras (Panama joined the talks as full member at the end of the process) (EEAS, 2015a). According to the Council Conclusions on the Management of external commitments at Ministerial level dating back to 2000, (doc. 9548/00, p. V), ‘there were more

than 80 regular ministerial level meetings with third countries per year – most of them under cooperation and association agreements’.

#### *Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs)*

Another kind of agreement signed between the EU and third countries that obviously features a mandatory political dialogue corresponds to the Stabilization and Association Agreements (under Title II: Political dialogue). It is offered exclusively to the Western Balkans countries in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Process. The particularities of this agreement are the incorporation of the ‘evolution clause’, which confirms the status of a potential candidate country and the emphasis on the regional cooperation in Western Balkans. All SAAs entail a political dialogue chapter. As of today, Croatia (2005), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2004); Albania (2009); Montenegro (2010) have signed such SAAs (EEAS, 2015f).

#### *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)*

Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) also encompass provisions for political dialogues (Title II: political dialogue). Such agreements were signed with partners such as Russia in 1997 and Central Asian countries – among them, Armenia (1999), Azerbaijan (1999), Georgia (1999), Kazakhstan (1999), Kyrgyzstan (1999), Moldova (1998), Ukraine (1998), and Uzbekistan (1999) (European Commission, 2015b). More recently, a recent Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed between the EU and Iraq in 2012 (EEAS, 2015e).

#### *Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement (TDCA)*

In the framework of the Trade, Development and Co-operation Agreement with South Africa signed in 1999, a regular political dialogue was established on subjects of common interest, both at bilateral and regional levels, which is within the framework of the EU's dialogue with the countries of southern Africa and with the group of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries (Council of the European Union, 2004).

#### *Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA)*

In 2016, a political dialogue and cooperation agreement (PDCA) was signed between the EU and Cuba. It includes three main chapters on political dialogue, cooperation, and sector policy dialogue as well as trade and trade cooperation (European Commission, 2016).

#### *Regional partnerships with a political dialogue component*

In addition to bilateral reinforced dialogues, new regional dialogues have and are still being set up – among them, one counts the Andean-Community-EU dialogue (Joint declaration on political dialogue dating back to 2003), the EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit that institutionalised political dialogues (28/29 June 1999), the 1995 Mercosur Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement (Article 3 on political dialogue), and the San Jose Dialogue (political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama (*Doc 14855/03, 03/12/2003*)). Besides the development of political dialogues with Latin America, the recently launched dialogue between the EU and the League of Arab States (LAS) is notable (Johnansson-Nogues, 2015). In fact, since the Arab Spring, the EU's relations with the Arab League have entered a new phase of constructive engagement and cooperation, signalling a strong willingness to tackle jointly important regional challenges facing the common neighbourhood. Like the Cairo Declaration envisioned in 2012, the new intensified relationship is based on 'structured political dialogue based on regular meetings at all levels' (Cairo Declaration, 2012, paragraph 1). This call is being heeded, as testified by the launch of the EU-LAS strategic dialogue in 2015 and the commitment to multiply instances of dialogue at other representational levels (EU-LAS Joint Statement, 2016).

#### 5.2.3.3. A distinct kind of dialogue: Human Rights Dialogue

The number of dialogues between the EU and non-EU countries has further increased with the establishment of a distinct kind of dialogue, i.e. the Human Rights Dialogue. In fact, following the UN Commission on Human Rights' inability to address well-documented violations of human rights in China, several countries (such as Canada, Australia, and Norway) and the European Union decided to set up a formal bilateral Human Rights Dialogue (Wouters, Basu, Lemmens, Marx, & Schunz, 2007). The EU issued its first guidelines on human rights dialogues in December 2001 which announced that they were an instrument of the Union's external policy and, as such, not only 'one of a range of measures which the EU may use to implement its policy on human rights' but also 'an essential part of the European Union's overall strategy aimed at promoting sustainable development, peace and stability' (European Commission, 2001, p.1). The guidelines also aimed at strengthening the coherence and consistency of existing EU dialogues (European Commission, 2001, p. 3). The wording of the guidelines also suggested that the EU was expecting even more dialogues to be set up in the turn of the century, mentioning the 'prospect of increasing numbers of dialogues' (Ibid, p.9).

This type of dialogue differs from the political dialogues of a rather general nature based on regional or bilateral treaties agreements. Indeed, these structured human rights dialogues have the particularity of being focused *exclusively* on human rights. They thus allow an in-depth examination of certain human rights issues with a given third country, thereby further expanding the scope of topics being addressed by the EU in its dialogues.<sup>17</sup> The initiative to launch such a dialogue can either emanate from the European Union or from a third country presenting a request (European Council, 2001). Furthermore, it is important to stress that the Human rights dialogues are established in accordance with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights dialogues, which are not legally binding; these dialogues are not enshrined in a legally binding treaty. They are legally detached from other agreements in which a third party is a signatory and, to the best of my knowledge, there is no conditionality involved in these specific human rights dialogues. In terms of content, the issues covered in each dialogue are decided on a case-by-case basis but certain topics are systematically on the agenda, including the abolition of the death penalty, the signing, ratification, and implementation of international human rights instruments, combating torture, eliminating all forms of discrimination, advocating for children's rights, women's rights, freedom of expression, the role of civil society, and more (European Council, 2001). As to the nature of the participants in these dialogues, the discussions generally take place at the level of senior officials. Dialogues involve officials responsible for human rights (including representatives from relevant departments and agencies, such as ministries of justice and the interior, police and prison authorities, ombudsmen, and national parliaments) (European Council, 2001).

Over the last 20 years, there has been a proliferation of Human Rights dialogues, mostly at the initiative of the EU: since the first Human Rights Dialogue launched by the EU with China in 1995, several other regular and institutionalised dialogues devoted solely to human rights have been put in place between the EU and third countries. Another country with which bilateral discussions on human rights were organised is Russia. As of today, the EU conducts such 'structured human rights dialogues' with countries like Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Iran (dialogue suspended since 2004 though), and, more recently, Vietnam (European Union, 2010) and Malaysia (Chevallier-

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<sup>17</sup> To avoid any confusion, it is important to emphasise here the different terminology used to differentiate between human rights dialogues conducted between the EU and third countries that have normally serious HR issues and human rights consultations conducted with countries such as Canada, EU member candidates countries, Japan, the United States, New Zealand, and Russia which insisted to have the term consultations used instead of dialogue, as they did not want to be put in the same category as China and Iran (Wouters et al., 2007).

Govers, 2011). The establishment of official human rights dialogues is also now an option with Mongolia, Singapore, and even Cuba. In addition, human rights dialogues are also conducted with regional organisations, such as the African Union, and the EU currently is working to develop additional regional Human Rights mechanisms with the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Arab League (LAS), and even the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (EEAS, 2015g).

Several human rights dialogues have been suspended over the years due to political issues. To give just a few examples of the suspension of dialogues used as ‘sticks’ by the EU or as a retaliatory measure by the third country, one can recall the fact that the Human Rights dialogue with Iran has been suspended since Iran’s cancellation of the 5th round of HRD in 2004. Indeed, following harsh criticism from the EU both on the lack of progress regarding the human rights situation in Iran and on Iran’s nuclear dossier, the Iranian government decided to review its interactions with European countries and suspended the dialogue (Mousavian, 2008, p. 216). Despite many requests since then from the EU, Iran has not resumed this dialogue (EEAS, 2015d). A few human rights dialogues with China have also been regularly postponed for technical and political reasons (Kinzelbach, 2015).

#### 5.2.3.4. Multiplication of sectorial dialogues: strategic partnerships

Finally, as the cooperation at the European Union level has extended to many different fields (including for instance Justice and Home Affairs), it has also become able to deal with these issues in its external relations. As a result, many additional dialogues have been created in order to deal with the range of issues around which the EU and non-EU countries cooperate. This trend is best exemplified by the 10 EU strategic partnerships<sup>18</sup> that include an impressive number of dialogues, ranging from agriculture to terrorism to customs or intellectual property rights. A significant amount of ambiguity surrounds the new EU foreign policy instrument, called strategic partnerships. The concept was adopted by the EU in the late 1990s-early 2000s but it was only in September 2010 that the European Council discussed for the first time the EU’s strategic partnerships as a foreign policy concept (Renard, 2011, p. 1). Experts have come to characterise these strategic partnerships either as ‘essentially political agreements between parties interested in increasing cooperation with each other’ or as ‘instruments of soft law used

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<sup>18</sup> The ten EU Strategic partners include Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States (Smith, 2014, p. 55).

by the EU to complete and re-define the framework of relations with selected partners' (Círlig 2012, p. 2). In this sense, a strategic partnership might contribute to the development of further areas of cooperation and possibly lead to the conclusion of new legally binding (framework) agreements, thereby creating additional forums of dialogues. The proliferation of technical meetings between the EU and some of its strategic partnerships is well documented and illustrated by Vivet and Lalande's study (2014).

### 5.3. Dialogues today: a snapshot from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe

To conclude this chapter, I propose to give a snapshot of the EU political and human rights dialogues with third countries, as it stands in 2018 in the form of a world map (see p.116 and appendix 2). The map, generated with the software *Tableau*, is based on a review of all the countries in the world and the type of agreements linking them to the EU. A quick glimpse to the map is enough to realise how widespread the EU practice of political dialogue with third countries is: almost the totality of the map world is coloured in blue. As I have already extensively covered the different countries and regions currently engaged in political dialogues with the EU, it is worth examining here the few countries coloured in yellow on the map – representing the countries with which no such political dialogue exists to date – and the reasons thereof. To start with, the EU does not hold political dialogues with certain countries due to political reasons. This is the case of Venezuela, Thailand, Equatorial Guinea, and Russia. Regarding Venezuela, bilateral relations between the EU and Venezuela are not governed by any bilateral legal framework, unlike other Mercosur countries (Dominguez, 2015). EU relations with Venezuela were initially going to be governed by the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the Andean Community signed in 2003, but this has not been the case since the withdrawal of Venezuela from the Andean Community in 2006 (European Commission, 2018). In the case of Thailand, the EU has negotiated with this state a Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that would provide a comprehensive framework and dramatically increase cooperation between the two parties. However, due to the military coup that occurred in May 2014 in Thailand, the EU has refused to sign the PCA until the country has a democratically elected government in place. This means that an old agreement, signed in 1980, continues to be the framework for relations between the EU and Thailand, and that agreement did not contain any provisions regarding political dialogues (EEAS, 2018).

Another reason that the EU does not currently hold political dialogues is that there are no provisions in place for political dialogues in the framework of cooperation. This is the case for Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Taiwan, all of which have cooperation

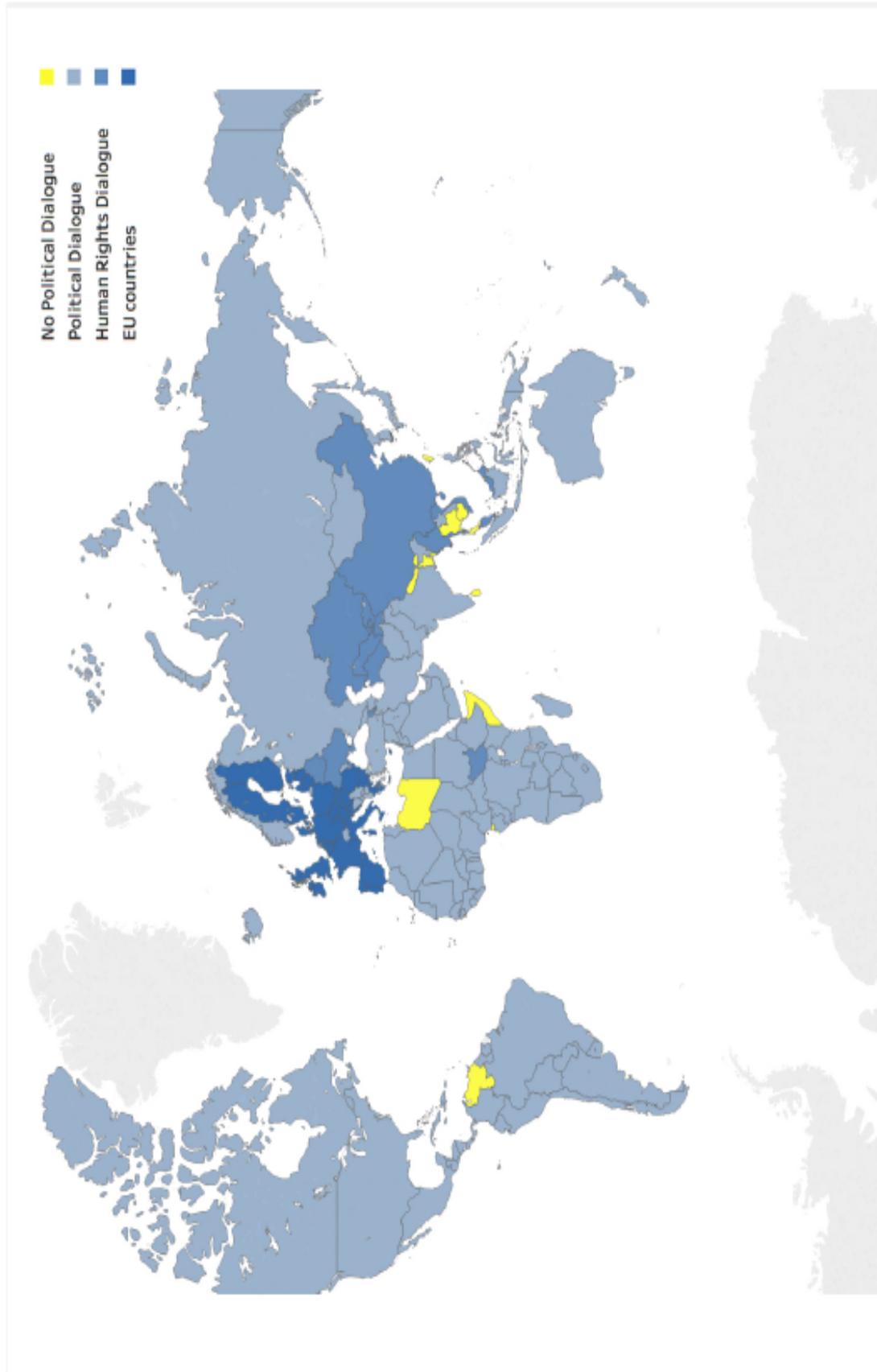
agreements with the EU – encompassing economic dialogues, for instance – but no institutionalised discussion about political issues. With Brunei and Singapore, however, this is about to change because both countries are currently negotiating PCAs with the EU (EEAS, 2016).

## Conclusion

The analysis of the historical development of the dialogues established between the EU and the rest of the world leads to several important conclusions. First of all, there is no doubt that over the years the EU has come to develop an extensive set of ‘dialogical interactions’ – covering an ever-increasing range of issues with an exponential number of states around the world. This phenomenon is without precedent in terms of its quantity and variety. Secondly, the process leading to the establishment of these dialogues has been neither regular nor systematic. It has developed in an incremental way aligned with key developments at the EU level and with the codification of EU diplomatic practice. In this regard, the chapter has identified three main turning points. While in the first days of the EEC, there were only very limited regular contacts to monitor the smooth implementation of trade agreements in the framework of joint institutions, the European member states became more engaged in dialogues in the 1970s with the launch of the EPC, which added a political dimension to the EEC/EC’s external relations. During this intense period of introspection and preoccupation with constitution reform and the single market, the development of political dialogues was remarkable. The pressing demand for dialogues with the EC come mainly from individual third countries, which saw in the EC an attractive interlocutor while the inter-regional dialogues were mainly set up at the initiative of the EC. At the beginning of the 1990s, the number of dialogues further increased. But this time, it occurred mainly under the impulse of the EU, which insisted to institutionalise political dialogues in a more systematic way. Political dialogues, for instance, have become an integral part of many international agreements (notably AA), thereby being almost automatically ‘imposed’ on country partners. This trend has been further reinforced with the emergence of another specific kind of dialogue, i.e. human rights dialogue, which is devoted entirely to human rights issues. Last but not least, beyond the political realm, the ever-widening spectrum of policy areas requiring cooperation between the EU and third parties/groups has also made necessary the establishment of new dialogues to tackle these issues from a functional perspective (cyber dialogues, environmental dialogues, technical dialogues, etc). Following this general overview of the dialogues conducted by the

EU with the world, I turn now to the specific case of the EU-US dialogues and focus on its peculiar development and features.

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe: Mapping EU Political Dialogues with Third Countries



## Chapter 6 - The evolution of the EU-US dialogues in historical perspective

The United States is the largest and most important interlocutor of the EU in the international system. Indeed, the EU-US bilateral partnership features an intensity and frequency of consultations unparalleled in the diplomatic relations of either partner and in the history of diplomacy writ large (Ginsberg, 2001b). In fact, over the last few decades, a whole architecture of dialogues has been put in place, dealing with a full array of policy areas including the traditional issues of trade, competition policy, and regulatory cooperation. But these issues increasingly include internal and external security issues, involving different kinds of actors (Pollack, 2014, p. xv), from the level of civil society to the highest ranking European and American political representatives. Before delving into the actual analysis of the dynamics and added value of these dialogues in the next chapters, it is first necessary to provide an updated review of the multi-layered architecture of EU-US dialogues standing at the core of this study.

In order to generate meaningful insights on the role of dialogues in the transatlantic context, I propose to analyse the evolution of the EU-US dialogues *within* the wider context of the transatlantic relations and to identify the changing patterns of initiative and consultations over time. The literature is replete with analyses emphasising the dual nature of the transatlantic relationship, oscillating between ‘cooperation and competition’, ‘convergence and divergence’, or ‘alignment and decoupling’. While there is no shortage of secondary literature about the ‘ups and downs’ of the transatlantic relations from a broader perspective, not enough attention has been given to the specific evolution of the practice of dialogues against this wider political backdrop. Therefore, a key question addressed in this chapter is whether the dialogue is affected by, affects, or is partially insulated from the state of transatlantic relations. The chapter suggests that the dialogue does not drive the state of the transatlantic relations. Rather, the overall state of the transatlantic relations influences the ease with which the dialogues are initiated and established in the first place. Once institutionalised, however, these dialogues are not easily dismantled and actually become partially insulated from the turbulence at the macro-level. If anything, during these times of crisis and uncertainty, they become even more valuable pockets of deliberation in which disagreements can be explored.

To back this argument, this chapter proceeds chronologically, highlighting the evolution of the dialogues between Europeans and Americans within the broader context of

transatlantic relations in order to provide a more fine-grained analysis. The first part focuses on the 1950s and 1960s, when the first diplomatic contacts between the European Community and the United States were officially established, with both actors equally engaged in the process. The second section, spanning from the 1970s to the end of the 1980s, documents the difficult establishment of the first consultations on political matters between the EC and the United States in the framework of EPC. These first political contacts, convened initially at the demand of the United States and later the EC, revolved mainly around a question of control over the other in a period when there were many conflicting interests and disagreements. Moving to the post-Cold War era, the third section shows the remarkable development of the architecture of dialogues covering an ever-increasing range of issues at different levels against the backdrop of improved relations. Finally, the last section covers the new millennium and demonstrates that even in times of turbulence, like during the Bush presidency or currently with the Trump administration, the dialogue continues and becomes even more relevant than ever.

## 6.1. 1950s-1960s: First EC-US diplomatic contacts in the backdrop of good relationships

This first section shows that the good relationship characterising transatlantic relations in the 1950s – and to a lesser extent the 1960s – drove the establishment of the first diplomatic contacts between the EC and the United States. The contacts at that time, equally desired by both sides, were restricted to the field of competence under the community and did not relate at all to political and security matters.

### **1950s: Truman and Eisenhower – a period of close relations with staunch American support for comprehensive forms of European integration**

Regarding the very first years following the end of the Second World War and through the early 1960s, there is a broad consensus in the literature about the close relationship between the United States and Western Europe, whereby the Atlantic framework is put in place and everyone tacitly agrees that Europe belongs to America's sphere of influence. In fact, due to strategic reasons – notably the 'double' containment of the Soviet Union and Germany – the United States actively favoured the creation of a supranational Europe with its own political bodies provided that a more united Europe would remain friendly to the United States (Lundestad, 2003, p. 37). The American support was welcomed by the Western European countries that needed economic assistance as well as military support to guard against Soviet-

communist expansion, leading Lundestad to argue that the Europeans de facto 'invited' the Americans to become involved (2003, p. 55). The 1950s and the 1960s are therefore commonly described as a period in which the relationship between the United States and Europe were close, with the Americans taking the leadership of the Western camp (for example, the Truman doctrine, Marshall Plan, creation of NATO) and supporting the various European initiatives in terms of integration (support for the ECSC, EDC and for the idea of the common market) (Hanhimmäki, Schoenborn, & Zanchetta, 2012, p. 44).

This positive state of the relations is reflected in the creation of the first diplomatic contacts between the United States and the nascent European community. On 11 August 1952, the United States became the first non-member state to recognise the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was formed on 23 July 1952. The following year, in 1953, diplomatic relations between the two entities were initiated when the first American observers were sent to ECSC. This paved the route for the opening of a formal mission to the ECSC in Luxembourg in 1956 that eventually became the US Mission to the European Communities in 1961. This move was reciprocated on the European side with the establishment of an embryonic version of what would become the Delegation of the European Commission to the United States in Washington, DC, at a later stage. In fact, Monnet and some of his American friends played a key role in the launching of a Community Information Office run by two Americans, but financed by the High Authority (HA) of the ECSC in 1954 (Winand, 2001, p. 128). After the launch of the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) in 1958, the ECSC information office changed its name to European Communities Information Service. It is only in 1972 that the European Communities Information Service was granted full diplomatic status thanks to legislation approved by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Richard Nixon. The office was then known as the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities to the United States (Delegation of the EU to the US, 2018). It is important to note that the exchange between these bodies corresponded only to matters under Commission (community) responsibility. Deliberations were held with US administrations by the Commission. Topics related to defence and foreign policy issues were discussed between the State Department and the individual European embassies in Washington but by no means at the European collective level (Kotsonis, 1997, p. 195).

### **1960s: Kennedy and Johnson (1961-1969): “beginning of uneasy period” in transatlantic relations**

During the Kennedy administration, several factors challenged the Atlantic framework (dominance of the United States) and gave rise to the first serious tensions between Europe and the United States (Lundestad, 2003, p. 120). Nevertheless, the American government did not alter its unwavering support for European integration (supra-nationalism). This continuous support for European unity and integration was mainly due to the preponderance of political considerations related to the fight against communism and to the understanding that Europe was necessary to keep the United States growing economically (Brinkley & Griffiths, 1999).

One of the key factors that helped challenge the ‘Atlantic stability’ was the growing independence of European countries vis-à-vis the United States, especially France and Germany as reflected in the rejection of British membership of the EEC, the French-German *Élysée* Treaty, and later in the French rejection of the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the withdrawal from military integration through NATO (Lundestad, 2003, pp. 128-129). The wide-spread criticism in Europe relating to the Vietnam war and détente after the Cuban Missile Crisis threatened to change the very foundation of the Atlantic unity that had been forged to face the Soviet threat in the first place.

In light of Europe’s renewed strength and recognition of significant economic weaknesses in the United States, Kennedy made the idea of the Atlantic Partnership as the cornerstone of his Grand Design. In his famous speech in Philadelphia in 1962, after arguing that the Declaration of Independence continued to inspire struggles for freedom around the world, Kennedy claimed that ‘the United States will be ready for a Declaration of Interdependence’ with a united Europe. He insisted that ‘the US is prepared to discuss with a united Europe the ways and means of forming a concrete Atlantic partnership, a mutually beneficial partnership between the new union now emerging in Europe and the Old American union founded here 175 years ago’ (Lundestad, 2003, p. 121). For Smith (1984, p. 15), the proposed Atlantic Partnership corresponded to a political alignment that would go beyond the limits of conventional alliances and which would rely upon a relatively equal bargain between the United States and an expanded, integrated Europe. More specifically, in Phillipart’s view, the Kennedy’s proposal in 1962 was the equivalent of a trading partnership between two giant markets on either side of the Atlantic. Yet it did not get support from the EEC, as Jean Monnet was wary of American intentions and argued that a more efficient Atlantic action community covering economic and political realms would only come about when Europe was sufficiently strong enough to be a full partner of the United States (Phillipart, 2001, p. 35). During the

Johnson administration, the United States continued to support European integration despite concern that the EEC was not becoming the outward-looking institution the United States favoured (Lundestad, 2003, p. 134). Eventually, by the end of the 1960s, ‘a partnership in which one partner effectively dominated the other had been replaced by a kind of adversarial partnership’ (Smith, 1978, p. 33). According to Mally, the relationship at that time could best be described as ‘one of ambivalence involving a partner-rival syndrome: the resurgent Europe competing with the United States for a position of preponderance in the economic domain, while remaining largely dependent on the American nuclear umbrella for its ultimate security’ (Mally, 1974, p. xv). Smith describes the state of the relationship by the end of the 1960s in even harsher terms: ‘Far from constituting a partnership or a community, transatlantic relations by the end of the Johnson administration seemed to form a battleground’ (Smith, 1984, p. 15).

## 6.2. 1970s-1980s: arduous establishment of EPC-US political consultations in a period of transatlantic turbulence

While the 1970s and 1980s constituted a turbulent phase in the history of transatlantic relations, it was also at this time that the first consultative mechanisms on political issues between the United States and the EC began in the framework of the EPC. Yet the establishment of these first contacts was arduous and difficult, as they were mainly motivated by a logic of ‘control’ over the decisions taken by the other side. In fact, at the beginning of the 1970s, surprised by the growing assertiveness of the Europeans on the international scene in the framework of EPC, Kissinger insisted the United States should be consulted in the early stages of decision-making at the collective European level. A decade later, in light of Reagan’s growing unilateralism with far-reaching consequences for Europe, it was the EC that time that came to request an upgrade in the political consultations with the United States. As explained below, the negative backdrop against which these contacts were initiated led to a non-systematic consultative framework and the consultations when they did occur were not linked to explicit policy objectives (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 305).

### 6.2.1. 1970s: Nixon-Kissinger’s insistence to enter into consultations with the EPC

The transatlantic literature generally depicts the 1970s as a turning point and even as a major time of crisis in the relations between Europe and the United States. In the words of Kaiser (1974) writing during this turbulent phase, ‘The present crisis is more fundamental since it appears to threaten the essence, indeed the survival, of cooperation both within European and

in the Atlantic world'. More than 40 years later, scholars continue to describe this period as 'one in which the Atlantic Ocean seemed to grow wider' (Hanhimmäki et al., 2012, p. 87). For Smith, what differentiates the period of the 1950s and 1960s from the 1970s is the degree of stability in expectations and perceptions of commitment that both sides had for each other (Smith, 1978, p. 43).

The deterioration of the transatlantic relationship during this period has mainly been attributed to the change of attitude in the Nixon-Kissinger era, which indicated less support for supra-nationalism in Europe compared to their predecessors. This new approach towards the European integration project was part of a broader change in US policy and strategic thinking whereby Nixon and Kissinger advocated a 'new structure of peace', in which major power centres would interact in a way reminiscent of the classical balance of power. In this structure, the European allies were to play a full and responsible part (Smith 1984, p. 16). This reappraisal of European integration came from the realisation that the US economy was facing severe difficulties, as well as from the sense that, to paraphrase Nixon, 'the Europeans were having it both ways' – that is, both enjoying American protection on the military front while creating difficulties on the political and economic fronts. (Lundestad, 1998, p. 102). In short, the administration had become ambivalent about the whole objective of a united Europe and questioned the compatibility of the goals of a supranational Europe and a US-dominated Atlantic Community (Hanhimmäki et al., 2012, p. 78).

The administration's ambivalence to the EC had an impact in terms of communication between both sides. While Smith (1978, p. 34) mentions an erosion of the channels of communication, other commentators go a step further, arguing that bilateralism and the lack of consultation became a characteristic of Nixonian foreign policy. The United States continued to meet with European national leaders but did not engage with the Commission (Lundestad, 1993, p. 177). Nixon reportedly argued that since it would take some time before the Europeans would learn to act as a group, 'we have to work with the heads of governments in the various countries and not that jackass in the European Commission in Brussels' (presumably Nixon meant Commission President Sicco Mansholt) (FRUS, 1972, p. 265). This propensity to bypass the Commission and to privilege direct communication with the member states led to serious complaints by the US Ambassador to the EC, Robert Schaezel (1966 to 1972), but the reports of his mission were mostly ignored by Washington. Similarly, the delegation of the Commission in Washington, DC, also experienced difficulties getting the Americans' attention at that time (Winand, 2001, p. 130).

Later, however, in light of the development of the EPC, the Americans had the feeling of being left out of control over the political process taking shape in Europe and were concerned that this could lead the Community to take common decisions in the realm of foreign policy opposed to the interests of the United States (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 301). In particular, the United States was caught by surprise when EPC made its international debut in 1973 by taking a common position at the CSCE talks – to which the United States had to adapt (Ginsberg 1997, p. 304). It is in this context that the initiative of the Year of Europe – which would soon be named the ‘Year of the Debacle’ – emerged. On 23 April 1973, Kissinger called upon the West Europeans to subscribe to the new structure of peace and to accept a ‘New Atlantic Charter’ that would form the basis of a new community within the crucial Atlantic framework (i.e. under the dominance of the United States) (Smith 1984, p. 17). Yet the new Atlantic charter that Kissinger proposed, coupled with his hectoring tone, irked the Europeans. He pointed out that ‘while the US had global responsibilities, the Europeans only had more regional ones’ and emphasised the linkage between the maintenance of the American security guarantee and a European *quid pro quo* in the economic sphere and with regard to military burden-sharing. In response, the EC’s draft agreement stressed the political equality of the EC and the United States and refused to recognise the linkage between security, political, and economic problems (Lundestad, 2003, p. 183). As to the idea of a comprehensive New Atlantic Charter, it was reduced to a declaration of principles and then divided into two separate documents, which were in turn stripped of all substance (Kotsonis, 1997), thereby inflicting upon Kissinger yet another defeat.

Eventually, after lengthy negotiations among the European member states themselves and with the United States, both sides finally agreed on the so-called ‘Gymnich Formula’ in April 1974. In essence, the agreement was that the United States was to be kept informed by the presidency of the EPC’s plans in sufficient time for the United States to react if it had serious objections (Nuttall 1997, p. 27). However, this agreement was far from what the Americans had hoped for initially, namely the institutionalisation of contacts ‘à dix’ at the level of the Political Directors, or as Ginsberg (1997, p. 304) put it, not less than ‘a seat at the EPC table’. In fact, the Americans put forward the request to be consulted *before* final positions were adopted by the Europeans. They also required that the text in which the form of consultations was to be fixed should be concluded, on the European side, by the member states acting separately and not collectively (Nuttall, 1997, p. 27). This is because the United States had been alarmed by European attempts to make the presidency their sole negotiator and were concerned that this development would restrict their access to individual states, reducing the

possibility to intervene in the EPC process (Ibid). As a result of the Gymnich formula, in 1974 the EC Commission and the US Cabinet initiated bi-annual ministerial meetings, and EC and US foreign ministers initiated *ad hoc* consultations. These patchwork consultative meetings were not related to any overall strategy of bilateral political ties and tended to focus on the sharing of views rather than on the unification of policies (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 304).

The European reluctance to the far more reaching US propositions mainly reflected the French position opposed to the institutionalisation of the consultations with the United States out of fear that reinforcing consultations would mean giving the Americans a quasi-permanent '*droit de regard*' over the Community's affairs and an opportunity to exert greater influence on the decision-making of the Nine. Nonetheless, the arrangement was still important for providing for the continuation of bilateral contacts and serving as a basis on which to build EPC-US consultations. The Americans were now to adopt a maximalist approach with regard to the agreement, playing off the Nine on both fields by making full use of bilateral channels while trying to open the EPC door wider (Pilgaard, 1993).

While the establishment of consultations between the United States and the EPC encountered difficulties, new channels of communication were put in place between the American Congress and the European Parliament. In fact, in 1972 the first US congressional delegation came to the European Parliament – starting what was about to become the oldest inter-parliamentary dialogue in diplomatic history. This happened under the initiative of former Representative Sam Gibbons. The first congressional visits to Brussels were arranged by Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means and focused mainly on issues such as agriculture subsidies, steel tariffs, anti-dumping initiatives, and general trade-related issues. These initial parliamentary contacts were first known as the United States-European Community Inter-parliamentary Group, before being renamed at a later stage the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue (Archick & Morelli, 2013, p. 2).

Under the Ford and Carter administrations, there was a slight improvement in the state of the transatlantic relations (Hanhimmäki et al., 2012, pp. 90–91; Lundestad, 2003, p. 203). President Ford demonstrated less rigidity than his predecessors regarding the relationship with Europe, a topic that did not rank high on his agenda anyway. If anything, the most memorable act of Ford's European policy was the signature of the Helsinki Accords on 1 August 1975 along with the representatives of all European states except Albania, as well as the USRR and Canada. This marked the high point of *détente* (Hanhimmäki et al., 2012, p. 91). As to Jimmy Carter, he fiercely criticised Nixon-Kissinger for their neglect of their European allies and was

determined to improve relations. For instance, in April 1977 he proclaimed: ‘I strongly favor, perhaps more than my predecessors, a closer interrelationship among the nations of Europe, the European Community, in particular’. Whereas Ford had agreed to consult regularly only with the chairman of the European Council, representing the national governments, not with the European Commission, Carter went a step further. In a symbolic move, he embarked on a visit to the European Commission in Brussels in January 1978, the first such visit by a US president. He promised that the United States would give ‘unqualified support’ to what the Community was trying to accomplish and welcomed the participation of the Commission President in the G-7 summits (Lundestad, 2003, p. 202).

### **6.2.2. 1980s: Reagan’s unilateralism and EC requests to upgrade consultations with the US**

Under the Reagan administration, transatlantic relations became strained once again (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 304; Kotsonis, 1997; Nuttall, 1997, p. 22). They were mainly characterised by acute frictions over a wide range of foreign policy issues: from the US bombing in Libya to American support for the Contras in Nicaragua through disagreements over the Venice Declaration or the EPC-backed Contadora peace process, to cite just a few (Dobson & Marsh, 2001, p. 62).

Under the Reagan administration, the United States pursued far-reaching policies in a unilateralist manner that would prompt the Europeans to improve the EPC-US consultations. Similar to the logic behind Kissinger’s requests a decade earlier, it was the sense of a loss of control and fear of the consequences of US unilateral decisions for their own interest that led the EC to upgrade the consultations with the United States.<sup>19</sup> In fact, many commentators have described this decade as one of uncertainty and dramatic changes in American foreign policy: while the first years of the Reagan administration signalled the end of détente, the last ones were characterised by an extraordinary rapprochement with the Soviet Union and the possibility of eliminating all nuclear weapons on the European continent. As Kotsonis put it, ‘Within the course of a decade the European pendulum had swung from concern over superpower *collision* to concern over superpower *collusion*’ (1997, p. 146) (emphasis added). In light of the significance of these changes for the European countries, the reluctance of

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<sup>19</sup> For more details on transatlantic tensions during this period see Neil Winn, *European Crisis Management in the 1980s*, Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1996.

Washington to consult with its European allies became more and more unacceptable. As a result, the Western European countries insisted to improve the transatlantic dialogues to avoid being faced with *faits accomplis* in areas that directly affected their interests (Kotsonis, 1997, p.1, Nutall, 1997, p. 28). They hoped that improved communication would lead to a better understanding between the two sides and greater European influence over American decision-making.

Following the European request for an upgrade of consultations, modest changes were introduced in the mechanisms of the EPC-US contacts: the new measure provided for *ad hoc* contacts between the Troika of Political directors and their American counterparts. The first meeting of this kind took place on 30 September 1982 while another followed on 11 February 1983. Following that meeting, contacts between the Political Cooperation Troika and the United States (in the person of the US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs) were further institutionalised and started taking place at *regular* intervals: once a year on the margins of the meeting of the UN General Assembly in September (Gardner, 1997, p. 9). In September 1986, further structure was added to transatlantic consultations through the Brocket Hall agreement: the United States and the EC agreed that the foreign Minister of the country holding the Community's Presidency would visit Washington at the beginning of each year and that the political directors' Troika should meet during each presidency with their US counterparts at the Under Secretary level, thereby doubling the frequency of such contacts (Schwok, 1991, pp. 32–35; Nutall, 1992, p. 286; Ginsberg, 1997, p. 306). In addition, regular contacts between the American administration and the diplomatic mission of the Twelve in Washington needed to be reinforced (Kotsonis, 1997, p. 194). This trend continued: one year later, in 1987, another measure was introduced – namely a working dinner on the margins of the September UN General Assembly in New York between the EC Foreign Ministers, EC Commissioner for external relations, and the US Secretary of State (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 306).

In parallel, the inter-parliamentary dialogues continued but the topic of the discussions also became more political than what they had been in the past. Indeed, given the evolving nature of the transatlantic relationship, and the changes taking place within the EU itself, the purpose and focus of the Congress–EP inter-parliamentary exchange gradually turned more to a foreign policy agenda dedicated to issues involving the Cold War and the development of the European Union. By the mid-1980s, the responsibility for arranging the US-EP meetings in the US Congress and the formation of the congressional delegations to Europe shifted to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (Archick & Morelli, 2013, p. 2).

To sum up, while in earlier years it was the Americans who had taken the initiative to deepen the American-European relationship (Kennedy's famous interdependence speech in 1962 and in Kissinger's 'Year of Europe' in 1973), things began to change in the 1980s with more requests emanating from the European side. Interestingly, this period of disagreement under Reagan was actually a period of institutionalisation of relations. Yet by the end of the 1980s, only a messy patch of consultations had been put in place with no general policy objectives. Things were about to change with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of structured and comprehensive consultations between the EU and the United States.

### 6.3. 1990s: "Talking about everything and on a regular basis": structured and comprehensive dialogue in the post-Cold War era

The end of the Cold War marked a real turning point in the history of the transatlantic relationship and this is reflected in the beginning of a *formal structured* bilateral dialogue between the United States and the EU from 1990s onwards (Steffenson, 2005, p. 25). At the end of the 1980s, the state of the transatlantic relationship dramatically improved and, against this backdrop, it was much easier to set up a proper framework for consultations (compared to the previous two decades).

#### 6.3.1. Bush administration: equal desire to institutionalise a proper EU-US dialogue

Overall, transatlantic relations improved markedly under President George HW Bush (Lundestad, 2003, p. 241). While Reagan tended to get personally involved in the economic disputes between United States and EC, Bush was more focused on the overall political relationship that he was determined to improve. In a famous statement, he made the following point: 'What an absurdity it would be, if future historians attribute the demise of the Western alliance to disputes over beef hormones and wars over pasta', implying harsh criticism of his predecessor (Ibid. p. 241).

Yet besides the different personalities of the American leaders, other factors were at play in the rapprochement between the United States and Europe. Already by 1989, the United States had begun to show greater interest in Europe, given the economic prospects of European integration ('Europe 1992' programme, completion of the Single European market) and the unprecedented political changes in Central and Eastern Europe that were to have implications on the Atlantic relationship (Devuyst, 1990). Eventually, it was mainly the international

context characterised by the end of the Cold war that motivated *both the EU and the United States* to seek new mechanisms for consultation and cooperation. While the EU wanted to demonstrate its abilities as a foreign policy actor, the United States was concerned that the Community might develop policies and institutions incompatible with American interests if the process of European integration was not accompanied by improved transatlantic dialogue (Gardner, 2001, p. 85). In addition, the United States welcomed the prospects of burden-sharing in light of being the only superpower (Steffenson 2005, pp. 25-50). For Ginsberg (1997, p. 305), the end of the Cold War also removed many of the tensions associated with earlier disagreements centred around East-West dynamics, paving the way for more cooperative relations based on pragmatism. Finally, beyond this interest-based explanation, the end of the Cold War also had a very strong symbolic dimension for the United States and Europe. According to the former EU Ambassador to the United States, Günter Burghardt, ‘The fall of the wall symbolized the greatest achievement of the US and Europe: it was partly the result of the successful combination of US power and determination and of the attraction of the European integration to the people under communist rule’ (Burghardt, 2013). It was thus logical to assume a kind of shared governance for the new world order was about to emerge.

The November 1990 Transatlantic Declaration (TAD) was thus a balanced effort with the Germans taking the initiative in close cooperation with DC (Lundestad, 1993, p. 265). After long months of negotiations, both sides signed the Transatlantic Declaration, which has been described as a ground-breaking move to create a structured dialogue (Steffenson, 2005, p. 35) and as a source of innovation in terms of regularity, frequency, degree of formality, and the level of meetings between US and EU officials (Phillipart & Winand, 2001, p. 394). Signed on 23 November 1990, this short document sets out the common goals, principles of the US-EU Partnership, and institutional framework for consultation pertaining to transatlantic cooperation. A series of common goals were identified, such as support for democracy, promotion of peace and international security, achievement of a sound world economy, and promotion of market principles (TAD, 1990). More specifically, the partners recognised mutual interest in pursuing economic liberalisation, educational, scientific, and cultural cooperation and in addressing transnational challenges, such as fighting international crime, terrorism, and environmental degradation (TAD, 1990). Most importantly for this study, the central principle on which EU-US cooperation has been based is that of ‘*mutual information and consultation* on important political and economic matters of common interests so as to bring their positions as closer as possible, without prejudice to their respective independence’ (TAD, 1990) (emphasis added).

This mutual desire to engage in regular consultation on a wide range of issues required the creation of a vast framework of dialogues at different levels and in different formats. For Stefansson (2005, p. 32), it is the creation of this impressive institutional framework for consultation that gives the TAD a real significance – though less its content, which has been described as cosmetic (Featherstone & Ginsberg, 1996), superficial (TPN, 1999), minimalist (Peterson, 1996), and lacking in substantive innovations (Devuyst, 1990). In fact, the TAD formalised a set of bilateral meetings between different levels of policy-makers:

- (a) bi-annual consultations to be arranged in the United States and in Europe between, on the one side, the President of the European Council and President of the Commission and on the other side, the President of the United States (EU-US Summits);
- (b) Bi-annual consultations between the European Community of Foreign Ministers, with the Commission on the one hand, and the US Secretary of State, on the other;
- (c) Bi-annual consultations between the European Commission and the US government at Cabinet level;
- (d) Ad hoc consultations between the Presidency Foreign Minister or the Troika and the US Secretary of State
- (e) Briefings by the Presidency to US representatives on EPC meetings at the Ministerial level (TAD, 1990).

It was assumed that this framework for consultation would open lines of communication, create networks, result in information-sharing, and hopefully reduce the impact of disputes in transatlantic relations (Steffenson, 2005, p. 33). In this regard, the TAD was perceived as a stepping stone for the creation of further fora for exchange: it clearly stipulates that ‘both sides are resolved to develop and deepen these procedures for consultations as to reflect the evolution of the European Community and of its relationship with the United States’ (TAD, 1990). According to a senior US diplomat, the mission of the TAD in this sense has largely been accomplished: ‘Clearly, the ever-expanding architecture of dialogues reflects the extraordinary development of the EU-US relations’ (Interview no. 38).

Yet TAD also presented important shortcomings, with one of them being the ineffectiveness of the mechanisms it introduced. Regarding the summits, for instance, they tended to be isolated events that did not build on one another and showed no clear line of progress (Steffenson, 2005, p. 34). As to the consultations at the expert and political directors/assistant or deputy assistant secretary level, they were criticised on the American side for being mere briefings for their counterparts for which they obtained little in return (Gardner,

2001, p. 89). This is an interesting claim that it is worth re-examining in the framework of this study almost 20 years later.

### **6.3.2. Clinton administration: reinforcing the foundations of the dialogue at the EU's request**

During the Clinton administration, the transatlantic relations went through several difficult phases, as the two sides squabbled over the crisis in the Balkans and trade wars over agriculture subsidies, beef, bananas, oilseeds, canned fruits, and Airbus. There were also pronounced disagreements regarding the pace of NATO and EU enlargement, which the United States wanted to accelerate as opposed to the more measured approach favoured by the Europeans (Van Oudenaren, 2010, p. 33). The distant relationship was already notable at the very beginning of the Clinton administration but both political entities eventually engaged in a pragmatic and incremental learning process leading to more cooperation by recognising the differences of the other (Smith & Woolcock, 1994). It was only in 1994 that President Bill Clinton clearly proclaimed his support for the EU and for Europe's development of stronger institutions of common action. Clinton soon saw himself as more pro-European than his predecessors. In his own words, his administration, unlike earlier ones, has 'not viewed with alarm ... the prospect that there could be greater European security cooperation between the French and the Germans and between others as well' (Lundestad, 2003, p. 257). Thus, in spite of trade disputes, the transatlantic relationship under Clinton saw an evolution that strengthened, rather than weakened, pre-existing patterns of cooperation and dialogue (Hanhimmäki et al., 2012, p. 141)

Indeed, in terms of dialogues, calls were made from the European side to further develop the system of consultation put in place in the TAD (Lundestad, 1993, p. 265). Indeed, it was widely accepted that the TAD had failed to revolutionise the relationship, and that its limited institutional framework was unable to contain new emerging tensions (trade disputes, lack of transatlantic unity concerning the Gulf war, the war in the Balkans) (Stefensson 2005, p. 36). The Europeans also wanted to guard against the domestic emphasis of Clinton administration after the end of the Cold War, signs of the United States reducing its role in Europe, and Washington's apparent concentration on Asia (Lundestad, 2003 p. 265).

### **The New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) and the Joint Action Plan (JAP)**

As a result, the EU and the United States agreed to significantly upgrade their relations by launching the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) on 3 December 1995 in Madrid, which would further solidify and complement the arrangements of the TAD (Van Oudenaren, 2010, p. 32). The NTA did not only produce a dedicated agenda, thereby adding substance to the transatlantic relationship, but it also introduced new institutions to administer the policy-making process (Steffenson, 2005, p. 35).

In terms of substance, the NTA basically elaborated on the TAD goals. The common objectives were much more detailed and were ordered under four distinct chapters whereby the partners could pursue deeper cooperation and identified priorities. These chapters were further detailed in the adjoining Joint EU-US Action Plan (JAP, 1995).<sup>20</sup> In addition, the EU and the United States committed to cooperate and produce so-called ‘deliverables’ in the form of joint agreements, statements, and initiatives (Steffenson, 2005, p. 37). This new emphasis on ‘deliverables’ is noteworthy because it indicates a wish to shift from mere consultations as in the TAD to more significant joint actions (Phillipart and Winand, 2001) to address one of the critics levelled at the TAD. This term corresponds to diplomat-speak for attaining specific outputs of coordinated or joint action in order to demonstrate the utility of, and time spent by, the highest levels of government in the transatlantic dialogue (Ginsberg, 2001b, p. 182).

In terms of structure, the NTA introduced two new important mechanisms to administer the relationship, i.e. to help coordinate and focus the whole process of cooperation: the Senior Level Group (SLG) and the NTA Task Force. They were created to help drive, coordinate, monitor, and implement the agenda for the EU-US summits (NTA, 1995) and have been described as a force of focus and continuity (Steffenson, 2005, p. 58).

In addition, the widening scope of cooperation covered by the NTA led to the creation of a new mosaic of consultations and additional structures of dialogues: whereas in the past, consultations used to focus on contentious bilateral trade issues, now the areas covered by the agreement include security, environment, health, education, humanitarian assistance, and more. The emergence of new security threats, such as international terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and regional conflicts such as the Balkan wars also enhanced the need for more transatlantic cooperation and hence for the creation of specific instances of dialogues. Thus, more than 170 issues of transatlantic, international, or global scope were prioritised with an

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<sup>20</sup> The four chapters of the NTA include: (1) promoting peace, stability, development, and democracy around the world; (2) responding to global challenges; (3) contributing to the expansion of world trade and promoting closer economic relations; and (4) building bridges across the Atlantic (NTA, 1995).

emphasis on practical approaches to these questions (Phillipart & Winand, 2001, p. 17). The different dialogues put in place are shown in the table below, according to broadly defined policy areas. It is important to note that the work in the framework of the political and security dialogues feeds into the twice-yearly EU-US sub-cabinet meetings (senior cabinet American officials and EU commission counterparts) and EU-US Foreign Affairs Ministers meetings. Decisions on EU-US political relations and the scope and content of policy cooperation and coordination occur at these levels and are rubber-stamped at the summits of the EU Council by the Commission Presidents and the US President during each EU Presidency (Ginsberg, 2001b, p. 182).

<b>Policy Areas, representations and frequency</b>	<b>Dialogues</b>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involving the EU Commission and its relevant DGs</li> <li>• frequency: either annual or bi-annual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Informal macroeconomic dialogue</li> <li>• High-level Regulatory Cooperation Dialogue</li> <li>• The High-level meeting on the enforcement of competition laws Dialogue</li> <li>• The Joint Customs cooperation committee (Vivet &amp; De Lalande, 2014)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political and Security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bi-annual</li> <li>• involving the US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and the EC equivalents referred to as ‘political directors’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU-US Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministerial</li> <li>• EU-US JHA Senior Officials meetings</li> <li>• Political dialogues on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Africa (COAFR)</li> <li>○ Consular affairs (COCON)</li> <li>○ Western Balkan region (COWEB)</li> <li>○ Development dialogue</li> <li>○ Human rights (COHOM)</li> <li>○ Humanitarian assistance</li> <li>○ Middle East and North Africa (MENA)</li> <li>○ United Nations (CONUN),</li> <li>○ Counter-terrorism,</li> <li>○ Chemical biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risk mitigation</li> <li>○ Non-proliferation and disarmament</li> <li>○ Conventional arms exports</li> <li>○ Enlargement (COELA)</li> <li>○ Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST)</li> <li>○ Latin America and the Caribbean (COLAC)</li> <li>○ Public International law (COJUR)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>Sectoral dialogues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Committee on Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training</li> <li>• The GPS-Galileo Satellite Cooperation</li> <li>• US-EU Space Dialogues (Civil Space and Space security)</li> <li>• the Steering Committee on Countering Violent extremism</li> <li>• The Steering Committee on migration and refugee issues,</li> <li>• EU-US platform for cooperation on migration and refugee issues</li> <li>• The Joint Technical Group on nuclear technology research and development,</li> <li>• The Dialogue on Drugs</li> <li>• The Working Group on Cyber-security and Cyber-crime</li> <li>• The Working Group on employment and labour-related issues</li> <li>• The informal financial markets regulatory dialogue</li> <li>• The chemicals regularity dialogue</li> <li>• The Technical Commission on energy efficient labelling programs</li> <li>• The Consumer product safety cooperation</li> <li>• The Transport Security Working Group</li> <li>• The Joint Committee for Air Transport and Air Safety</li> <li>• The high-level regulatory trilateral EU-US-China meetings</li> <li>• The Joint Senior level working group on development</li> </ul> <p>(see the scheme by Vivet &amp; Lalande, 2014)</p> <p><b><u>Added at a later stage:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU-US high level dialogue on Fisheries and Ocean governance</li> <li>• EU-US Information Society Dialogue</li> <li>• EU-US Innovation and Investment in the Digital Economy Dialogue</li> <li>• EU-US joint consultative group (JCG) meeting on science and technology cooperation</li> </ul> <p>(source: document from the State Department)</p>

Finally, the proliferation of dialogues under the impulse of the NTA also relates to its fourth chapter focusing on ‘building bridges’ across the Atlantic. Its aim was to broaden science and technology cooperation, people-to-people links across the Atlantic, information and cultural exchanges, and parliamentary links (NTA 1995; JAP 1995). Among its main flagship achievements, one counts the creation of interest group ‘dialogues’ such as the transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD), the transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD), the transatlantic Environmental Dialogue (TAED), and the Transatlantic Labour Dialogue (TALD). The strengthening of the parliamentary ties through the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue is also a product of the NTA and of its ambition to boost transatlantic relations at all levels (Jančić, 2014, p. 49; Steffenson, 2005, p. 38). Last but not least, there is also a wide range of informal dialogues that emerged at approximately the same time – albeit not government-sponsored, such as the Transatlantic Policy network, the Transatlantic Dialogue on Aviation and Climate Change, and the Transatlantic Donor Dialogue (Jančić, 2014, p. 6). In sum, the NTA opened the way to an ever-expanding edifice of dialogues, to which building stones even now continue to be added.

### **The Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP) and other initiatives**

In 1998, the Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP) was launched in order to intensify and broaden both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in trade and investment issues. More specifically, it committed the two sides to an ambitious programme of regulatory co-operation designed to reconcile – if not eliminate – regulatory barriers to trade and regulatory conflicts between them (Pollack & Schaffer, 2001, p. 907). It also aimed at tackling technical barriers to trade through the expansion of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA). Similar to NTA, the TEP was complemented and further detailed by the TEP Action plan, which set a more specific agenda and included target dates for actionable actions. In terms of new dialogue structures, the TEP Action plan added the TEP Steering Group, charged with monitoring, implementing, and reviewing TEP objectives and established specialised TEP Working groups at the expert level (Steffenson 2005, p. 44). The Transatlantic Partnership on Political co-operation (TPPC) agreement was also announced at this occasion, representing a commitment to intensify consultations for more effective political cooperation and establishing a new set of principles for applying economic sanctions (Ibid).

Last but not least, the inter-parliamentary dialogue was also reinforced at the 50th inter-parliamentary meeting on 15-16 January 1999 in Strasbourg when both delegations decided to launch the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (TLD), the formal response of the EP and the

US Congress to the call in the New Transatlantic Agenda for *enhanced* parliamentary ties. Subsequently, TLD activities expanded in order to include video conferences, special working groups on subjects of particular interest, and a facilitative role for direct exchanges between legislative committees of the European Parliament and the US Congress (European Parliament, 2017).

To sum up, under the Clinton administration the architecture of dialogues between the EU and the United States became significantly thicker. During this period of ‘transatlantic integration’, key channels of communication were established at all levels of representation to facilitate and promote cooperation across an impressive array of issues, covering nearly all realms of international politics.

## 6.4. 2000s onwards: “talking through thick and thin”

### **6.4.1. Bush administration: overall deterioration of the relationship but persistence of the dialogue**

While there is a wide consensus in the literature that the transatlantic relationship significantly deteriorated under the administration of George W. Bush (2001-2009), disagreements persist among scholars regarding the severity of the crisis and the extent of the damage done to the relationship. Some compared the crisis to a ‘transatlantic divorce’ (Daalder, 2001), while others were much less alarmist and recalled the many crises previously experienced and overcome by the EU and the United States (Lindberg, 2005). A notable debate evolved in this respect with Michael Cox and Vincent Pouliot on opposing sides. On the one hand (the more pessimistic side), Cox argued that the EU and the United States reached a critical tipping point, not necessarily because of the Iraq War or the Bush style of leadership, but rather due to the development of fundamental and deep-rooted differences between many European countries and the United States (Cox, 2005, 2006). On the other hand, Pouliot (2006) affirmed that in spite of the major divisions arising from the Iraq War, the Atlantic Community was ‘alive and well’, thereby downplaying the depth of the crisis.

### **“A game of two-halves”**

After a brief period of rapprochement between the United States and Europe following the 9/11 attacks, deep disagreements resurfaced over the Bush’s administration conduct on the ‘Global war on terror’ and over other issues such as commitments to multilateralism, climate change, and security institutions more broadly, exemplified by the dispute over the International

Criminal Court (Groenleer, 2016). During the second Bush administration, transatlantic relations slightly improved due to its attempts to re-engage with European allies, but the damage had already been done. He continued to push policies such as missile defence and NATO enlargement to which Europeans were opposed (Lynch, 2013, p. 424).

Interestingly enough, despite the high tensions between the United States and the European Union at that time and the ‘disdain’ of some American officials towards the European preference for diplomacy,<sup>21</sup> the machinery of consultations/dialogues continued to work and additional dialogues were even created during this rocky period. This is particularly true for President Bush’s second term (2005-2009). According to a high-level US diplomat working closely with Bush at that time:

When the President was re-elected in 2004, there was a conscious strategic decision on his side. He realized that trying to create a coalition of the willing was less effective than trying to work with the EU as a whole. So, he came to Brussels in January 2005. There was at that time a huge emphasis on these dialogues. In fact, it became clear that we (US) needed to try to find mechanisms to work with the EU. A lot of these mechanisms had been set up but we continued to set up more dialogues (Interview no. 29).

Echoing this point, Wyles (2008) argued, ‘Bush’s legacy to his successor will be a much more broadly developed dialogue with the European Union than he inherited’. For instance, this was the case in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, in which political and operational cooperation on counter-terrorism particularly flourished and gained momentum after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 (Aldrich, 2004; Burghardt, 2013) (Burghardt, 2013). US-EU cooperation against terrorism has fostered dialogue on law enforcement and homeland security issues previously reserved for bilateral discussions with individual EU member states. Indeed, contacts between US and EU officials – from the cabinet level to the working level – on police, judicial, and border control policy matters have increased substantially since 2001. The Secretary of State, US Attorney General, and Secretary of Homeland Security meet at the ministerial level with their respective EU counterparts at least once a year, and a US-EU working group of senior officials meets once every six months to discuss police and judicial cooperation against terrorism. In addition, the United States and the EU have developed a regular dialogue on terrorist financing and have established a high-level policy dialogue on

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<sup>21</sup> On the eve of war with Iraq in 2003, a senior official in George W. Bush’s administration was heard to complain bitterly about Europe’s preference for diplomacy and engagement over action: ‘The only thing Europeans were really good at, he said, was convening meetings’ (Stephens, 2010, p. 45).

border and transport security to discuss issues such as passenger data-sharing, cargo security, biometrics, visa policy, and sky marshals (Archick, 2016, p. 8).

In addition, the transatlantic institutional architecture has been further built up in the economic realm, as well as leading to the creation of further dialogues. For instance, during the 2008 US-EU Summit, Bush, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso signed the Framework for Advancing Transatlantic Economic Integration, which created the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC). This has become the primary plenary forum for economic dialogue between the United States and the EU. Meeting at least once a year, the co-chairs of the TEC – the White House Deputy National Special Advisor for International Economic Affairs and the European Commission Vice President for Trade – promote dialogue and agreement to further integrate the transatlantic economies (US Department of State, 2017). Within the TEC, the High-Level Working Group on economic growth and Job Creation led by DG TRADE on the European side played an instrumental role in recommending the launching of a comprehensive trade agreement in 2012, known today as TTIP (Archick & Morelli, 2013, p. 2). Yet with the launching of the TTIP negotiations under President Obama a year later, the TEC lost quite a bit of its relevance because many issues related to trade have been discussed in the negotiation framework (Interview no. 32).

At the inter-parliamentary level, dialogues continued to take place twice a year and became especially important during this time of crisis. As an MEP member of the EU parliamentary delegation to the United States recalls: ‘When I entered the parliament in 2004, there were tense EU-US relations in the backdrop of the Iraq invasion. I was one of the people thinking that it was a huge mistake but I believed that it was not thoughtful to turn our back to the US and this is the reason why I have been so much involved in the work of this important delegation’ (Interview no. 4).

In short, this section showed that despite turbulences at the macro-level (i.e. the poor state of the transatlantic relationship), once the dialogue structures have been established, they are very difficult to dismantle. In times of crisis, they become not just valuable, but necessary.

#### **6.4.2. Obama administration (2009-2016): appeasement and proliferation of dialogues**

A brief review of the transatlantic literature under the Obama administration reveals again a wide consensus about the positive change brought about in the state of the relationship during that time. In fact, since the beginning of his Presidency, Barack Obama made very clear his

promise to restore the transatlantic relationship that was damaged after eight years of the Bush Presidency. On 3 April 2009, Obama held an important speech at the 60th anniversary of NATO in Strasbourg, emphasising that he ‘saw an opportunity for the US and Europe to renew the strongest alliance that the world has ever known’ (Stephens, 2010). Taking stock of the mistakes of the past, American officials reiterated their commitment to repair the relationship and to approach the new global agenda in a genuinely cooperative, rather than domineering, manner. As US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Philip Gordon, put it in Brussels during one of his visits, ‘As we look around the world and think about which partners can help us deal with challenges like Iran, Afghanistan, climate change and the global financial crisis... nowhere are there greater or more important partners than in Europe and the European Union.’ He continued, ‘It’s not just understanding that we need strong partners, but dealing with them in a way that we hope shows some humility... and respect for the positions of others...’ (Budd, 2010, p. 35). This renewed commitment to the transatlantic relationship was warmly welcomed by the Europeans who perhaps a bit hastily decided to award Obama the Nobel Peace Prize.

Yet for many commentators, despite the fine rhetoric there was not any substantial change in Obama’s policy. According to Nielsen (2012), the main difference between Obama and his predecessor derived from his diplomatic skills and tone. Echoing this line of argument, Csanyi (2014, p. 222) argued that Obama pursued transatlantic relations in a manner that was quite similar to George W. Bush in his second term of office: he continued to disappoint Europeans on climate change and expressed the ongoing and constant American dissatisfaction with regards to European contributions to NATO capabilities in Afghanistan. In addition, it would be a mistake to consider Obama as a ‘natural Atlanticist’: his foreign policy paid relatively little attention to Europe, as his agenda was clearly dominated by the ‘pivot to Asia’ and the ‘reset policy’ with Russia.<sup>22</sup> However, a whole array of new challenges required a high degree of cooperation between the EU and the United States: from the threat posed to the transatlantic economic space by the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, to the events collectively dubbed ‘the Arab Spring’ in 2011 through the continuing rise of the Rest (Hanhimäki, 2012, p. 5).

As a result, in addition to the dialogues that were already set up and still very much active, more was added to the architecture of dialogues, such as the Energy Council in 2009, the EU-US Cyber Dialogue in 2014, and the most recent EU-US Security and Development

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<sup>22</sup> For a variety of views about Obama’s European legacy, see the article in Politico (Politico, 2016).

Dialogue. The dialogue on counter-terrorism has also been strengthened with US and EU officials now engaged in expert-level dialogues on critical infrastructure protection and resilience, as well as on preventing violent extremism (Archick, 2016, p. 8). The contacts and exchanges between the EU and the United States on such a wide range of issues have become so intense that high-level European and American officials in charge of the relationship confess they are having a hard time keeping track of all of them (Interviews no. 32 and 29). Yet the dialogue – or rather the absence thereof – that has obviously attracted most of the attention has been the cancellation of the EU-US Summit scheduled for May 2010 in Madrid over the decision of Obama not to attend it (Lynch, 2013, p. 424). Offering the pretext that it was only a scheduling issue, Obama apparently did not judge his participation necessary or important enough to attend yet another summit with the Europeans. In reality, according to officials close to the US President, ‘Mr. Obama felt that the previous major American-European summit meeting, last June in Prague, was a waste of time’ (Erlanger, 2010) and he was ‘fairly unimpressed’ with this summit when all 27 leaders lined up to shake his hand (MacAskill & Watt, 2010). Considerations of domestic politics were also cited to explain his refusal to attend. In any case, Obama’s decision to skip the meeting was experienced as a kind of ‘insult’ by the Europeans, who were expecting a different type of treatment commensurate with their identity as ‘key partners’ of the United States. Reports described the reaction of the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, as angry and embarrassed. In the same vein, his close ally and governing Socialist Party’s spokesman in the Spanish parliament affirmed, ‘I think the US administration is and must be aware of what Europe is’ (Ibid.), hinting once again that some Europeans felt the United States takes its relationship with the EU for granted.

#### **6.4.3. One year into the Trump Presidency: “business as usual in terms of dialogue”**

Following Donald Trump’s disparaging remarks on the future of Europe<sup>23</sup> and his election in November 2016, many commentators were quick to announce the demise of the transatlantic relations, while sensational headlines in international newspapers talked about a profound change on the horizon. Even top level European officials, such as the President of the European Commission, warned that, ‘Trump risked upsetting the EU-US relations’ (*The Guardian*, 2016). In a way, the current crisis is reminiscent of the Bush years, in which the prevailing

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<sup>23</sup> That included among other things: cheering on Brexit, stating that NATO is obsolete, and questioning the very need for the European bloc (Collinson, 2017).

discourse was all about the ‘the end of the West’. Thus, the same old question arises again: to what extent are the fundamentals of the transatlantic relationship in jeopardy? Is it simply another family quarrel or does it herald deeper structural changes in relations between Europe and the United States? While it may be too early to say, a few points can be made regarding the enhanced importance of dialogues in this new era of unpredictability and inconsistency associated with Trump.

Indeed, noteworthy is the inconsistency of Trump’s position when it comes to US relations with Europe. While the change of tone of the President during the election and after taking office has been notable, it continued to shift regularly over Trump’s first year in office as well, sowing immense confusion. In fact, on the one hand, shortly after the elections the Trump administration sent signals it will continue to work with the EU. For instance, during his visit to Brussels in February 2017, Vice President Mike Pence pledged a ‘strong commitment’ to the EU in an attempt to reassure the Europeans (Pence, 2017). A few months later, Trump said during a press conference with the Italian Prime Minister in the White House that a strong Europe is, ‘very, very important to me as president of the United States and it’s also in my very strong opinion... important for the United States,’ adding that the United States would help the EU ‘be strong’ (Elzas, 2017). On the other hand, Trump continues to perceive Europe in transactional zero-sum terms, with a heavy emphasis on economic nationalism. Just recently, he engaged in escalatory trade war rhetoric against the European Union, adding further strains on the relationship (Smith, 2018). As a result, Europeans are deeply frustrated with the Trump administration’s mixed messages, making it difficult for them to know how to react or even distinguish between policy and rumination (Karnitschnig, 2017b).

In this context, the continuation of the dialogues institutionalised over the years is of paramount importance in order to clarify these issues and avoid any severe misperceptions or misunderstandings between both sides. While Europeans admit they have been struggling to make sense of his foreign policy, they also highlight the utility and value of the channels of communication well-established beforehand that allow them to ask directly their American counterparts for more information and clarification in these times of unpredictability (Interviews no. 23, 38, and 39). In this sense, the relevance of the dialogue has therefore increased rather than decreased.

More specifically, at the level of the executive dialogues, no substantial change has been reported, if any. In the early months of the Trump presidency, many European diplomats complained about the difficulty to identify the new American counterparts at the time of the transition, which did not go as smoothly as expected (Interviews no. 23 and 24). The general

confusion and lack of clarity have transpired in the first meetings between the European ambassadors and their counterparts. According to one Eastern European Ambassador commenting on these discussions, ‘The policy was often unclear and the problem is that people don’t know anything. They are quite open about it... It doesn’t matter what level. It is all levels’ (Birnbaum & Jaffe, 2017). Apart from that, both European and American diplomats report that, ‘The channels of communication that have been established over the years are still in place and the next dialogues on the agenda are being prepared as if nothing had changed’ (Interviews no. 23, 38, and 39). As one US diplomat explained to me, ‘If we don’t get the very explicit instruction to lower or stop a dialogue with the EU, it will just keep going’ (Interview no. 38). This suggests that once in place, the consultative mechanisms are difficult to dismantle, even if the state of the relationship at the macro-level is not at its best. Examples of recent high-level dialogues that took place in the first months of the Trump administration include the meetings of the Energy Council in May, the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial dialogue in Malta in June 2017, and more recently the 15<sup>th</sup> EU-US Information Society dialogue in February 2018 (Kostaki, 2018).

However, one notable exception of a change of policy that had direct negative implications on the dialogues has been the suspension of the negotiations regarding TTIP. Indeed, following Trump’s decision regarding TTIP, a new forum of dialogue was instead set up between the EU and the United States, namely the Joint Task Force. This body is now responsible for making progress on trade while the negotiations are put on ice. According to the President of the EU Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, ‘The Joint Task Force will serve as a forum to exchange points of view because we (US-EU representatives) estimate that there are too many divergences in approach and analysis between these two big economic blocs when it comes to trade matters’ (Vincenti, 2017).

At the inter-parliamentary level, the dialogues keep taking place at the same pace, i.e. twice a year – albeit with a more assertive American voice than before (Interview no. 19). In the debriefing session of the 80<sup>th</sup> IPM after Trump’s election, the chairman of the EP delegation to the United States emphasised: ‘We came back from Washington with a clear understanding that our relationship transcends elections. We conveyed and received a message of continuity and unity and we need that in this new context, we – as lawmakers – have to go out and to explain the importance of the relationship to our respective administrations more than ever’ (Video no.2). Interestingly enough, one of the MEPs directly asked the American Ambassador, Anthony Gardner, who was present at this same meeting: ‘How do you think that the Europeans can improve their image in the US to be better appreciated by the Administration?’ To this

direct question, which revealed the recognition conundrum of the EU in a very blunt way, the US Ambassador answered:

To counter the possible bilateral transactional basis that the Trump administration is likely to take, you need to prove and explain that that the EU is capable of delivering. As lawmakers, you clearly have a play to role in that. You need to couch your arguments in terms of what EU-US relations can do for the US. This is the language that resonates. Talk less about values and more about how it makes sense in terms of US interests if you want to convince them (Video no.2).

As will be demonstrated in the empirical analysis, this is exactly what the Europeans are trying to project during the dialogues with their American counterparts.

As to the civil society level, dialogues between businesses and consumer groups across the Atlantic continue as usual and are closely working out propositions to improve transatlantic relations in spite of the suspension of the negotiations. On the consumer side, a report was recently released dealing with what TACD considers to be a consumer-friendly trade agreement (TACD, 2017). As one of the members explained,

We worked on this “vision paper” to take advantage of the break in TTIP negotiations and not to waste time. Instead of focusing on all the things we think are wrong with trade agreements and being perceived as critical of that- we’ve decided to take a different approach and present what consumers would like to see, this is what we think should be a good trade agreement. With the suspension of TTIP now, we paradoxically find that EU officials are very interested in hearing from the consumer side more ideas about how moving forward. This break should not be considered as “TTIP is over – but rather as a good opportunity to reflect on what can be done better in the future” (Interview no. 43).

The same forward-feeding vision is present in the work done by the Transatlantic Business Council: thinking about how they can make progress in light of this new situation (Interview no. 40).

Last but not least, an interesting phenomenon is currently emerging, namely the reinforcement of direct ties between US cities and states with Europe, bypassing the Trump-era White House altogether. According to the California Governor, Jerry Brown, who was received at the European Parliament last November, ‘Contacts between US states and other countries can be helpful and important, because you have to keep talking. This business of yelling at each other across the ocean is not good’ (Birnbaum & Jaffe, 2017).

To conclude, this last section has shown that in spite of the alarming headlines trumpeting a serious deterioration in transatlantic relations, the whole machinery of dialogues that has been set up over the years keeps working at full steam. What transpires in the headlines is just the tip of the iceberg while the bulk of the intense cooperation between the EU and the

United States goes unnoticed. In this sense, I tend to agree with Smith and McGuire, who argued 10 years ago that, ‘The continuing political dialogue that characterizes the Euro-American system will not allow for an easy divorce or separate development’ (2008). In today’s particular circumstances, the exchanges and dialogues between non-state actors in the transatlantic context takes on a new importance.

## Conclusion

This chapter does not claim to do justice to all the subtleties of the transatlantic relationship given the immensity and complexity of Euro-American relations. Yet by taking a more focused approach on the evolution of the dialogues within the wider context of the transatlantic relations, it has highlighted the changing pattern of initiative and consultation in Atlantic affairs.

First, in broad terms, there has been a remarkable proliferation of dialogues established between the EU and the United States over the years at different institutional levels and dealing with a wide range of issues. When compared to the paucity of the first political consultations in the 1970s and 1980s, when both sides were only reluctantly and cautiously engaging with each other, today’s architecture of dialogues, which has almost taken a life of its own, constitutes an extraordinary development.

Secondly, the analysis has shown that the state of the transatlantic relationship affects the dialogue more than the other way around, but only when it comes to dialogue initiation. Indeed, it is important to properly differentiate between the initiation of the dialogue in the first place and its continuation and further development. The state of the relationship generally influences the ease with which the dialogues are established in the first place. This is demonstrated by the contrast between the difficult initiation of the political consultations in the 1970s and 1980s, when both sides were animated by the ‘question of control’ or more precisely the fear of a lack of it, and the impressive institutionalization of the dialogues in the 1990s in the backdrop of improved relationships. Once established, however, dialogues are not easily suspended or interrupted. The channels of communication remain open and become partially insulated from the turbulences at the macro-level. They become even more important and useful in these times when clarifications and better understanding are tremendously needed.

This conclusion therefore confirms the solidity of the transatlantic edifice whose glue could be called ‘dialogue’, thereby echoing Michael Cox’s (2012) idea that ‘the transatlantic relationship is too big to fail’. While alarming headlines often portray a very bleak picture of

the transatlantic relationship and its future, it is important to be aware of the fact that this is only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. Much more is going on ‘under the surface’, with channels of communication established at all levels and covering almost all possible issues. Their extensive use keeps the relationship alive and kicking.

Finally, the New Transatlantic Agenda remains today the most significant transatlantic policy document: it sets out a comprehensive framework within which EU-US relations have constantly developed. The mega-structure of dialogues that has emerged out of these successive agreements (TAD, NTA and the TEP) has been described by some scholars as a ‘whole system of governance’, i.e. as an *effective* decision-making system at different levels, involving different types of actors, fuelling one level to another (Pollack & Schaffer, 2001; Steffenson, 2005).

However, key questions regarding the development of the architecture of dialogues in the transatlantic context and their added value remain unanswered. First of all, for the above-mentioned studies conceptualizing the mega-structure of dialogues as a system of governance, the main function of these dialogues is to promote cooperation in the liberal institutionalist vein. In fact, taking as the starting point the mandates of these institutions, these studies assess the extent to which the actors deliver the outcomes expected from them on the basis of the decisions taken in the framework of these deliberations. A close examination of the practices unfolding within the meeting room that goes beyond the rationale assessment of the results obtained will provide additional insights on the added value of these numerous dialogues that have been proliferating over the years. Secondly, while this chapter has shown that dialogues were most likely to be initiated in times of transatlantic congruence, more light needs to be shed regarding the rationale behind the continuation of the dialogues even in times of turbulences. For historical institutionalists for instance, the persistence of the dialogues (understood as specific institutions) might well be explained by the vested interests of the actors taking part in them (Fioretos, 2011). But is it really the case? Can we point to another reason related to non-material considerations that would justify the development and persistence of these multiple pockets of deliberation among European and American actors?

As Chapter 4 has shown, the EU is in a dire need to get recognition for its institutional identity and particularly so vis-à-vis the United States. This important insight needs to be explored when considering the development and persistence of the transatlantic dialogues over time. In fact, as it has been explained at length in chapter 2, the practice of dialogue can serve to anchor states’ or institutions’ identities through an on-going and iterative process of recognition, achieved in the face-to-face interaction between representatives of participating

institutions. The analytical framework presented in chapter 2 details the process through which the anchoring of institutional identity occurs at the micro-level with implications at the macro-institutional level thanks to the power of symbolism. It suggests that these dialogical encounters are conceived as a performance in which the representatives of the institutions get to experience the other institutions and vice versa. As such, actors seeking recognition go to great lengths to display the qualities that are part and parcel of their institutional identity and for which they want to be recognized. Recognition is granted if the actors seeking recognition ‘feel that there has been a match between their self-image and the treatment they deem appropriate to receive by the recognizing party’ (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, p.17-18). Thus, the theoretical framework provides various cues – both verbal and non-verbal- that can be interpreted as implicit acts of recognition along three critical moments of the dialogical interaction: (1) the preparation of the dialogue and its setting (2) the communication and interaction during the dialogue itself (both formal and informal moments); and (3) the stage where the participants leave the room and carry with them the recognition process that has taken place behind closed doors. It is thanks to the use of visual, discursive and practical anchors that recognition is clinched and projected to the world.

In the three following chapters, this analytical framework is applied empirically in an attempt to bring a more nuanced understanding of the added value and function of the multiple EU-US dialogues that have resisted the test of time and of political crises. The in-depth investigation of the constellation of practices related to these dialogues, as well as the perceptions held by European and American participants of their added value will determine the extent to which these dialogues fulfil also an additional important function related to identity matters and recognition. More specifically, the huge edifice of dialogues will be disaggregated in a few of its constituent parts. The analysis will thus focus on three different formats of dialogues with unique advantages and constraints: The Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue (TLD), the executive working groups involving the EEAS, the European Commission and the US Department of State, and two transatlantic dialogues involving non-governmental actors (TABC and TACD). While recognizing that each institution (whether it is the European Parliament, the EEAS, the Commission or the non-governmental actors) has its own specific vested interests and distinct organizational cultures, I expect all of them to play a role in the quest for the recognition of the EU’s institutional identity– albeit with different degrees. One variation to be established through the application of the theoretical framework is the level of salience of the recognition processes which occur between the governmental, parliamentary and non-governmental forms of dialogue.

## Chapter 7 – The Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue: a dialogue among friends

The Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue (TLD) – regularly bringing together members of the European Parliament and representatives of the American Congress since the early 1970s – constitutes an important albeit unknown forum of transatlantic dialogue. In the spirit of equality, the declaration on the TLD specifies that the bi-annual inter-parliamentary meetings shall take place alternately in the United States and in Europe. The aim of this chapter is to examine both the discursive dynamics and constellation of symbolic practices unfolding during the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue *at the granular micro-level* in an attempt to gauge its added value and implications at the macro-institutional level. While such instances of parliamentary diplomacy have been critically defined as ‘tourist diplomacy’ (Herranz, 2005), the main argument developed here suggests that far from being merely a ‘talk shop’, the regular inter-parliamentary meetings (IPMs) between members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and American congressmen allow the representatives of the European Parliament to seek recognition for and anchor the EU’s institutional identity.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first contextualise the TLD in the wider context of ‘parliamentary diplomacy’ as increasingly practised by the European Union in recent years. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two is then applied to the case of the TLD, emphasising the importance of the socio-psychological dimension of the dialogical interaction. Put differently, the empirical analysis brings evidence to the mechanism of recognition and anchoring of institutional identity at play during the three main phases of the dialogue (i.e. entering the room, communication in the room, and leaving the room). The third part of the chapter is dedicated to the assessment of these identity dynamics by European representatives, which is then contrasted with the American perspective. Finally, I discuss the relevance of other dynamics unfolding simultaneously during the dialogue. The empirical data used in this chapter relates to three Inter-Parliamentary Meetings (76<sup>th</sup> IPM in Riga in June 2015; 77<sup>th</sup> IPM in Washington, DC, in November 2015; and the 78<sup>th</sup> IPM in The Hague in June 2016) that took place under the Obama administration. The analysis is based on 25 semi-structured interviews

conducted with MEPs and American congressmen who participated in these dialogues, as well as on field notes taken during two participant observations.<sup>24</sup>

## 7.1. The TLD in the context of parliamentary diplomacy

### 7.1.1. Emergence of parliamentary diplomacy at the EU level

Before delving into the analysis of the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue, it is important to put this initiative in perspective, i.e. as an instance of ‘parliamentary diplomacy’. According to Jančić (2014, p. 43), parliamentary diplomacy is an international politico-legal phenomenon that relates to the significant growth in the number of international or transnational parliamentary bodies. It corresponds to a generally increased parliamentary input in global affairs. Parliamentary diplomacy includes a variety of international activities by various parliamentary actors (individual parliamentarians, political parties, and parliaments as a whole) at various levels (intrastate, interstate, intra-regional, inter-regional, and international) (Fiott, 2011, p. 2). It can take a wide variety of forms ranging from multilateral international parliamentary bodies to involvement in the monitoring of elections in third countries (Stavridis, 2002).

In the EU context, parliamentary diplomacy has also taken root as part of a wider process whereby the European Parliament has come to play a more important role in the external relations of the EU – leading some scholars to designate this phenomenon as the ‘ongoing parliamentarization of external relations’ (Raube, 2012). The need to democratise EU decision-making both in internal and external affairs has been the main factor behind this development, and parliamentary democracy has prevailed as the instrument for achieving this goal (Jančić, 2014). By regularly resorting to ‘democratic blackmailing’ and by emphasising the lack of democratic accountability, the EP has managed to gain additional powers in the EU’s decision-making (Jančić, 2014, p. 41; Raube, 2012, p. 67). Two main instruments of power available to the EP in external affairs have traditionally been mentioned in the literature: the assent procedure that gives the Parliament veto powers over international agreements with the exception of agreements which are exclusively part of the CFSP (‘consent power’) and the ‘power of the purse’ (Raube, 2012, p. 67), whereby the Parliament has the final say in regards

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<sup>24</sup> I chose to focus my analysis on these three TLD meetings, as I gained access both to the full range of documents (both public and confidential) recording them and to some of the meetings themselves. I am fully aware that they all correspond to inter-parliamentary meetings that took place under one single US Democratic administration. The implications of a new administration on the quality of the dialogues will be discussed in the conclusion of the thesis.

to the community's expenses for external relations that fall under the general budget (Ripoll Servent, 2014; Wisniewski, 2013, p. 84).

Importantly, apart from these instruments that relate to the internal institutional functioning of the EU, the EP also engages *directly* on the international scene in multilateral and bilateral inter-parliamentary forums engaging in inter-parliamentary diplomacy (Jančić, 2014, p. 41).<sup>25</sup> This intense diplomatic activity is reflected in the fact that one counts today a total of 40 EP delegations classified in four main categories: 'Delegations to Parliamentary Assemblies; Delegations to Joint Parliamentary Committees; Delegations to Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and Delegations for relations with third countries and external entities' (Jančić, 2014, p. 47), with one of them being the EU parliamentary delegation for relations with the United States.

### **7.1.2. A long tradition of EU-US inter-parliamentary dialogues**

The EU parliamentary delegation for relations with the United States is special in the sense that it has a long historical tradition of dialogue with the American Congress. In fact, the inter-parliamentary relationship between the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress is the longest and most intensive in the history of the European Parliament (European Parliament, n.d.). Bi-annual EU-US inter-parliamentary meetings were set out as early as 1972, when a group of members of the U.S. House of Representatives, led by former Representative Sam Gibbons of the House Ways and Means Committee, travelled to Brussels for the express purpose of meeting and exchanging views with the European Parliament. These initial parliamentary contacts became known as the United States-European Community Inter-Parliamentary Group (Archick & Morelli, 2013, p. 2). Yet it was only on 15-16 January 1999, on the occasion of the 50th inter-parliamentary meeting, that the EU and US delegations decided to set up a Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue in order to implement the call made four years earlier to enhance transatlantic parliamentary ties by the NTA<sup>26</sup> (Jančić, 2014, p. 51). As of the time of writing (March 2018), 81 inter-parliamentary dialogues between the EP and the Congress have taken place.

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion on the legal basis of the European Parliament's international 'diplomatic' action, see Jančić, 2014, p. 46.

<sup>26</sup> In the NTA, the EU and the United States emphasise that '[they] attach great importance to enhanced parliamentary links and that they will consult parliamentary leaders on both sides of the Atlantic regarding consultative mechanisms, including those building on existing institutions, to discuss matters related to our transatlantic partnership' (NTA, 1995).

### **7.1.3. Objectives of the dialogue: democratic oversight, harmonization, and early warning**

The official objectives of the TLD are both ambitious and limited at the same time. According to the 1999 Joint Statement on the establishment of the TLD, ‘the aim of the TLD is to strengthen and enhance the level of discourse between European and American legislators’. It further stipulates that the ‘TLD would develop into a powerful tool to add a new level of democratic oversight to the expanding transatlantic partnership’ and ‘to assist in the development of more *harmonized approaches* to issues of joint concern and in preventing disputes in sensitive areas before they occur’ (European Parliament, n.d.). It is worth noting, however, that through this cautious wording, American and European executive branches stopped short of any invitation or promise of direct legislative involvement in their policy for obvious reasons linked to the separation of power (Philippart, 2001, p. 403). Furthermore, these objectives can also be categorised as inward- and outward-looking. Internally, the dialogue is designed to address deficiencies in terms of transparency through the reinforcement of democratic oversight over the transatlantic relationship, thereby fostering the democratic element of EU international relations. Externally, the objective of ‘leading to a convergence of positions’ suggests the possibility to influence and convince the other side. As to the early-warning function, it refers to the privileged position of the parliaments to avoid backlashes and low points in the relations. While these objectives might be reached with varying degrees of success (Jančić, 2016), my contention in this chapter is that the TLD serves an additional purpose related to identity matters – i.e. it helps the EU to gain recognition and anchor its institutional identity. In what follows, I demonstrate precisely how this process of recognition and anchoring of institutional identity comes about in the framework of the inter-parliamentary meetings.

## **7.2. The process of recognition**

The chapter will show that in the case of the TLD, there is a striking asymmetry in terms of commitment and engagement in the dialogue between the EU and the United States. From the preparation to the follow-up phase, MEPs are much more invested in this dialogue than their American counterparts. While the way in which the dialogue is conducted makes particularly visible this asymmetry, it presents at the same time an opportunity for the EU to gain recognition and proves its American counterparts that it is worth investing in this dialogue. In

fact, the analysis shows that MEPs approach the dialogue as a performance in which they have the opportunity to project the different dimensions of the EU institutional identity, both in terms of relevance and distinctiveness. Based on the MEPs' positive perceptions of the treatment they receive during the dialogue, the chapter shows that recognition is granted during these meetings and, as such, they help anchor the institutional identity of the EU. In this section, I outline the process of recognition unfolding at the micro-level and its ramifications at the macro-level thanks to the power of symbolism. Put differently, I focus on what actually occurs step-by-step during the dialogical interaction of the IPMs bringing empirical evidence for each one of the stages outlined in the theoretical chapter (i.e. entering the room, communication in the room, and leaving the room). I show how the spatial immediacy and emotional display inherent in the dialogical interaction are exploited in order to seek and grant recognition for the institutional identity of the actors in presence.

### **7.2.1. Entering the room: preparation and setting**

The desire of the EU to be recognised by its American counterparts as a relevant, 'serious', and unified interlocutor is already manifest in the preparatory phase of the dialogue whereby the EU takes the lead in the preparation of the dialogue and puts a heavy emphasis on the internal preparation of its 'team performance', *à la Goffman* (1959, p.47), aimed at maintaining a certain impression upon others.

While each TLD lasts in reality no more than a day and a half, its preparation involves long months of reflection and intense preparation, particularly on the European side. On the European side, it is the Secretariat and the Bureau of the Parliamentary Delegation for the relations with the United States that are at the forefront of the TLD preparation, working closely with the EU Delegation to the United States and with the European Parliamentary Liaison Office (EPLO)<sup>27</sup> in Washington. On the US side, no similar structure exists. The USTLD has no dedicated staff in the House of Representatives but relies on the Foreign Affairs Committee Staff to prepare the TLD meetings (Archick and Morelli, 2013, p. 15). As the TLD is just one event among many others they need to set up, the United States traditionally has less time and resources to dedicate to the preparation of the TLD compared to their European counterparts (Interview no. 16).

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<sup>27</sup> The European Parliamentary Liaison Office was created in April 2010, by the then-President of the EP, Jerzy Buzek. Among many other functions, EPLO monitors US legislative activity and relays information about it between both sides. It also assists the visits by MEPs and has the potential to play a great role in facilitating the EU-US parliamentary dialogue (Jančić, 2014, p. 57).

Even though the EU and the United States formally have the co-responsibility to prepare the TLD bi-annual meetings, in practice the EU often takes the lead in the preparation of these meetings in an attempt to make the most of them and to appear as a reliable and serious interlocutor. Two specific aspects are crucial in this regard: the choice of the topics on the agenda to be discussed and the drafting of the Joint Statement. Usually, each TLD meeting tackles three to four main topics of common interests highly relevant to both Europeans and Americans, covering political as well as economic issues. The topics for discussion are often proposed by the staff of the Secretariat and further discussed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the delegation, as well as with MEPs who are also invited to raise topics they would like to tackle directly with their American counterparts (Interview no. 3). In line with the idea of ‘joint consultation’, the American representatives are also consulted on a regular basis and, ultimately, both sides agree on a suitable agenda that reflects their common interests.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the American counterparts are also involved in the preparation phase but they often play a minor role, mostly reacting to the proposals put forward in the first place by the European delegation. In the words of a close observer of the TLD on the American side, ‘the initiative comes mainly from the EU – they are in the driver seat while for the Americans, this is much of a reactionary thing’ (Interview no. 21).

In addition to the choice of the topics on the agenda, the drafting of the Joint statement setting out the positions agreed upon by both delegations is also an important part of the preparation of the dialogue. In this regard as well, the EU tends to take the lead. Normally it is the host that drives the drafting of the joint statement. Yet recently there have been instances in which the EU has taken the lead even when the meeting took place in the United States. As a US official mentioned, ‘the last meeting that was in DC, they (Europeans) had a lot of initiative and they got to draft the statement before we got to do it. That was fine, we then added our comments but normally it is more balanced’ (Interview no. 9). This strong sense of initiative is not innocuous. It can be seen both as a subtle way to exert more influence on the parameters of the dialogue and on its outcome (i.e. formulation of the Joint Statement), as well as to project the image of a highly committed and competent partner in this common endeavour.

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<sup>28</sup> Very often, the selected topics correspond to ‘hot issues’, related to high-profile events that require timely consultation between American and European legislators. Looking at past TLD meetings’ topics, one gets a clear sense of the issues agitating the world at each specific point of time: in 2007, for instance, the discussions of the 63th TLD in Las Vegas tackled mainly the situation in the Middle East linked to the nuclear threat posed by Iran, and the future status of the Kosovo (63th TLD Joint Statement, 2007). By comparison, in the 76<sup>th</sup> TLD held in Riga, MEPs and congressmen talked at length about the Dialogue with Russia, the situation in Syria, and the refugee crisis (76<sup>th</sup> TLD Joint Statement, 2015).

For instance, the comparison of the joint statements with the non-papers distributed to MEPs ahead of the meetings shows that several topics particularly relevant for the Europeans have made their way to the final document. This includes the question of Russian propaganda, the need to enhance the cooperation on refugee issues or the necessity to incorporate the energy issue under TTIP (Participant observation, 2016).

The preparatory phase of the dialogue is also used by the European participants to work on their 'team performance' in an attempt to come across during the interaction with the Americans as a relevant and unified actor. The high level of preparation of the MEPs is instrumental in order to make a good impression on their US counterparts and to project a positive image of the EP. Indeed, a recurrent theme that has clearly emerged from my analysis is the high level of preparation done by the EU and the high degree of preparedness of its members compared to their American counterparts: for instance, one MEP in a key position in the TLD mentioned that 'generally, the Europeans are more prepared. We really read the non-papers, we plan everything, and we generally understand the United States better' (Interview no. 6). In the same vein, another high-level European figure mentioned: 'Our secretariat does a lot of excellent preparatory work, so you know the result is that our guys are quite well-informed in these meetings and they are quite realistic about what to expect from the US side because it is clear that it does not really happen over here (in the US)' (Interview no. 8). The rationale behind this high level of preparation is to prove to the Americans that it was worth talking to Europeans, that is was worth coming to Europe, and, in short, that Europe is relevant: 'Meeting for the sake of meeting is not good enough so we really need to bring some added value to convince Americans members to travel. We really have to make sure that it is worthwhile and that members will not regret that they travelled and hosted' (Interviews no. 1, 18).

There is indeed a lot of pressure on MEPs to coordinate before the dialogue among themselves but also with other EU institutions such as the EEAS in an attempt to counter the recurrent criticism addressed against the EU on its lack of coherence as an actor. In order to achieve this high level of coordination and expertise, the Secretariat takes several steps. First, after *jointly* agreeing on the topics to be discussed in the next TLD, the EU and the US parliamentary delegations ought respectively to form so-called 'working groups' with lead speakers, which will then be in charge of the corresponding working sessions during the TLD

itself.<sup>29</sup> On the European side, these working groups are composed of committee liaison persons (MEPs) that have to keep abreast of legislative developments at the committee level and facilitate early intervention to avoid disputes (Jančić, 2014, p. 54). These working groups are composed respectively of around five to six MEPs of different political affiliations but sharing a common expertise on a specific topic. They are responsible for drafting the so-called Non-papers about the specific topics that have previously been selected with the American side. A TLD Non-Paper is defined by the EP as ‘an unofficial, not binding document, written in preparation and as a means to encourage discussion in the inter-parliamentary meeting with the US Congress’ (internal document, EP). These TLD non-papers traditionally summarise the EP position on these issues by recalling previous relevant parliamentary resolutions and recommend a series of considerations for discussions. They ensure that all the participating MEPs are well informed about the position of the EP on the specific topics that will be discussed- representing the broad ‘European position’. (Interview no. 3).

In addition, a few weeks (or even days) before the actual TLD, the European delegation holds a preparatory meeting in Strasbourg to ensure that Members are fully aware of the latest developments in the areas touched upon in the discussions. This sometimes includes a briefing of an important relevant actor, such as the EU TTIP Chief Negotiator Mr. Garcia-Bercero, who talked about the latest state-of-play on the negotiations before the 76<sup>th</sup> TLD in Riga (European Parliament, 2015). In addition, each member participating in the TLD gets the heavy dossier/reader with useful information and documents put together by the EP Secretariat: they contain both the non-papers and additional briefing background material provided by the EEAS, DG TRADE, and the EP Liaison Office in Washington to ensure that everybody is on the same page (EEAS, 2015 and interview no. 3). Echoing the theoretical framework (p.48), this process of preparation and coordination helps cement a common European position and reinforces the institutional identity of the EU by clearly stating the values and interests they stand for as an institution. As several MEPs mentioned, ‘The preliminary meetings are very important, we try to figure out what our positions are, what’s important for us. It is quite difficult to find a Joint European position and it requires often compromise but it is necessary’ (Interview no. 1). In the same vein, another MEP emphasised, ‘In the preparation phase, we really try to coordinate ourselves as much as possible in order to avoid sending contradictory messages to the Americans during the meetings’ (Interview no. 2). Therefore, the efforts and

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<sup>29</sup> This requirement emanated from a Joint Agreement between the EU and the US dating back to 2011 (Jančić, 2014).

thoughts invested in the preparation of the dialogue itself are a clear indication of the high importance the EU attributes to the dialogue as an opportunity to project an image reflecting its institutional identity vis-à-vis their American counterparts.

I turn now to the setting of the inter-parliamentary meetings themselves in terms of frequency, attendance, and place, including the location and design of the venue as well as seating arrangements. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, all these elements are important as they constitute part of a whole arsenal of symbols that can be used to seek and grant recognition of the institutional identity of the other side during these dialogical interactions.

*Frequency: when and how often?*

While finding a suitable date for these meetings with American representatives is not always an easy task due to the tight schedule of politicians on both sides of the Atlantic and other constraints related to vital national political events (interview no. 2), this practice goes relatively smoothly compared to other political dialogues conducted by the EU. In fact, in the framework of other dialogues with the rest of the world, setting a date can turn out to be a much more complicated matter, due to the reluctance of the third partner country to fully and willingly participate in these meetings. This point is nicely exemplified in the case of the EU-China Human rights dialogue, whereby Chinese authorities have traditionally posed numerous problems in fixing a date with their European interlocutors. According to an EEAS official closely involved in these dialogues, ‘The Chinese representatives use to systematically propose the dates of the 26<sup>th</sup> of December and of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January of each year’ to hold these dialogues (Interview no. 7), obviously well aware that these dates could hardly be approved by their European counterparts, busy at that time in the midst of end-of-year celebrations. At least in the transatlantic case, such callous proposals and time-consuming negotiations around the specific date for the meeting are not common place. This relative ‘easiness’ through which meetings are set up between the EU and the United States is a testament to the willingness of both parts to engage in this dialogue on a regular basis.

*Attendance: a blatant asymmetry between European and American participation*

A second aspect of the meetings carrying a particular symbolic significance deals with the size and composition of the delegations. Traditionally, the large size of a delegation and/or the presence of high-level personalities have been interpreted as a sign of recognition of the relevance of the interlocutors. In fact, the *physical* presence of delegates demonstrates the interest and importance attributed by a party for a particular event, conveying the tacit message

that it is worth attending, hearing the other side, and engaging with it. With this understanding in mind, the attendance to the TLD reflects once again a striking asymmetry between MEPs and representatives of the US Congress. While theoretically the number of representatives on both sides should be equal, there is a strong asymmetry in the level of attendance in practice, with consistently more European representatives attending the IPMs, be it in Brussels or Washington. For instance, in the 76<sup>th</sup> IPM, 17 MEPs participated versus only eight representatives of the US Congress (EPLO, 2015). This asymmetry becomes all the more visible during the dialogue itself thanks to the spatial proximity of the participants, as exemplified in the 77<sup>th</sup> IPM that I attended. During the meetings, there were only five American representatives in the room facing a row of 20 MEPs sitting in front of them. This led one MEP to joke that at lunch time every single table would get one American guest for five European participants (Participant Observation., 2016). How can one explain this discrepancy? While it is true that the US Congress has neither a strong institutional structure nor significant resources similar to the EP when it comes to parliamentary delegations, the difference in the level of participation also hints to different political priorities,<sup>30</sup> sending a clear message in terms of recognition. While on the European side, the EU parliamentary delegation to the United States is one of the most prestigious delegations for which many members compete to be a part of (Interviews no. 4 and 5), on the American side it is up to the chairmen of the delegation to *convince* as many members as possible to participate to the IPMs with their European counterparts [emphasis added] (Interviews no. 12, 19; Archick & Morelli 2013, p.15). This is not surprising given the fact that until recently, many congressmen were not even aware of the existence of this delegation to the EU (Interview no. 4). Today, even when congressmen do agree to participate in the IPMs in Washington, they do not stay for the entire duration of the dialogue, except for a small number of committed members (Interview no. 1). They pick and choose the topics they are interested to discuss but do not stay for the duration of the TLD. Even during the session itself, congressmen are constantly entering and leaving the room when the dialogue is held in Washington (video of the 77<sup>th</sup> IPM, 2015), demonstrating that other priorities take precedence over the meeting with MEPs. In terms of composition, the Europeans make a deliberate effort to compose their delegation in a way that reflects the relative power of each political group in the parliament at any given time in order for the ‘Americans to understand who we are as a parliament’ (Interview no. 2). In addition, while the EUTLD has

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<sup>30</sup> Many interviewees mentioned overriding domestic concerns dealing with the issue of public opinion (Interviews no. 11, 12, 16, 21).

representation from most of its key parliamentary committees in order to inject as much expertise as possible in the debates, the USTLD is not structured to guarantee the inclusion of members from all major congressional committees (Archick & Morelli, 2013).

*Place of the meeting: “let us show you how diverse Europe is”*

In a spirit of equality, the declaration on the TLD specifies that the bi-annual inter-parliamentary meetings shall take place alternately in the United States and in Europe. This decision is highly symbolic in the sense that it gives equal weight and status to both sides. When these meetings are held in the European Union (EU), they usually take place in the capital of the country holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union (European Parliament, 2017). This is a way for the host country to raise its profile in the eyes of the Americans but also to show to the American counterparts that the EU is not reduced to Brussels only (Interview no. 3). Put another way, this practice serves to emphasise the diversity of the EU. For instance, the 78<sup>th</sup> TLD meeting took place in The Hague in June, as it was the Netherlands that assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2016. The year afterwards, the TLD took place in La Valette in Malta, which is the smallest member state of the EU, supposedly largely unknown by Americans (Gallup & Saad, 2004). Regarding the IPMs taking place in the United States, they used to take place in different places each year, such as San Francisco or Florida, but due to the poor attendance of these meetings by American representatives, it has been decided to meet in DC for practical reasons (Interviews no. 12 and no. 16).

*The venue and arrangement within the room: “please take a seat”*

Regarding the meeting room, efforts are generally made to hold the working sessions in elegant and historical venues, conveying a deep sense of respect both to the hosts and to the meaning of the visit. As mentioned in the theoretical part, the splendour of the ceremony and of the building are important to project might, status, and specific cultural characteristics. The pictures of the halls in which the last TLD meetings took place in Europe are a testament to this fact. Every detail in the room matters. The idea of equality and respect is materialised by the presence of two co-chairmen – one from the EU and one from the United States – who would typically sit *side-by-side* on a perfectly equal footing during the working sessions. While the chairs occupy a central place at the table, the two delegations sit around a large table, facing each other: on one side the European representatives and on the other the American ones (Interview no. 2 and fieldwork notes, 2016). The flags of the EU and the United States are of

course part and parcel of the meeting room and are positioned in a way to reflect again perfect symbolic equality as demonstrated in the photography of the 76<sup>th</sup> IPM in Riga below.

*This photo of the 76<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary meeting in Riga, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

In sum, analysis of the preparation of the dialogue and the setting of the room shed light on several important elements. First, a key theme running through this first stage is the blatant asymmetry in terms of commitments and efforts put into this dialogue, with European lawmakers being much more engaged than their American counterparts. This transpires both in the preparation process, whereby the EU clearly takes the lead, and in the rehearsal of its ‘team performance’ through preparatory meetings aimed at making sure to come across as a relevant, competent, and coherent actor vis-à-vis the United States during the dialogue itself. While cementing and coordinating a common unified European position ahead of the dialogue, the institutional identity of the EU is reinforced in this process as it forces members to clearly define core elements of their institutional identity, particularly in terms of values and interests. Secondly, the specific setting of the meeting room acts both as ‘a visual representation’ of the asymmetry between the two sides and as an opportunity for the MEPs to seek recognition in terms of relevance and distinctiveness. This is where the spatial proximity inherent in the dialogical interaction becomes particularly salient.

### **7.2.2. In the room: communication and interaction**

In this sub-section, I look at the essence of the meeting in terms of communication and interaction, as these aspects are packed with symbolic meaning related to the recognition of identity. While it is true that the exchange is merely based on the exchange of information and arguments as the liberal and constructivist approach would suggest, the very characteristics of this exchange carry *also* a message in terms of identity and recognition. I first focus on the core of the IPMs which consists of working sessions and talks with experts. Each inter-parliamentary meeting generally encompasses three working sessions revolving around the issues previously agreed upon. On average, each working session lasts around two hours (Interview no. 3). In between these formal discussions, a whole set of informal activities take place as well, such as dinners and visits on the ground. As this informal component is also part and parcel of the dialogue, it too will be analysed in order to shed light on the elements relating

to the recognition of institutional identity. Finally, the IPM culminates with the negotiation and signature of the joint statement based on the exchanges that have been taking place during the working sessions. For each one of these moments, I show how the verbal and non-verbal cues available in the dialogue are used by the participants to seek and grant recognition for the institutional identity of the other and vice versa. I specifically address the two main components of institutional identity outlined in the theoretical framework: (1) distinctiveness and (2) relevance.

*The core of the visit: working sessions and talks with experts*

In line with the theoretical framework, I argue that the content of the exchange is also a way for the EU to emphasise its distinctive and unique features as an institution (i.e. as one dimension of institutional identity) and to gain recognition of them.

First, as outlined in the theoretical chapter, this desire to be recognised as ‘different and unique’ in a dialogical context requires first of all to have the opportunity to voice particular concerns and more importantly to be heard by others. The analysis of the data clearly shows that the European participants of the IPMs very much value this possibility inherent to the dialogue. Indeed, many interviewees mentioned the opportunity offered by the dialogue to express their concerns: ‘There have been a lot of opportunities to try to raise some questions. For instance, we have repetitively voiced in this context our concerns about Guantanamo and the ugly secret prisons’ (Interview no. 4). Dealing with the burning issue of energy dependency and of the importance of LNG exports from the United States, an EU official emphasised that, ‘Thanks to the dialogue, the Americans *hear* the need of the Europeans and can try to make pressure in the Congress afterwards’ [emphasis added] (Interview no. 2).

Secondly, the contribution of the different MEPs to the working sessions is supposed to reflect the particularities of the European Parliament in terms of the plurality of political views it represents. Hence, a strong indicator about the importance attributed by the EU to expose the whole range of opinions represented in the EP lies in the rules for taking turns to speak. The chairmen have the prerogative to give the floor to their participants on their respective sides. Usually, the lead speakers of the working groups kick off the discussions. Then as the dialogue develops, the chair on the European side should give priority of speech to the representatives of the most influential political groups, although he can also deviate from this rule if he thinks that another MEP might be better positioned to join the dialogue at a specific moment, given its expertise. Overall, the European chair aims at giving the opportunity

for all MEPs to express their views, the ideal being to have the European Parliament in all its political diversity represented while preserving the relative power of force (Interviews no. 2, 3, and 4).

This display of diversity is somewhat unusual for American lawmakers, who are not particularly familiar with the nuances of the different European political parties. While the lack of cohesion on the European side (despite efforts to have a unified stance) might sometimes create confusion for the American participants, they also expressed great appreciation of the given opportunity to be exposed to the rainbow of views represented by the EP: ‘Thanks to the dialogue, the American congressmen are exposed to hear new and original political views from Europe, with which they are not familiar at all. Because when they negotiate – US and EU – it’s more like centre-right centre-left. The commission is much more centrist and so that was interesting for the Congressmen to see this diversity of views’ (Interview no. 11). This appreciation on the American side is well understood by the Europeans, as testified by this MEP: ‘It’s true that we are supposed to portray the position of the EU, of the parliament but this does not mean that we may not to be able to expose divergences that we have. We have done it and sometimes and I think that this is appreciated by the Americans because they understand that we are not a uniform parliament. The beauty of the exercise is to see the different positions and the nuances that characterize our parliament’ (Interviews no. 1 and 4). This is a great illustration of how the dialogue turns into a performance in which the distinctiveness of the institution being represented becomes more tangible for the other side thanks to the deliberate and concerted efforts of the members to project this identity.

Turning now to the second component of ‘institutional identity’, I show that the idea of being ‘relevant’ constitutes an integral part of the institutional identity of the EU. A way through which the EU proves its relevance is through the type of relationship identity both sides maintain towards each other as friends. In this regard, the content and nature of the interaction itself reflect to a large extent the particular identity relationship linking the two political entities.

First of all, the fact that the rationale guiding the discussion corresponds to the advancement of a common project in terms of world governance reinforces the sense of ‘being relevant’ and important. It helps strengthen the feeling among EU representatives that they are part of an important common endeavour with the United States, whereby both entities are leading the world as partners and part of the Western liberal order. The insistence on the common project in terms of world governance amounts to the recognition of the EU institutional identity as a relevant actor. For many participants of the dialogue, one of the key

reasons motivating their presence in this specific delegation, is indeed their commitment to advance together a common vision of the world based on shared values and principles. For one leading US congressman, ‘The US and EU synergy and our collaboration are critical to the continuing success of the western world (...) Between the two of us, we have over 850 million people that reflect the world’s largest economies. All those countries combined share common western values, such as the respect for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. So, when you look at the totality of what the US and the EU represent, I still believe that it’s the beacon of light for the rest of the world - where you still have dictatorships, undemocratic regimes’ (Interview no. 17). On the European side, it is the same story: ‘I have been very participative in the TLD because I really believe that the EU-US relations are extremely important for world governance’ (Interviews no. 4 and no. 5). During the dialogues themselves, many ideas discussed – notably around trade – refer back to the ambition of ‘setting the gold standards so that the others can follow’ (Participant Observation, 2016).

Secondly, contrary to other dialogues very much characterised by the use of threats and distrust (i.e. dialogue with Iran), the flow of the dialogue is very much appreciated by the MEPs and their American counterparts because they confirm a certain relationship identity whereby both sides are part of the same community and recognise each other as such. In fact, the exceptionally good quality of the exchange between American and European lawmakers has directly been linked by the participants themselves to the common political and cultural values that unite them. The smoothness and good understanding that characterise these dialogical interactions are attributed to the fact that the interlocutors belong to democracies sharing the same basic values. For instance, in the quick overview of the 77<sup>th</sup> TLD meeting, the EU Chairman of the delegation reported that ‘the members of Congress evoked “it was pleasant to deal with countries where you don’t have to deal with human rights”’. European MEPs, regularly involved in other parliamentary delegations with third countries, echoed the same idea. Drawing a comparison between the inter-parliamentary dialogues between the EU and the United States, and the EU and Iran, an MEP mentioned that culture was the most significant factor influencing the quality of the discussion: ‘With the American[s], you speak the same language – of how decisions are made and also the systems of checks and balances. For instance, we all understand – MEPs and congressmen – that if you have a plan and you cannot find a majority, it’s not your fault. Basically, you understand it instantly. In a dictatorship, this is not that easy’ (Interview no. 6).

Moreover, the high level of mutual disclosure and frankness characterising these exchanges arguably amount to the recognition of the EU as a valued and trusted partner, and

even as ‘a friend’. For Oelsner & Koshut (2014, p. 20), this is even a mark of friendship in IR, as friends will expect each other to reveal more information to each other than to others, as well as display a higher level of tolerance towards ‘bad news’. In other words, actors can be particularly candid towards each other because they fundamentally care. This habitual routine of amity has been strongly underlined by the interviewees both on the European and American sides: ‘It’s not a dialogue of the deaf. On the contrary, it is a dialogue between friends. For instance, an Estonian MEP told Republican members of Congress that the roots of the conflict in Syria lie in climate change and the subsequent drought etc... I am happy, as a European, that we can be frank with them (American lawmakers) and tell them why we think that they are wrong sometimes. If we would agree with everything they say, we wouldn’t behave like friends. We need them and they need us’ (Interview no. 2). The same interviewee further added that during one of the working sessions, an American congressman explicitly admitted the partial responsibility of the United States in the turmoil in the Middle East and the subsequent refugee crisis, noting: ‘This is a real conversation between friends because he would not say necessarily say such a thing outside of the dialogue’ (Interview no. 2). This ‘confession’ has been very much appreciated by the European participants of the dialogue, who feel as a consequence in a privileged relationship where this kind of mistake can be openly admitted. Conversely, European representatives feel at ease to talk openly with their American counterparts. As an MEP recalls, ‘When the Snowden revelations came up about the NSA, there was a deep mistrust in Europe about the US – and it was good for us to tell this to the Americans. Because they sometimes thought that we were a bit immature or over-reacting. Then it’s better to say it face-to-face and not via the media, not via distance. But really to say, “Look guys, we have a real problem here, the relationship between the EU and the US is suffering as a result of you guys not addressing this”. And I think for them it is very useful to hear *directly* that in principle, we believe in the transatlantic relation, so we are not destructive by default or being difficult for the sake of being difficult. But we are each other’ counterparts’ (Interviews no. 4 and 6).

#### *Outside of the formal meeting room: social activities*

The TLD is noteworthy in the sense that it features a skilled blend of official working sessions and diverse ‘social’ extra-activities taking place outside of the formal meeting room. These include coffee breaks, lunches, and official dinners in sophisticated locations, as well as visits on the ground that are often related to the specific topics under discussion in the form of fact-

finding visits. Examples taken from the last TLD meetings include: a visit to a NATO basis in Estonia (76<sup>th</sup> TLD), a visit to the Rotterdam Harbour and Europol (78<sup>th</sup> TLD), or to the naval operations to fight human trafficking in the Mediterranean (80<sup>th</sup> TLD). While it is true that these social activities contribute to build trust among participants, as widely argued in the literature on dialogues, I contend that they also play an important role in the recognition game. Indeed, these site excursions in the framework of the TLD are also used in order to project an image of a ‘relevant, capable and efficient’ institution as key institutional identity features.

As explained in the theoretical framework (p.56), the fact of being in a different context changes the discursive dynamics between the participants of the dialogue and allows a less formal kind of communication to develop, thereby bringing people closer and building trust. This is definitely the case regarding the TLD. According to a European staffer of the TLD, ‘Throughout the dialogue, we are also engaging in “team building”’: we have lunches together, we get mixed. In Riga, for instance, we took the Americans to a NATO base and we had a lunch with the American troops stationed there. We really mixed ourselves, all together: MEPs, Congressmen and the American troops; it was great’. Emphasising the benefits of sharing experiences, he added, ‘Instantaneously, the fact of being together in a different country had a great effect. It matters a lot and it is part and parcel of the dialogue’ (Interview no. 2). Indeed, the analysis of the visual data of this visit to the NATO basis shows a display of positive emotions, and a certain sense of excitement and discovery shared by both the American and European participants of the dialogue (Appendix 5). This day on the NATO base remains equally anchored in the minds of the American participants, as a particularly good memory (Interview no. 16). During the interview, the chairman of the EP delegation to the United States even enthusiastically showed me the pictures he took on his iPhone, portraying him, with his American friends and soldiers, on the very same day, observing NATO’s weapons (Interview no. 1).

*This photo of the 76<sup>th</sup> IPM, Joint visit to the Adazi military base where Latvian and American forces conduct joint military exercises under NATO Operation Atlantic Resolve, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Clearly, for many participants the best parts of the dialogue are the ‘less formal sides – having dinner, having lunch together. This is when people can be blunter and more honest and give a clear perspective on how they feel about trade. So, the members can really share their perspectives more on a one and one level and – without a big microphone in their face to talk across a big table’ (Interview no. 16). In the same vein, another American commented that, ‘The most fruitful conversations are not in the formal meetings or presentations but on the boundaries’ (Interviews no. 19 and 25). The development of closer inter-personal relations during these informal moments goes hand-in-hand with more candid discussions: ‘They [MEPs and Congressmen] would start sharing things in common outside of their work, talk about their family, fishing ... they have time to have this social discourse during the dialogue. Once you get to know your counterparts more personally, you can feel more comfortable talking to them about important issues in a less structured manner, in more informal discussions’ (Interview no. 12).

More importantly, the empirical data is replete with evidence of how discussions spill over from the intimate conversations to the official rooms of the meetings and vice versa, indicating the benefits of having in this case ‘two different spaces of dialogue’ – one formal and the other informal. For instance, during the observation of the 78<sup>th</sup> TLD meeting, many participants of the dialogues referred in the formal sessions to casual discussions they had during the different breaks (Participant observation, 2016). In sum, as one of the European interviewees succinctly put it, ‘It’s really about being here, sharing the coffee and the cookie. And this cannot happen in a video conference’ (Interview no. 2). This suggests that trust is essentially built outside and then brought inside. Put another way, there is an interweaving in and around the room that could not have been possible without the spatial and emotional immediacy allowed by the dialogical interaction.

Apart from the fact that these social interactions out of the formal meeting room help build trust and thereby reinforce a positive relationship identity, my contention is that they also carry symbolic meaning and are used by the organisers to seek, get, and grant recognition for their institutional identity, particularly in terms of relevance.

First of all, due to the typically low attendance of American representatives of the Congress to the IPMs taking place in Europe, the EP secretariat *strategically* considers the different options for extra-curricular activities aiming at motivating their American counterparts to cross the Atlantic. As the chairman of the EP delegation himself explained, ‘We

always go to the country who is chairing the Council and do something interesting there. Because if we say Brussels, a lot of Americans would say: Brussels? We have been in Brussels? Why should we travel to Brussels? So, this year, we thought we could do something with NATO. The Americans are always interested in NATO' (Interview no. 1). The fact that Americans are not easily willing to come to Brussels – which is after all the heart of European power – is confirmed by the Americans themselves: 'Sometimes it's attractive to go, sometimes it's not, so if you are going to Prague, you might get a big group. (...) I remember the one year, the meeting was in Rome so it was very easy for the co-chairs of the TLD to get 12 members to sign up and go to Rome. In fact, there were even more and they had to tell me no! That was really good' (Interview no. 12). In this sense, the informal activities are used as a strategic choice to gain recognition for one's relevance.

Secondly, the on-site excursions when they happen in Europe are also interpreted by the Europeans themselves as a way to 'prove' to the American participants that they are able to deliver. They aim at showing to the Americans the achievements of the European Union that are too often unknown or underestimated. A good illustration of that point is the visit to Europol and to the harbour of Rotterdam that took place during the 78th TLD in the Netherlands. As a senior figure in the EU parliamentary delegation to the United States explained, 'This visit to Europol serves our agenda. I think that if the Americans see how serious the work Europol is doing is, they may not just think Europe is letting all the terrorists run free. This is "how politics work". You shape the program to your advantage: I don't even have to say a word but I hope that the impact will be that when they will see what is happening in Europe, they will be calmer – and will not be so aggressive and tell us we are naïve' (Interview no. 6). Reinforcing this rationale, another prominent actor of the TLD emphasised: 'We plan to go to the port of Rotterdam so that they (Americans) can see on the spot the security measures that we take in the Harbour to limit trafficking or to make sure of the security installations. We really want them to learn something on the ground' (Interview no. 18). This is well understood by the American side: 'Going forwards, there is going to be a meeting with Europol and counter-terrorism ... this is something that our side at least is willing to learn about and see exactly what kind of procedures are in place to tackle terrorism and understand the concerns as well. Yes, I think that they want to show "hey... we are beefing up..." There is a misperception that there are open borders and that everyone can come in to Europe. Europol will show that this is not the case obviously' (Interview no. 16).

Therefore, what happens in the room in the case of the TLD is that, clearly, the EU displays recognition-seeking behaviour, using a variety of (verbal and non-verbal) cues in order

to project its institutional identity both in terms of relevance and distinctiveness. This recognition-seeking behaviour is not limited to formal interaction but extends also to the more informal parts, like the site visits for instance, which are designed in part to ‘prove the relevance of the institution’ and bring concrete evidence of its achievements in certain policy areas. Moreover, the extensive informal moments embedded in the TLD programme allows the development of interpersonal relations and strong bonds of trust that cannot be achieved in any other format of interaction (neither email nor video conference). The emotional display cultivated in this context is crucial as it contributes toward anchoring a positive relationship identity as friends – not least by improving the quality of the exchange back to the formal meeting room.

### **7.2.3. After leaving the room: communication and interaction with the outside world**

In line with the theoretical framework, this sub-section shows how the recognition process that took place during the dialogue is celebrated outside the ‘room’ and projected to the world. The analysis of the *use* of the different types of anchors carrying the recognition of institutional identity out of the room reveals yet again an asymmetry between MEPs and American representatives. Europeans are much keener than their American counterparts to project, publicise, and disseminate the existence and results of these meetings. This suggests a profound desire on the European side to use all the possible outcomes of the dialogue to anchor its institutional identity – thereby confirming the main argument developed here about the EU’s quest for recognition throughout the dialogue.

#### *Visual anchors of institutional identity: “Every Picture Tells a Story”*

Echoing the theoretical framework, photographs (i.e. the visual representation) of specific events can become important carriers of symbolic messages to the outside world. This is true for the TLD as well. While the traditional ‘family picture’ of the European and American delegations might escape notice or simply be considered as a routine component of the protocol, I argue that it fulfils a crucial function in terms of anchoring the EU institutional identity as a relevant actor. One can distinguish between two types of photographs capturing both formal and informal key moments of the meetings. In the first category, one finds the visual representation of the two delegations standing side-by-side in a spirit of equality and cooperation, with the landmark building in the background to easily recognise the meeting depending on its location. This ‘family picture’ serves not only as the ‘official portrait of the

relationship' but also as a vivid record of who was present but also of who was absent. It is also common currency to 'immortalise' the meaningful culmination of the signing of the joint statement and the subsequent handshakes between the European and American chairmen (Appendix 5). These staged photographs are telling in terms of recognition: the participants are always positioned in a way to convey equality and solemnity. On the more informal side, there are also pictures of activities on the ground, as well as interviews and videos (European Parliament, 2015).

Beyond the photographs and videos of the activities themselves, what really matters for our discussion is the extent to which these anchors of institutional identity are disseminated and the rationale behind it. Noteworthy here is the difference between the European and American parliamentary delegations in the way they publicise the dialogue towards their domestic constituencies and wider international audiences. On the one hand, the European side pro-actively publicises the TLD using a wide variety of media channels: TV, radio, and social media. One of the dialogues that attracted the most media coverage was the 76<sup>th</sup> TLD meeting in Riga because the Latvian government was interested in using the visit of the American representatives to raise its profile and the awareness to the specific challenges it faces in terms of security (Interview no.1). But generally speaking the meetings and visits in the framework of the TLD are much more advertised on the European side than on the American side: The website of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with the United States of America (D-US) as well as EPLO are replete with pictures and other relevant information about the meeting whereas there is no equivalent of this kind on the American side.

*This photo of the 76<sup>th</sup> IPM, where a MEP gives an interview to the press, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

Similarly, individual members of parliament make these pictures enter the public domain by tweeting and posting images of their meetings with their American counterparts on social media (Appendix 5). These efforts by MEPs can be interpreted as a way to ‘show to the rest of the world’ that they are talking with the American Congress, which in turn serves to reinforce their sense of relevance on the international stage. On the American side, however, the story is completely different. No particular efforts are made to put the TLD under the media spotlight and many American participants rather mention the negative attitude of their public opinion regarding these trips to Europe, considered as ‘luxury distractions’ compared to more domestic burning issues: ‘Because Europe is seen as luxurious, when members and staff travel there, this is perceived very negatively by the public. They are hanging out in London, Paris and the perception is that it is on the back of the taxpayers. Members of Congress and staffers always have this in mind’ (Interviews no. 11, 16, 19).

#### *Discursive anchors of institutional identity*

Following the same logic, another practice that serves to anchor the recognition of institutional identity is the drafting and dissemination of the joint statement, which is the only collective tangible outcome of the inter-parliamentary meetings. Even though this document can be viewed at first sight as ‘trivial’ due to its non-binding nature and vague formulation – his *symbolic* value should not be underestimated. Indeed, the careful analysis and comparison of the joint statements over time (76<sup>th</sup>, 77<sup>th</sup>, and 78<sup>th</sup> TLDs) reveals interesting findings in terms of recognition, both along the ‘relevance’ and ‘distinctiveness’ dimensions of institutional identity. In fact, certain ‘elements of recognition’ present in the meeting room are directly ‘imprinted’ on the document. This point matters as the joint statements serve as the main documents of reference when it comes to the inter-parliamentary cooperation between the European Union and the United States (Interview no. 2).

Regarding the ‘relevance’ dimension of institutional identity, the idea of a common world governance project and the ‘relationship identity’ emanating from it is repeatedly enshrined in the joint statements in a systematic manner. For instance, in the opening paragraphs of the Joint Statements, there is a constant reminder of the common values and principles tying the two political entities: ‘*Building upon the strong foundation of our common values and shared principles*, we discussed ways to further strengthen our relationship’ (Joint Statements of the 76<sup>th</sup>, 77<sup>th</sup>, and 78<sup>th</sup> TLDs) [emphasis added]. In the same vein, the emphasis is often put in the formulation of the joint statements on the EU and US’s identity as shapers

and guarantors of the current world order. For instance, at the time when the negotiations on TTIP were going on, several joint statements reiterated the fact that ‘the EU and the US were unique strategic partners’ working on a transatlantic trade agreement that shall among other things, ‘establish modern *global* trade rules’ (78<sup>th</sup> IPM, Joint Statement) (emphasis added). Echoing this idea, a similar extract of the document mentions: ‘We maintain the conviction that a multilateral system founded on universal rules and values is best suited to address global crises, challenges and threats and we stress that the transatlantic partnership must remain a crucial pillar of this global rules-based system’ (Ibid). In a more recent visit of the Bureau of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the United States, the European parliament published a short press release, outlining that ‘the main message of the members of European Parliament to Members of Congress, the US Administration and civil society focused on the importance of continued and ever-strengthened EU-US relations through concrete steps, such as the setting of high standards, the promotion of common values and leading forward the global order’ (EPLO, 2018). Moreover, while the dialogue and joint statement arguably serve the ‘liberal institutionalist’ function of monitoring and registering progress on common areas of cooperation, I contend that this exercise carries *also* a symbolic dimension in terms of recognition. Indeed, the explicit insistence (and acceptance) on having the achievements and progress done by the EU incorporated in these statements – which were eventually signed by the US Congress – is an implicit acknowledgment on behalf of this institution of the efficiency/relevance of the EU. Put differently, it contributes to the recognition of the EU as an ‘efficient’ partner able to deliver.

As to the ‘unique and distinct’ dimension of institutional identity, its recognition is also enshrined in the joint statement as a testament to the fact that the American participants understand and accept the specific concerns of their Europeans counterparts. For instance, in an internal report circulated by the European chairman of the delegation to the totality of its members, a great sense of pride was perceptible due to the success of the EU to have the United States accept their concerns on human rights and their willingness to consider the issue of refugees as a matter of shared responsibility (Internal report European Parliament, 2015). This corresponds in a way to the process of reinforcing institutional identity through the reification of differences. In the words of a high-level EU official, ‘When we have to defend our values as Europeans, it makes us feel more Europeans’ (Ripoll, 2018).

Similar to the extensive use of various channels of communication to publicise the pictures of the TLD, the same rationale is at play regarding the dissemination of the joint statements. Particularly telling in this regard is the importance attributed to the Joint Statement

in the form of the intense follow up on the European side compared to the American side. As a first stage, the European administrators of the dialogue draft an internal report about the ‘minutes’ of the meetings and the Chairman of the delegation writes a personal note sent to all the D-US members. In addition, the Joint Statement, which constitutes the document of reference, is distributed to a much larger circle, namely to all the members of the D-US delegation, members of all the committees (Interview no. 2), and the EU Commission as well (Interview no. 3). Simultaneously, the EU Delegation in Washington reports to the EEAS and to the European Parliament. According to the EEAS guidelines of July 2015, the Head of the EU delegation in Washington reports to the EEAS with emphasis on the outcome of the visit, particularly as regards the assessment by the host country (EEAS, 2015). The staffers of the D-US delegation like to emphasise the value that the joint statement enjoys compared to the outcomes of other dialogue’s institutions. For instance, a European staffer insisted on the unique value of the joint statement in that it can be effectively used by the EU commission during the current trade negotiations as a solid document stating where the positions of the two parliaments stand (Interview no. 2). This is indeed crucial in light of the ratification power that both chambers hold. On the other side of the pond, much less attention is given to the Joint Statement, which is even not systematically disseminated among the relevant actors. According to current and former US staffers in charge of the TLD, ‘The joint statement is put in the Congressional record but we do not disseminate it to the other committees’ (Interview no. 9); ‘On the American side, no one really reads it. We do not publish the Joint Statement and we don’t refer to them’ (Interview no. 25). There is, however, a close follow-up by the US State Department that has a representative present in each one of the TLD meetings. It is responsible for writing a report that is then sent to the FA committee to make sure that they did not miss any important point (Interviews no. 25 and 16).

*Practical anchors: “talking the talk and walking the walk”*

Finally, the last way through which the recognition of institutional identity is carried out of the room is through the continuation and intensification of the dialogue as a symbol of the relevance of the partnership emanating from the dialogue itself. First, the dialogue itself automatically re-commits the members to meet again in the future, irrespective of the disagreements that might have arisen in the meetings and free of any conditionality attached to the progress that could be done in the meantime. In fact, it is interesting to note that systematically at the beginning and at the end of each Joint statement, both parties recall the

previous meeting in these terms: ‘following up on previous discussions...’; ‘we re-affirm the conclusions of the previous IPM’; and insist that ‘our conversations have convinced us of the need to strengthen and deepen our relations. We will continue the policy-oriented approach in the TLD (...) in a spirit committed to enriching our valuable partnership. We look forward to achieving progress on these by our next meeting’ (76<sup>th</sup> TLD, 77<sup>th</sup> TLD, 78<sup>th</sup> TLD Joint statements). These lines are important because they emphasise the importance of the continuity and continuation of the dialogue.

What is all the more striking is that this commitment to the continuation of the dialogue is unconditional. No matter how deep the disagreements between the two sides might reveal themselves to be, what ultimately counts is the continuation of the dialogue. As this quote from a senior European figure clearly shows: ‘Equally important is the commitment to pursue the dialogue, even in the midst of disagreements that become sometimes more apparent during our exchanges’ (Interview no. 1). This idea is confirmed by a majority of the TLD participants, who expressed great satisfaction in light of the possibility offered by the dialogue to disagree without damaging the relationship: ‘With the Americans, the dialogues are always friendly, even though we do not always agree on TTIP or the future of carbon emissions’ (Interview no. 19). The same assessment is shared on the American side, as exemplified by these quotes: ‘Regardless of the result, the process itself is important: American representatives get another perspective on issues of common interests and this is what matters’ (Interview no. 21). By the same token, the commitment to pursue the dialogue remains intact irrespective of any progress made by both sides: the joint statement does not specify the precise steps to be taken until the next meeting by the two parliaments nor any benchmarks to assess subsequent progress.

Last but not least, a whole constellation of contacts and exchanges take place in between the formal inter-parliamentary meetings among representatives of the two parliaments ignited by the contacts established during the TLD. These intense exchanges, which are initiated in the first place thanks to the physical meetings, are tangible proof of the recognition granted to the EU in terms of relevance. In other words, the establishment of these channels of communication and their active use constitute practical anchors of institutional identity. The very act of consulting each other on matters of common interest and organising/proliferating further meetings reinforce the institutional identity of the EP as a relevant partner with whom it is worth engaging. The recognition that takes place during the physical dialogue among the representatives as qualified and relevant interlocutors extend beyond the meeting rooms. While the dialogue provides the opportunity to representatives to get to know each other and to

identify their relevant counterparts, the recognition of the relevance of the EU is carried out in the form of further consultations.

The fact that following the dialogue, representatives on both sides are willing to consult each other strengthens the sense of being ‘worth talking to’ and therefore relevant. As a US staffer put it, ‘The real benefit is that the members of Congress make contacts and put faces to names. Throughout the months in between the two dialogues, lots of time they reach out to each other: “This is what we are considering over here. What do Europeans feel about this? What is your view about this? The parliament is talking about this” etc. It’s really the relationships more than the actual meetings themselves’ (Interview no. 9). This is confirmed by another US staffer, for whom ‘building a relationship is one of the most important things. My boss (a congressman) can just pick up the phone, call, or email someone in the parliament because he has a relationship with them. Ultimately, the added value is to figure out how we can work together to advance our shared goals’ (Interview no. 16). On the European side, this is the same story: ‘In the field of financial regulations, both sides know each other well and understand that there are indispensable partners. So, they do communicate and talk finance issues on a regular basis’ (Interview no. 18).

As a matter of course, these inter-personal links provide not only the opportunity to consult later on but also act as a catalyst in the creation of informal interactions (and possibly institutionalised ones at a later stage) thereby reinforcing the institutional identity of the other as relevant. Echoing this claim, a former US staffer mentioned that ‘the dialogue was about MEPs and congress members getting each other, understanding each other on different things, developing contacts, and turning them into ad hoc meetings here or in Europe when people travel. That’s the value and it is valuable. No question about it. The fact that there is money appropriated and spent each year is an indication that there is value from most people’s point of view’ (Interview no. 25). In essence, the formal dialogues act as multipliers of other formats of discussions and exchanges. According to a high-level official in the EP, there are all sorts of visits involving parliamentarians besides the IPMs, such as committee delegations, EP’s rapporteurs who visit the United States on fact-finding missions and get in touch with congressmen, members coming as political groups, or members coming individually to meet their counterparts with whom they have become personally acquainted (Interviews no. 18 and 4).

To conclude, this section showed how the recognition process taking place within the room transcends the meeting rooms and is being projected to the outside world. While the EU tends to extensively use visual anchors in the forms of widely-disseminated photographs to

anchor its institutional identity, the United States is less inclined to do so. The discursive and practical anchors emanating from the face-to-face interaction are crucial in ‘clinching’ the recognition process of the EU institutional identity – in particular, the positive relationship identity linking the EU and the United States.

### 7.3. The outcome: a dialogue among friends

Finally, this last section examines the prevailing discourse across the different stages of the process in terms of equality in order to assess the extent to which the members of the EP *feel* their institutional identity has been recognised and anchored. This assessment is then contrasted with the American perspective to see if there is any discrepancy between the views of both sides.

#### **7.3.1. EU perspective: overall satisfaction with recognition – but persisting frustration**

First, there is no doubt regarding the challenge the European Parliament faces as it tries to attract the attention of the Americans. The profusion of metaphors in the empirical data is unequivocal: ‘We [EPLO] seek to put the European Parliament on the map, here in Washington’ (Interview no. 8); or ‘Our refusal to ratify ACTA created a “bip” on the radar screen of the Americans’ (Interview no. 2); in short, ‘We try to increase the visibility of the EP parliament in Washington, DC. We want to be seen and we want to be heard’ [Emphasis added] (Interview no. 18). With this aim – which amounts to the quest for recognition – in mind, the analysis shows that despite the persistent frustration on the EU side associated with the lack of a stronger commitment of the Americans, the prevailing discourse is overall positive and does express progress in terms of recognition of the EU institutional identity. Bearing in mind the definition of recognition provided in the theoretical chapter, according to which ‘recognition is granted when there is a match between the self-image of the actor seeking recognition and the treatment it deems appropriate to receive by the recognizing party’ (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, p.17-18), I provide below a few indications for the progress in terms of recognition that has been made:

Even from the very first stage of entry in the room, the ‘relatively’ high level of US congressmen attending the meetings is perceived as a success for European delegates because it is perceived as a statement about the importance of the relationship and of the EU. In fact, the European chairman of the US delegation and its staffers usually define the success of a IPMs as a function of the American presence to these encounters: ‘Most important in the end,

is to get the American side involved [...] And I think that in the last meetings that I have chaired, we had good American participation. I mean, if you get ten Americans coming to Europe, it's a huge achievement' (Interview no. 1). Contrary to what could have been expected in such a highly institutionalised relationship, the American presence in these dialogues is not taken for granted and, as such, their very participation in the meetings constitutes one of the most important criteria for measuring its degree of success, regardless of the discursive dynamics and actual outcomes of the encounter itself. It is clearly a sign of recognition for the relevance of the EU, for which it is worth taking the time to engage. Recently, another achievement for the European delegation to the US Congress has been the increased involvement of members of the Senate to the official TLD Programme, which is very unusual in this context. The European chairmen of the delegation expressed great satisfaction in this regard as the Senate has constitutionally and traditionally taken the lead in the Congress in FP. More specifically, its Foreign Relations Committee has been highly regarded and regularly drawn upon by the Executive for advice (Dobson & Marsh, 2001, p. 9). As such, the fact that the Chair of the US Senate Sub-committee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation, Senator Ron Johnson, personally dedicated time to meet with the delegation of MEPs during the 77<sup>th</sup> IPM in Washington in 2015 has been interpreted as a great sign of respect and honour for the European participants and their institutions (Interviews no. 1, 2, and 3). This interpretation is largely confirmed by the American participants of the dialogue as this quote illustrates: 'The very presence and attendance to the dialogues is a way to show commitment to the value of the dialogue and the relationship as a whole: It is important not to neglect the fact that the Congressmen are coming because they see value in these dialogues - otherwise they wouldn't come! They are definitely committed' (Interviews no. 21, 16, and 19).

Secondly, regarding the assessment of the dynamics within the room, a vast majority of MEPs consider the dialogue to be effective in helping the Americans better understand the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the European Union as an actor, thereby granting recognition for this dimension of institutional identity as well through the demonstration of empathy. This point is all the more important when one considers the very limited knowledge of certain American lawmakers about the EU's functioning, interests, and achievements. In fact, both Europeans and close American observers have noticed the gap in terms of knowledge about the other's respective achievements. For a high-level EU official involved in the dialogue, 'Sometimes the dialogue can be very pedagogical for us, but Americans benefit from it the most' (Interview no. 2). In the same vein, several legislative assistants of American

congressmen substantiated this claim by admitting that ‘they (congressmen) even don’t know what the treaty of Lisbon or the Schengen area are (...) Or when you ask them to talk about European energy security, they have absolutely no clue’ (Interview no. 19). Because of this asymmetry in terms of knowledge about the other, many European participants are convinced that thanks to the dialogue, they help Americans better understand Europe’s concerns and positions on a variety of important issues. On privacy for instance, an MEP recalled, ‘At the time, they (the US) were trying to put these X-ray machines in airports that keep your photos naked, and we had doubts about the compatibility of that with our data protection. The dialogue was an eye-opening opportunity for us and for the Americans. They clearly saw that there are limitations. Their data protection system is far away from ours. They also realised many of the dangers and why we were so concerned. It’s a mutual learning process’ (Interview no. 4). On trade issues, a European staffer expressed a similar view: ‘I think they (the United States) understand now better how important these geographical indications (GIs) are for Europeans. A third of all food quality product are GIs. For Americans, it’s ridiculous but now they better understand’ (Interview no. 3).

This important feeling of being understood and recognised in one’s difference comes about with the demonstration of empathy for the concerns of the other part. In this regard, most of the interviewees who actively participated in the TLD expressed some degree of satisfaction regarding the demonstration of empathy coming from the American side, i.e. the degree to which they took their concerns into account seriously. A participative MEP of the D-US delegation mentioned that, ‘On plenty of issues, we saw that some American colleagues really responded to our concerns and helped work out solutions’ (Interview no. 4). In sum, as this high-level European parliamentarian figure put it, ‘There is recognition, they recognise now who we are. I remember 10 years ago in my previous functions in the Parliament when I used to come to Washington, we had to repeat in each meeting “who we were, what was the European parliament”. They had no clue of what it was. Now we don’t have to go through all this anymore. So, I would say – one of the biggest achievement is that, even if we (EU and US) don’t agree always on everything, we are discussing on an *equal-to-equal basis* and I think that this is great progress’ [emphasis added] (Interview no. 18).

Thirdly, the subjective feeling of being recognised as relevant is also related to the ‘extra gestures’ done by their American counterparts to honour their European guests. When the EP delegation gets to travel to the United States, they appreciate the symbolic gesture that their American counterparts make by giving them privileged access to specific places, for

instance: ‘The little bonus we [EU] got when we were in Washington during the last meeting, is that the Americans took us to the balcony of the Speaker of the House, with a very beautiful view. It’s nice, they let us go through “secret” corridors not open otherwise to the public. These little things are part of the meetings and help build the relationship’ (Interview no. 2). The sensitivity of the European participants to this ‘differentiated treatment’ is telling and shows yet again that the dialogue is about gaining recognition for one’s relevance.

### **7.3.2. US perspective: recognising – and learning from – the EP as an institution**

The American perspective is in line with the prevailing sense of recognition felt by European members. In other words, the Europeans are not living in a bubble disconnected from reality.

First, a majority of American participants acknowledge and appreciate the high level of preparation and expertise displayed by their European counterparts during the dialogue. Europeans come across as well prepared and very professional, as this quote testifies: ‘On the European side, they are traditionally very well prepared, lay the background on an issue, they usually have very good and substantive presentations. It’s great to work with them’ (Interviews no. 12, 16, 21, and 25). In addition, the data analysis of the American interviewees reveals that there is a better understanding of the relevance of the EU, amounting to more recognition for the EP on the American side. This assessment of the increased recognition of EU relevance is widely shared among American interviewees, who admit that,

Over the last maybe 10 years or so, members of Congress have begun to realise that members of the European Parliament do have legislative authority. The EU all the sudden had become an important and relevant legislative institution – even though it was not the institution of a country, but this ‘union thing’, which is something that people are still trying to grasp. I think that now we better understand the powers of the Parliament and we’d better start talking to the EP because it does things that can negatively impact what happens here and vice versa (Interviews no. 12 and 11).

More specifically, the American participants recognise they *learn* a lot from the Europeans, which confirms the perceptions of the Europeans themselves. This is particularly true on Justice and Home Affairs issues. The thorny topic of the protection of privacy vs. security has often been referred to as an area of fruitful conversation, in which the American participants sympathised with the concerns voiced by their European counterparts: ‘Two years ago, we had very good exchanges on X-ray machines at the US airports and there were some concerns on the part of the European parliamentarians of “what kind of data showed up on the screen”?; “What you could see and couldn’t see?” In other words, how you protect the privacy of an individual looking for a specific gun or knives. We also addressed the question of health

risks for people who would go through these machines and get a full body blast with x-ray and whether there was an option for people not to go through that machine’ (Interview no. 12). Another US participant added, ‘Whenever Europeans talk about privacy, we learn a lot of them. We have now developed a better understanding of this issue and we now realise that it is more complicated on the European side when it comes to data. (Interview no. 16).

It is interesting to note that there is even a sense of empathy from certain Europhiles members of Congress who would like to see an even more equal type of partnership. Certain American participants (though this is a minority view) are themselves very aware of the frustration generated by the low level of American engagement with the European side. Indeed, a few American interviewees have themselves voiced harsh criticism regarding the disrupted and unengaging way in which the American representatives oftentimes behave during the working sessions, suggesting that it might seem disrespectful to the Europeans. These observers on the American side even ‘felt sorry for the MEPs that are not treated with the same care/honour, as when they are hosting the Americans. I see the power dynamics. These 15 MEPs that are treated like kings in the European Parliament and when they come here... it’s tough’ (Interview no. 19). Echoing the exact same feeling, another American participant of the dialogue said about the inter-parliamentary meetings: ‘It’s not about domination but the perceived sense of importance is unequal. The way MEPs perceive themselves and are perceived in Brussels is that they are at the top. Facing the American Congress, they are treated like junior partners, even unconsciously. Typically, the role that Congress occupies exalts power’ (Interview no. 11).

#### 7.4. Alternative explanations: what else is going on during the dialogues?

While the bulk of this chapter shed light on the recognition processes at play during the dialogue, some consideration needs also to be given to the counter-hypotheses developed by the other IR theories outlined in the theoretical framework (p.32-37). In the case of the TLD, the discursive dynamics developing during the dialogue do not correspond to the hard-bargaining kind of communication attempting to coerce the actors. What happens though more predominantly is an exchange of information in the pursuit of cooperation that allows to dispel some stereotypes and misperceptions. There is no strong evidence of persuasion processes either, whereby participants ultimately revise their beliefs to come up with new shared

understandings. This strongly indicates that the real added value of these dialogues resides not so much in the quest for security or profit but more clearly in the quest for recognition.

First, the case of the TLD did not display any instance of bargaining during the dialogue, as realist scholars would expect. In fact, the analysis showed no evidence of the exchange of threats or promises following a give-and-take bargaining kind of mechanism, characteristic of a ‘coercive type of dialogue’. This is hardly surprising given the finality of the TLD meetings: the participants are not expected to come up with a precise binding agreement on a specific topic – contrarily to negotiators at other levels of dialogue. Even the participants of the dialogue explicitly mention that the dialogue is *not* about negotiations: ‘We don’t negotiate anything but really the aim is serious political discussions on real issues that matter to the members the moment they meet. We are really trying to go beyond what they read in newspapers, brief papers and achieve a real personal exchange between legislators’ (Interview no. 18). However, an attentive observation of the dialogue reveals that there is a process of negotiations ongoing during the TLD itself, but it takes place on the margins of the working sessions and is not at the heart of the discussions. Surprisingly enough, it does not involve the main participants of the dialogue (i.e. congressmen and MEPs) but rather the European and American staffers who negotiate between themselves with the representatives of the political groups the final joint statement to be signed by the two chairmen at the end of the TLD. This process of negotiation takes place in a very limited period, which gives no room for any meaningful persuasion processes. As I observed by myself in the last TLD in The Hague (Participant observation, 2016), the staffers were under time pressure to find a common agreement: they were constantly going in and out of the hall in which the working session was taking place, consulting with political groups representatives and running back to their staffer counterparts. Later the same day, reflecting about the negotiation process with the American staffers, they admitted that ‘it had been tough this time. We had no time and just decided to delete the word “multilateral”, as the American staffers were not willing to commit on that’. The phenomenon at play here corresponds to the creation of ‘incomplete agreement’, where compromises are found based on the ambiguity of the language, without involving any significant persuasion processes (Steffek, 2005). The fact that the joint negotiation of this statement – which is the only ‘deliverable’ and collective tangible outcome of the TLD – does not stand at the core of the Inter-parliamentary meeting is a strong indication that its added value resides elsewhere.

Second, in line with the institutional liberal theory, the TLD serves indeed as a forum for the exchange of information in the pursuit of cooperation. The type of information being

exchanged corresponds mainly to ‘taking stock exercises’, whereby members update the other side of what has been done on a particular issue and give their advice on future prospects related to further cooperation. Surprisingly enough, however, most of the information and views being exchanged are neither ‘exclusive nor confidential’ in nature. There is no crucial asymmetry of information that the dialogue is supposed to address. On the contrary, most of the information and arguments being exchanged during the working sessions are made available in the public sphere long before the meeting and even included in the ‘dossiers’ that the participants must read. An American observer who was also closely involved in the preparation and attendance of the TLD meetings reinforced this point by noting that, ‘There is no surprise because the Europeans and Americans on these committees are following these issues on the other side of the Atlantic and they know that there is no agreement on geographic indications and the Europeans know that they will talk about defence issues. These things are very public and they will come up – there is nothing secret’ (Interview no.11). What the dialogue allows, though, is a better understanding of the interests behind the positions advanced, as reflected in the claim that the dialogue helps dispel stereotypes and misperceptions (Interviews no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, and 16). While recognising that the dialogue fulfils its role as an engine promoting cooperation, my argument developed above made the point that the exchange of information has an additional function in terms of identity. The way the exchange of information unfolds is not neutral: the level of disclosure displayed, the efficiency of the meeting, and the high level of connivance contribute to anchor a positive relationship identity beyond the mere rational utility that the exchange of information brings.

Finally, the analysis does not point to any effective persuasion processes: the actors of the dialogue do not fundamentally change their minds following this intense exchange of views. This is quite striking given the conventional view in the literature about the EU, that has long praised its so-called ‘persuasive power’ in its dealing with third countries. At the inter-parliamentary level between the EU and the United States, at least, this is not the case, as this extract from an interview testifies: ‘There will be no life-changing take-away from these dialogues’ (Interview no. 11). Two important points deserve to be highlighted in this regard. First, a majority of lawmakers involved in the TLD expressed no readiness to profoundly revise their beliefs about certain topics: ‘Generally, I think it would be rare that there is a *massive* change after one conversation. I’d like to think that I think very long and hard about my points of views and that they develop over the years. So, it hardly ever happens that I meet anyone who can instantly change my mind’ (emphasis added) (Interview no. 6). Secondly, for many participants of the TLD, the conversion of one to another’s beliefs is not the objective of these

meetings. There is even no deliberate attempt to persuade the other side – partly because the participants do not think that it is a realistic expectation. When asked about any processes of persuasion, MEPs commented, ‘No, this does not happen. It is too ambitious’ (Interview no. 5); and, ‘You know, it’s not one or two meetings with Europeans that they will change their minds... it’s quite ideological!’ (Interview no. 2).

## Conclusion

This chapter offered a new perspective on the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue by ‘inviting the reader to enter the room of the dialogue’ –i.e. by analysing the nitty-gritty details of the discursive interaction at the *micro-level* in an attempt to understand its added value and implications at the macro-institutional level. It highlighted how the regular inter-parliamentary meetings between European and American lawmakers serve to seek recognition and anchor institutional identity – particularly so for the European side. In fact, the thorough analysis of the symbolic elements omnipresent in the dialogue as well as their interpretation by the participants on both sides of the Atlantic support this argument very well.

The first section, which described the preparation of the dialogue and the setting of the room, revealed a striking asymmetry in terms of commitment to the dialogue between European and American representatives. At this early preparatory stage, great efforts are made on the European side to work out a good ‘team performance’ that will allow MEPs to project a positive image of the EU as a relevant, serious, and coherent actor, in line with its institutional identity during the dialogue itself. This entails the selection of MEPs experts in certain areas to lead the working sessions, the cementing of a common European position in the framework of preparatory meetings, and coordination with other EU institutions. Regardless of the dynamics at play during the dialogue to follow, the preparatory phase in itself contribute to the reinforcement of the EU institutional identity.

Then the analysis of the interaction between European and American representatives during the formal and informal sessions exposed the recognition-seeking behaviour of the MEPs vis-à-vis their American counterparts and indicators of recognition for the positive relationship-identity as friends. The rationale behind the exchange aiming at setting global rules for the years to come, the high level of openness among the participants, as well as the flow of the conversation were all interpreted as indicators of the strong relationship linking both institutions, thereby reinforcing the ‘relevance’ component of the EU institutional identity. Particularly important at this stage are also the informal activities taking place ‘outside

of the official meeting room'. They allow for the development of inter-personal relationships and solid bonds of trust that not only reinforce the quality of the interaction back to the room but also constitutes the basis for the thickening of the relationship at the macro-level.

In the third stage corresponding to the moment when the participants leave the room, I showed that European representatives manage to take advantage of the visual, discursive, and practical anchors emanating from the dialogue to clinch the recognition of their institutional identity and project it to the outside world. The extent of the dissemination of the tangible outcomes of the dialogue is particularly telling in this regard as it reflects the acute need of the EU to have the recognition of its institutional identity also seen by others.

Last but not least, this chapter demonstrated that there is overall a positive sense of progress in terms of recognition from the European perspective. This assessment being shared by the American participants, the dialogue definitely appears to be of added value when it comes to identity matters. This overall thesis does not deny the fact that other discursive dynamics are at play during the dialogue as mentioned in the last part of this chapter. The liberal institutionalist approach conceptualising the dialogue as a forum for the exchange of information in the pursuit of cooperation is valid in this context. However, my contention was that the way through which this exchange takes place is meaningful in terms of recognition as well.

In the next chapter, another set of transatlantic dialogues will be scrutinised, involving official representatives of the executive branch, namely from the US State Department and the EEAS/Commission on the European side.

## Chapter 8 – The Transatlantic Executive Dialogues: a dialogue between partners

Exploring further deliberative pockets of the transatlantic architecture of dialogue, this chapter is dedicated to the working practices and added value of the political and sectoral dialogues at the executive level. These dialogues involve representatives from the EEAS and EU Commission on the one hand, and diplomats from the US State Department and other relevant bodies on the other hand. While it has been argued that it is at this level of dialogue that the bulk of the cooperation between the EU and the United States is conducted (Steffenson, 2005), little is known regarding the practicalities of these encounters and its added value in the eyes of the actors of the dialogue. Considering the objectives of these dialogues, a liberal institutionalist analysis would mainly emphasise the cooperative functions of these encounters (reviewing progress, identification of common ground, etc). Yet a close examination of the practices and discourse surrounding the experiences of the EU and US participants of these dialogues reveals subtler and more profound dynamics at play related to the quest of recognition by the EU for its institutional identity.

The key argument advanced here suggests that the recognition of the EU as partners of the United States should not be taken for granted: it is part and parcel of the diplomatic work in which European diplomats engage. In this respect, the executive dialogues provide meaningful instances whereby the EU gets recognition of – and anchor its institutional identity as – a competent partner of the United States. The aim of this chapter is thus to reveal the acts, behaviours, or statements interpreted as recognition by the European Union’s representatives. From the preparation of the dialogue to its follow up, the analysis abounds with evidence that the EU seeks and gets recognition for its distinctiveness and relevance vis-à-vis the United States. Beyond the recognition process unfolding during the dialogues themselves, its celebration outside the room is particularly meaningful. Indeed, against the backdrop of intense, informal, and often unseen processes of communication between the EU and the United States, the formal executive dialogues serve to make the extent of the cooperation between the EU and the United States more visible and tangible.

The chapter proceeds as follows. It first provides a short background on the objectives of these dialogues among diplomats and their institutional outreach corresponding to the more classical type of diplomatic dialogues. The second section sheds light on the process of

recognition and anchoring of institutional identity at play during the three main phases of the dialogue (i.e. entering the room, communication in the room, and leaving the room). The next part of the chapter is dedicated to the assessment of these recognition dynamics by the European representatives, which is then contrasted with the American perspective. Finally, the other discursive dynamics at play during the dialogue are considered and contrasted with the added value of my own explanation.

The empirical analysis is based on 13 semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives from the EEAS and their American counterparts in the US State Department. While the number of interviewees is not very high in absolute terms, the sample is nevertheless representative of the ‘population’ of EU and US officials currently taking part in these dialogues due to the small number of participants overall. Indeed, the formal EU-US political/sectorial meetings are not big gathering events: only five representatives on average for each side usually attend this kind of meetings. On top of that, each representative is responsible for several policy or geographic areas and therefore gets to organise and to attend a wide variety of dialogues, both in terms of issues covered and levels of representation. For instance, one same US official from the State Department can get to regularly attend Ministerial meetings on JHA issues as well as dialogues on Africa, drugs, and human rights at the working level, thereby attending in average 12 meetings over a period of four years. As a result, each interviewee has a broad vision of these dialogues and of their different dynamics. In the selection of the participants, I also made sure to interview American and European representatives that attended the exact same meetings to better contrast their perspectives on these dialogues.

Within the panoply of the EU-US political dialogues (Appendix 3), the analysis deals specifically with the dialogues that are the most active: namely, the EU-US High-level Dialogue on Non-proliferation, Disarmament, Arms Control, the dialogue on the Balkans, human rights consultations, the migration dialogue, and the Justice and Home Affairs Dialogue at the Ministerial level. For triangulation purposes, I also systematically analysed the official texts emanating from the dialogue – mainly in the form of joint press releases and proceedings available on the websites of the EEAS and of the US State Department, as well as visual data related to the meetings, i.e. official photographs of the meetings disseminated on social media.

## 8.1. Background on the transatlantic executive dialogues: classical diplomacy

### 8.1.1. Objectives of the dialogues: fostering cooperation

Most of the political and sectoral dialogues conducted between the US State Department and the EU were established in the 1990s as a way to foster cooperation in all the relevant policy areas mentioned in the TAD, NTA and notably its joint EU-US action plan (1995). In fact, in almost all the sections of the Joint EU-US action plan, the text reiterates the same formula: ‘We will reinforce existing dialogue and cooperation on consolidating democracy, stability, and the transition to market economies in Central and Eastern Europe. To this end, we will hold annual high-level consultations’ (NTA, 1995). In specific fields such as development and humanitarian activities, more details are given regarding the specific functions of these consultations: ‘We have agreed to coordinate, cooperate and act jointly in development and humanitarian assistance activities. To this end, we will establish a High Level Consultative Group *to review progress on existing efforts, to assess policies and priorities and to identify projects* and regions for the further strengthening of cooperation’ (NTA, 1995) (emphasis added). The same holds true for more recently established dialogues, such as the EU-US Cyber Dialogue announced at the 2014 US-EU Summit: ‘It will formalize and broaden EU-US cooperation on cyber issues and constitute the platform for close U.S.-EU coordination on these matters’ (White House, 2014). As the analysis of these formal documents shows, the official function of these dialogues is to promote cooperation through a regular process of policy assessment, involving reviewing progress, identifying areas that need to be strengthened, and suggesting ways to move forward. According to Ginsberg (2001, p. 182), it is during these discussions that ‘decisions on EU-US political relations and the scope and content of policy cooperation and coordination occur’. This statement is however not fully accurate as the issues discussed and topics agreed upon in the framework of these dialogues need to make their way through the EU institutional machinery both before and after the dialogue.

### 8.1.2. The dialogue’s outreach: how do the EU-US “executive” dialogue fit into the wider structure of decision-making?

To fully understand the reach and significance of the EU-US dialogues conducted by the EEAS/EU commission, the US State Department, and various US agencies, one needs to situate these dialogues in the wider institutional structure of decision-making. On the European side, the EEAS follows the instructions given by the European Council, the Council of Ministers as

well as the Political and Security Committee and the Working groups (i.e. the European Council and the Council hierarchy). It basically means that the EEAS presents only positions and solutions previously agreed among the Member States. On the American side, however, the story is more straightforward as the US State Department, which is mostly responsible for organising and conducting these dialogues, is itself part of the executive branch.

On the European side, the main institutional actor directly engaged in the dialogues with the Americans is the EEAS. More precisely, the transatlantic dialogues fall under the remit of the United States and Canada Division of the EEAS, which works in close cooperation with the EU Delegation in Washington (EUDEL)<sup>31</sup>. As the EEAS shares certain portfolios with the EU Commission, such as DG for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement (DG NEAR), DG for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), DG for trade (DG TRADE), and DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) (Duke, 2014), EU Commission officials are also taking part in specific dialogues with the Americans. This is the case, for instance, regarding the Justice and Home Affairs dialogue in which certain areas of expertise are under the remit of the Commission as the words of one EU interviewee makes clear: ‘The Commission is the “home owner” of this topic’ (Interview no. 37). Similarly, in the case of development dialogue, for instance, different commission services are present in the meeting: ‘It always depends on the agenda items but we had representatives of the EEAS, DG DEVCO and DG HOME covering certain items’ (Interview no. 36).

The Treaty of Lisbon has mandated the EEAS to support the High Representative/VP in fulfilling his/her key tasks in the field of Foreign Policy. More specifically, the EEAS needs to assist the HR/VP (1) in conducting the Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence policies (CSDP); (2) in contributing by proposals to the development of these policies, carried out as mandated by the Council; (3) in putting into effect the CFSP and CSDP decisions by the Council (Treaty of the European Union (TEU), Article 18(2); Art. 24(1)); and (4) in ensuring the consistency of the EU’s external action (TEU, Art 18(4)). Hence the ‘core’ of the decision-making process lies heavily on the European Council (i.e. representing the EU Member States): the EEAS is authorised to advance certain policies only if they have received the previous green light by the MS. In the context of the EU-US dialogues, it theoretically implies a high degree of cooperation between the

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<sup>31</sup> For more details about the work and history of the EU Delegation in Washington, see chapters by Winand (2001) and Maurer (2015).

EEAS/European commission on the one hand and the European Council on the other (notably the working Group on Transatlantic Relations, COPRA). As one EEAS official mentioned regarding the preparation of the JHA dialogue, ‘We prepare the skeleton of the meeting, it then goes to the Council working parties and comes back to the EEAS’ (Interviews no. 37 and 24). The bottom line is that the participants of the dialogue need to follow the decisions taken by the European Council. As a result, when the EU representatives enter the room of the meetings, they know exactly their leeway for action and the points they have to promote vis-à-vis their American counterparts.

On the American side, the institutional story is different and more straightforward. The political dialogues under study fall *mainly* under the responsibility of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the US State Department. The State Department – as the formal foreign office of the United States - has primary responsibility for forming, implementing, and articulating US foreign policy. Yet in practice, it is in constant rivalry for control over foreign policy with the National Security Council (NSC) and National Security Adviser (NSA) situated within the Executive Office of the President in the White House (Dumbrell, 1997, p. 93). The influence and status of the State Department varies depending on the president in power. It is very much the President who determined how to conduct Foreign policy (Dobson & Marsh, 2001; Dumbrell, 1997). In sum, as Smith and McGuire (2008, p. 52) explain, there is a mismatch in the policy-making relationship between the EU and the United States in that both actors do not have the same resources and capabilities to mobilise them: while the United States possesses a full federal government that can mobilise the resources of US society over the full range of external action, the same cannot be said with the complex distribution of power at the EU level.

## 8.2. The process of recognition

The fined-grained analysis of the political dialogues at the executive level reveals a high degree of symmetry in terms of the commitment and engagement between the EU and the United States. Yet this does not preclude the EU from engaging in the recognition game in each opportunity given. Indeed, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, the quest for recognition of institutional identity is constant and never-ending. Once recognised, players have to live up to the expectations and understandings forged with and by others. The analysis shows that in every part of the dialogical interaction, the EU strives to come across as an efficient and competent player in line with its identity relation of ‘partners’ of the United States.

While the idea of ‘partnership’ between the EU and the United States is often evoked in public statements (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 302), it does not exempt the EU from living up to this image/expectations in the framework of the dialogue. The rhetoric of the US President, Barack Obama, about the importance of Europe is telling in this regard. In an opinion article published in the *New York Times* in November 2010, Obama stated: ‘With no other region does the United States have such a close alignment of values, interests, capabilities and goals’. Later, on a visit to Britain in 2011, the US president portrayed the upcoming decade as one of opportunity for the transatlantic alliance and denied that globalisation and the rise of new world powers would lead to a decline of the United States and Europe. Instead, he stated: ‘The time for our leadership is now’ (Lynch, 2013, p. 424). This chapter will show that these ideas about the transatlantic relationship in terms of partnership transpire in the way the dialogue is conducted at the micro-level between both sides, with the EU under pressure to live up to this description as a strong partner on the world stage.

### **8.2.1. Entering the room: preparation and setting**

The preparation of the executive dialogues constitutes a well-balanced process between American and European officials under the signs of equality, reciprocity, and partnership. There is, however, one key difference in the American and European approach to the preparation of the dialogue: EU officials clearly attribute more importance to the high level of preparation of the dialogue, perceived as indispensable for the effective projection of the EU’s image as a ‘capable, relevant, and competent’ player. On the American side, by contrast, the absence of reference to the ‘pressure to be well-prepared’ suggests that the stake in terms of institutional recognition is not as relevant.

To begin with, it is worth highlighting that the setting of the date and agenda of the dialogue is done in a spirit of equality whereby the other’s expertise gets recognised. Indeed, in the description of the preparation of the dialogues, a large majority of European interviewees emphasise the smooth and balanced process through which key parameters of the dialogue are decided, i.e. the date and the agenda (Interviews no. 23, 24, 32, 35, 36, and 37). Typically, a few months before the next upcoming dialogue, the relevant policy officials in the EU and in the United States start coordinating its setup: ‘We typically start fixing a date, who is going to attend, and the agenda which is the most important part’ (Interview no. 24). In this regard, both the EU and US participants are well-aware of the importance of not having one side dominate the other. Therefore, the convention is that the host country proposes the agenda but there is always room for the other side to suggest other options: ‘Generally, it’s adding up things – and

then you get too much, so you need to see how you can re-concentrate again. It's a give and take thing. It's really a joint undertaking' (Interview no. 23). Staffers on both sides insist that no party imposes topics of discussion on the other and that they generally go at great length to incorporate the counterparts' demands (Interview no. 24 and 37). This is confirmed by US officials who mention that, 'We (US) make sure that the concerns of the Europeans are incorporated on the agenda even if we don't want to talk about that' (Interview no. 39). This willingness to tackle issues important to the Europeans can be read as a sign of recognition for their distinct concerns related to their institutional identity. Yet as one EU diplomat astutely noticed, even if both sides agree on putting an issue on the agenda, there is still a certain leeway regarding the degree of cooperation and exchange of information during the dialogue itself: 'If this was not a priority topic that the other side wanted to discuss, then the participants can decide to be more or less open in the amount and nature of information that it chooses to share' (Interviews no. 23 and 24).

Furthermore, there is also a form of recognition for the achievements and expertise of the other in the choice of the lead speakers for the different dialogues. The lead speakers are fixed in advance and depending on the topic of discussion, the choice can be very telling. For instance, in the realm of development policy, the European Union likes to describe itself as a 'reliable superpower for peace and human development' (Mogherini, 2017a). In practice, the EU has indeed developed a wide-ranging and highly institutionalised set of relationships with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (ACP) and has a comparative advantage over the Americans on this matter as a 'development superpower' (Smith & Steffenson, 2005, p. 353). By letting the Europeans lead this dialogue, the Americans implicitly recognise the EU's leadership and expertise in this realm. Other examples include the dialogue on Afghanistan/Pakistan, in which 'it is clear that the US will take the lead on this issue due to their heavy involvement in this region' (Interview no. 23), while the contrary is true when it comes to the sanctions on Russia where the EU is at the forefront. Describing the dialogue, a high-ranking US official recalls: 'We think together of who is the best actor to lead on a certain issue, who should be the one to engage? For instance, on Russia it was clear that the EU would lead as France and Germany are already very engaged' (Interview no. 39).

A key difference in the preparation stage between European and American representatives concerns the 'self-imposed' pressure of the EU to come across as a competent partner vis-à-vis the United States. Indeed, a shared understanding has emerged among EU officials about the necessity to 'deliver' in order to gain recognition as a competent/relevant partner vis-à-vis the United States. Many put the emphasis of the 'outcome-oriented' attitude

of their American counterparts: ‘The Americans are very clear about that: as long as they take something out of the meetings, they will participate- otherwise, dialogue dies off. They don’t have the time to spend – half day and all the preparation time for that – if it is not worth something’ (Interview no. 23). Developing this idea further, this European diplomat emphasises: ‘From the Americans’ perspective, you just don’t have a dialogue to have a dialogue with somebody like the EU, considered a normal and trusted partner — you have a dialogue to accomplish things’ (Interview no. 23). In the same vein, another EEAS diplomat mentioned, ‘The US tries to engage with players which are effective in achieving their goals’ (Interview no. 37). This is largely confirmed by the Americans themselves, who equate the continuation of the dialogue with the notion of efficiency: ‘So what we said to the Europeans was “let’s make sure that these dialogues are useful and effective and that we are not meeting just to have meetings you know. We are not just gathering around’ (Interview no. 39). In a similar way, a high-level US official in the State Department emphasised that ‘a successful dialogue is one in which the topic is not exhausted; we want to continue the conversation because we have more *to do* together and it’s *moving forward*’ (Interview no. 38) (emphasis added).

Therefore, all too aware of the fact that the Americans ‘have no time to waste’ (Interview no. 23), a majority of EU diplomats mention the pressure they put on themselves to ‘be ready and well-prepared’ for these dialogues, suggesting the need for the EU to live up to the high expectations set by their American counterparts: ‘With the US, you have a player that puts a lot of demands on your homework. You have to be well-prepared because the other side will be’ (Interviews no. 35, 32, and 37). Echoing the same idea, another EEAS official highlighted that ‘there is certainly pressure because nobody wants to go to an outside partner like the US without having done homework or prepared these dialogues properly’ (Interview no. 36). The heavy European emphasis on the need to be well prepared and ‘deliver’ vis-à-vis their US counterparts is a strong testament to the fact that the dialogue is an instance in which the EU has the opportunity to show that it can live up to the image of a competent partner.

Moreover, European participants understand that if they want to be taken seriously by their American counterparts, they need to send a unified and coherent message to their US interlocutors. This has typically been a challenge for the EU due to its complex institutional arrangements (chapter 4), thus the dialogue is interpreted as an opportunity to correct this negative perception of the EU. As explained by an EU official, ‘Typically, on the EU side we will get all the relevant services together and discuss what we want to get out of that, what the

issues are and so on. So that we can also come across as a *unified* player, this is very important to us' (Interviews no. 36, 37, and 32).

As was mentioned in the theoretical framework (p.49), the necessity to come across as a unified player requires a serious coordination among the different EU institutions and as such, the dialogue acts as a 'bureaucratic catalyst': it sets the entire bureaucratic machinery in motion in order to coordinate and achieve the desired goals ahead of the dialogue. Almost all the participants of these dialogues mentioned this effect of the dialogue related to its institutional function (Interviews no. 23, 35, 36, 37, and 47). For instance, according to an EU official, 'The formal dialogue makes for an overview of a wide range of topics where the whole administration is working behind toward a certain date to get things ready for decisions' (Interview no. 23). Echoing the same idea, another EU official working in the EEAS mentioned that 'agreeing a day and a venue for the meeting helps consolidate processes in DC and Brussels to finalize the agenda in the advanced stages, particularly when there is a lack of momentum. So, if we agree on a date of a dialogue for a particular agenda, we have a reason to go around and to mobilize the relevant actors, including the Member States if their involvement is relevant for the topic. In this regard, this formality or regularity is important and useful' (Interview no. 35). The bureaucratic catalyst is also crucial in the sense that it reinforces the EU institutional identity, regardless of the upcoming interaction with the Americans. It forces all the relevant players to come to a common position and to reaffirm the values and interests at the heart of their identity as an institution. In the words of an EEAS official, 'the dialogue is also a useful exercise for us to get ourselves at the same table, to get consolidated from our side' (Interview no. 36), and 'we really need to think about the main points we want to make and how we are going to present them to the Americans' (Interview no. 24).

#### *Frequency: formality for the sake of visibility*

It is essential to make a clear distinction between formal and informal dialogues. The formal dialogues at the heart of this study normally occur once or twice a year but it varies according to the specific dialogue. In the words of an EU diplomat familiar with these dialogues, 'We have a variety of formats: for the non-proliferation dialogue, we have bi-annual dialogues while for the Afghanistan/Pakistan region, we do not have any formalized dialogues but rather a lot of meetings all the time. As to the dialogue on the Balkans, there is yet another format, i.e. a "quint format" and we meet every three months' (Interview no. 23). While the different dialogues are not supposed to be *formally/officially* convened exactly with the same frequency, a common feature to all is the high degree of flexibility in terms of the informal meetings that

take place in between. According to another EU official, ‘Even though there is a regularity foreseen in these dialogues in the way it is set up, it does not mean that it must meet if there is no agenda or that it cannot meet more times if needed. If something needs to be done urgently, we are not going to wait for the next formal dialogue but we have informal meetings’ (Interviews no. 35, 36, and 37). Therefore, the formal meetings are important in order to take stock of the progress made and more importantly to give visibility to the process of cooperation that goes on ‘unnoticed’ in the form of informal meetings. This high degree of flexibility and ongoing dialogue in the form of informal dialogues fit very well with the relationship identity as partners. Indeed, in a relationship of partnership, it is to be expected that the interaction loses its rigidity as both sides need to be able to reach out to the other with relative ease in order to achieve their common goals more efficiently.

*The composition and size of the delegations: high level and exclusive*

The high level of representation of the participants of these dialogues is by itself a telling indicator of the recognition of institutional identity: the higher the representation, the more recognition is granted in terms of relevance. Typically, both delegations are led by one or several high-level officials, accompanied by three to four colleagues either from the EEAS in Brussels and from the EU delegation in Washington or from the US State Department and US mission to the EU on the American side. In total, there is normally around the table of discussion seven people on both sides (Interviews no. 13 and 23). In the case of the EU-US JHA Ministerial dialogues, the US delegation is usually led by the US Attorney General and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security on the US side, and by the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers, and Gender Equality on the European side (The United States Department of Justice, 2016).

While the level of representation has to be strictly respected on both sides, the rule is not as rigid regarding the number of participants. Seven people on both sides is normally the rule but in practice, ‘There is often more participants on the host side, particularly experts that want to benefit from the conversations’. This can lead to very asymmetric meetings in terms of attendance: for instance, in the last EU-US high-level Dialogue on Non-Proliferation, Disarmament and Arms Control, there were only four representatives on the EU side and twenty on the US side (Interview no. 23). This asymmetry is not perceived as a negative feature by the European participants for whom the presence of so many American experts rather indicates a high level of interest in the dialogue. In addition, the prestige associated with being part of the EU delegation to the United States in these dialogues conveys the importance that

the United States has for the EU. According to an EEAS official, they (EU diplomats) feel flattered to be part of the delegation to the United States, to meet with the Americans, or participate in this type of dialogue. This is related to the huge power of attraction that the United States benefits from: everybody wants to go there, have the feeling of being well treated by the Americans, get a picture in the White House (Interview no. 24).

*Place of the meeting: reciprocity and flexibility*

It is important for the EU to be recognised as an interlocutor of equal importance with their US counterparts. As such, the EU conventionally puts a strong symbolic emphasis on the logic of equality and reciprocity in the design of its dialogues. This includes the alternative convening of the meetings once in Brussels and once in Washington. But here again, there is also a certain degree of flexibility on the matter due to practical concerns (Interview no. 13). For instance, the last EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting took place in Malta in Valletta in June 2017 under the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU (Council of the European Union, 2017).

*Arrangements within the room in perfect symmetry and dress code fully respected*

In this type of official diplomatic dialogues, perfect symmetry is aimed for even if numerical symmetry is rarely achieved. In fact, tremendous importance is given to the seating arrangements around the table reflecting a perfect symmetry between the two parties (see picture below) – the way the official picture has been framed conveys perfectly this idea. Typically, the participants do not sit too far away from each other, thereby creating an intimate atmosphere, facilitating the exchange (see picture below). This detail is not innocuous, considering other dialogues conducted by the EU, where the host country deliberately designed the seating arrangements in order to create more distance. As an EEAS official recalls:

‘When we were in China for the human rights dialogue, our Chinese hosts invited us to seat in a huge room where we were very far away from each other; there were at least five meters between us and them. We were not sitting around a table all together but behind two tables facing each other. It was very formal and sent a clear message that they were not really willing to engage with us (Interview no.7).

As this quote demonstrates, the spatial immediacy characteristic of the dialogue can be exploited to send powerful messages in terms of recognition of the other. In addition, based on the picture below and on other visual data (Appendix 5), American and European participants of these executive dialogues cannot be differentiated from each other as they are all typically

dressed the same way, i.e. in a plain business manner proper to the ‘Western countries’. This detail is visually striking and hints to the same cultural background shared by these groups.

*This photo of the EU-US Justice and Home Affairs High Ministerial meeting in Washington, November 2014, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

To sum up, the analysis of the preparatory phase of the executive dialogue shows that both sides are equally involved in the organisation of the dialogue in a spirit of partnership and equality. The high importance attributed to the dialogue (and hence to the relationship with the other) by both sides is symbolically and visually reflected in the settings of the room. The main difference among European and American participants of these dialogues, however, is the high pressure felt by the Europeans to perform well during vis-à-vis their American counterparts – suggesting the need to impress their American counterparts and live up to the high expectations held from a trusted partner.

### **8.2.2. In the room: communication and interaction**

#### *The core of the meeting*

First, the dialogue is used by the European officials to gain recognition for the EU’s distinctiveness in terms of its objectives, interests, values, and approach to international politics. The data analysis reveals that the exchange of information and arguments characterising the executive dialogues does not only serve the institutional purpose of review and coordination. It also helps the parties to re-affirm the priorities, ideas, and values that are the most important and defining them institutionally. Reminiscent of the ‘desire to be heard’ in the framework of the TLD, there is ample evidence here as well of the EU’s need to be well understood by the other side and have its concerns given due consideration: ‘The objective for us [EU] is to remind the Americans of certain priorities that we have and that are important to us, such as closing Guantanamo. We are not necessarily talking about issues regarding which we lack information, but issues we want to draw their attention to’ (Interviews no. 24, 32, and 36). The fact that these specific issues are raised during the dialogue itself gives the matter a higher degree of importance and raises the expectation on the European side that their American counterparts will act upon these matters: ‘For instance, if you mention the specific case of a prisoner in the framework of the Human Rights dialogue – the very fact that you put your finger on this matter, you know that there will be a follow up because they understand

that it is important and that we might put pressure on them' (Interview no. 24). This suggests that the Europeans are willing to use the dialogical interaction in order to emphasise their own interests and priorities characterising their institution and expect some degree of empathy from their American counterparts. In this sense, the dialogue constitutes an exercise in 'empathy', as reflected in this telling quote: 'You force both sides to get through the other's one head to a certain point' (Interview no. 23). Thus, the dialogue enables the understanding and acceptance of the concerns and constraints of the other side and as such provides a forum in which implicit act of recognition of the other's institutional identity can be performed.

The dialogue is also perceived as an opportunity for the EU to make its specific approach to certain international issues clear and thereby projecting one key feature of its institutional identity related to 'how we do things'. For instance, in terms of counter-terrorism, the EU has traditionally adopted a comprehensive strategy, tackling both the short and long-term root causes associated with this phenomenon (Porter & Bendiek, 2012). The same encompassing approach, which is a key signature of the EU, holds true for migration policy as well. Commenting on the EU-US migration and development dialogue, a European diplomat emphasises that the dialogue gives the EU a chance to explain its specific approach:

There are obviously certain issues on which we would like to see the US more active both in thematic and geographic areas. We would like to inspire them on certain issues, to push them for instance to have a more comprehensive approach to migration, encouraging them to work more on the long-term, *like we do* (Interview no. 36) (emphasis added).

The dialogue is therefore a way to make explicit the distinctiveness of the EU when it comes to its approaches to specific international problems.

The recognition of the others' key differences is all the more vital as it helps move the discussion forward and find possible agreements. During the dialogue, the actors go at great length to *explain the rationale* behind their positions on certain issues in an attempt to find a common ground. This ability to dig deeper and shed light on the interests between specific positions is *a sine qua non* condition for coming to a win-win agreement (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2012). Several EU officials in particular describe very well this process at play during the dialogue: 'What you do is that you understand and explain things, you understand where the others come from, why they do what they do. You understand their rationale and this is very valuable in itself' (Interviews no. 23, 35, and 36). Giving a more concrete example, another EU official involved in the humanitarian dialogue mentioned that:

The Americans explain why they are generally going for direct goods' support in the delivery of aid whereas the EU is going for cash support. Thanks to the dialogue, it is

easier to identify opportunities for cooperation and common points because you better understand where they come from and how they think. So, the dialogue is particularly useful. You can't do that *per* email. Through video conference, it is much more cumbersome (Interview no. 36).

This last point reinforces the relevance of the spatial and temporal immediacy inherent in the face-to-face interaction that allows more in-depth explanations and therefore increases the quality of the exchange.

Secondly, the features of the interaction unfolding during the meetings provide many verbal and non-verbal cues, indicating the type of relationship that both sides maintain with each other thereby addressing the 'relevance' component of institutional identity. The rationale guiding the discussion and the very practice of thinking together about how to best achieve common objectives (touching upon virtually all the realms of international affairs) are by themselves strong indications of a relationship identity as partners. Similarly, the level of openness and trust transpiring in the meetings as well as the *feeling* of being part of the same community of knowledge all contribute to the recognition of the EU as a competent partner of the United States, thereby strengthening the 'relevance' component of its institutional identity. In what follows, I address each one of these characteristics of the executive EU-US dialogues.

***Rationale guiding the discussion: advancing a common project in terms of world governance***

The dialogues are geared towards advancing common objectives, therefore the discussions naturally focus on topic on which there is enough agreement and contentious topics are pushed aside. This point is best captured by this quote from an EEAS diplomat: 'What is going on is that you understand where both sides come from, and then whether or not the positions are too afar. When this is the case, you focus on issues where agreement can be easily found. You leave the difficult contentious points apart. There is no point to argue about disagreements but rather focus on the areas where you can agree and move forward' (Interview no. 23). An American State Department representative echoed exactly the same point: 'We are coming to the table to talk and push the cooperation forward, not to argue – this is not the place for disagreements' (Interview no. 39). In this process, the EU and the United States enhance their identities as partners constructing a collective identity in a configuration reminiscent of Kishore Mahbubani's famous phrase: 'the West versus the Rest'. In this regard, the words of this diplomat involved in the cyber dialogue are telling:

We (Americans and Europeans) are realizing that if we do not manage to agree on the norms of behaviour in the cyber space, it is the other countries with less democratic values that will set the norms for everyone. So, during the dialogues, we really try hard

to think together of our strategy in this regard. Even the fact that the EU and the US talk together about this issue sends a message to other countries on the planet that might have different opinions' (Interview no. 47).

***“Strategizing”: thinking together of the best way to achieve common goals***

In order to achieve these multifarious common objectives in terms of global governance, EU and US officials engage in the discursive act of ‘strategizing’, i.e. thinking together about the best strategy to reach these common goals together, thereby reinforcing their relationship identity as partners. For instance, discussing the EU-US non-proliferation dialogue, an EEAS official mentioned: ‘It’s about strategizing: proliferation is a very multilateral topic and as such, it has a lot to do with the different multilateral forums, treaties, and conventions. So, we strategize, asking questions such as: how do we deal with this upcoming international conference? Who do we try to take on board? What are the topics that we want to achieve over the next couple of meetings?’ (Interview no. 23 and no.13). At the implementation level, the same need for coordination exists: referring to the newly-created climate change working group within the EU-US Energy council, a high-level EU official emphasised that ‘this dialogue will constitute an effective forum where we will discuss how we can push forward the implementation of the Paris agreement’ (Interview no. 32), or in a different context, ‘how we can best advance the sanctions regime regarding Russia’ (Interview no. 38).

It is worth underlining here that these brainstorming exercises deal first and foremost with the different approaches to reach a common objective agreed beforehand. The focus of the discussions is mainly on strategies and not goals, which echoes one of the fundamental descriptions of the EU-US relations whereby both actors share generally the same objectives in foreign policy but display differences over the means to tackle them (Ginsberg, 1997, p. 312). In the words of an EU diplomat, ‘We think a lot about how to get to a certain point that we both agree on. Oftentimes, we have different assessments, we want to do things differently, but *we think together, brainstorm together* and propose things, and sometimes we realize that maybe this approach makes more sense than not’ (Interview no. 23). The interviewee continued:

For a long time, we were discussing the question of how to move forward the reform processes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The EU had typically favoured a gradual small-step approach going through economic and legal reforms- whereas the US thought that a bigger overarching change – at the constitutional level needed to be done. In the end, the EU convinced the US not to push for that because it would have been too unsettling of the whole structure of the country. So, this case is a good example of the EU winning the argument. But there was from the start a full alignment on the goals and objectives– it was on the way to get there that we differed (Interview no. 23).

The regular exchange of best practices as part and parcel of the dialogical interaction is yet another practice confirming the relationship identity of the two sides as partners. As this diplomat enthusiastically underlined, ‘We really do a lot of sharing of best practices. For instance, regarding the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, we looked at the US readmission and refugee programmes and identified if they were lessons that could be learnt to share with our European interlocutors, and vice versa. We do this kind of things all the time’ (Interview no. 39).

### ***High level of trust and openness***

As a matter of fact, for these strategizing exercises to be efficient a high level of trust and openness towards the other is necessary. In the words of this senior EU diplomat:

‘Inevitably, there is a different degree of confidence in how and how much they (US) exchange on third parties and other players. Both sides have many other relationships with other players as well. You can always choose to be transparent about the other players or not. You feel that when there is a lot of trust, they are very open about how they deal with other partners, what are the problems they encounter etc. So, I would say, the closer you get, the more you get this inner information. That is where the value of the repetitive dialogue comes in, you build trust, you build the relationship. It is worth it (Interview no. 23).

It is crucial to mention that the exchange of these precious information is substantially facilitated by the spatial and temporal proximity of the participants (that is, the dialogical setting) and under the cover of confidentiality. As several diplomats argued, ‘This type of information is only transmitted during the dialogues and much less in an exchange of emails’ (Interview no. 24).

The high level of trust and informality characterising the dialogues is an additional indicator of the identity relationship as partners. For an EEAS official,

Our relationship with the US is rather different from other countries because it is much more informal and we are generally basically trying to achieve similar things in terms of trade, global human rights etc. Therefore, the nature of the conversation that we have with the US is different than if we are talking about China, Russia or India or – smaller countries as well. With the US, the nature of the conversations is a much more open one (Interviews no. 32 and 36).

Conversely, based on the diplomatic experience of interviewees who have dealt with interlocutors other than the United States, in the absence of trust, both sides are more likely to fall into the category of ‘coercive’ dialogues in which the prevailing discursive dynamic comes down to an exchange of threat and hard-core bargaining, thereby creating another type of

identity relationship based on enmity and confrontation: ‘With the US, there is a trusting relationship so we are not using threats at all with them – compared to other countries like China for instance’ (Interview no. 24). This point is confirmed by another EEAS official regularly involved in the human rights dialogues with China: ‘The dialogues can get very heated. Our Chinese counterparts shamelessly lie to us, sometimes they get very angry and even threaten to leave the room and interrupt the dialogue. This is very confrontational, unpleasant and reflects the state of the relationship we have with them when it comes to the defence of human rights. They also don’t like to feel dominated by the EU’ (Interview no.7). In this case, the negative emotions are clearly on display thanks to the physical immediacy provided by the dialogue: whether real or fake, the anger expressed by the Chinese representatives sends a strong message of rejection to the Europeans, who feel disrespected as well.

### *The flow of the dialogue*

Another factor that strengthens the identity relationship of the EU and the United States as partners is the excellent flow of the dialogue, which reflects a high degree of ‘transatlantic connivance’ in terms of common knowledge and shared understanding (i.e. expertise). Talking about the quality of a dialogue in the realm of drugs, a US participant enthusiastically reported: ‘The Europeans said to the US counterparts, “Everything you are telling us is music to our ears”, and the Americans answered, “Everything you are telling us is music to our ears”. This was so positive, upbeat, and such a great example of collaboration in areas that most people even don’t realize we are working on together’ (Interview no. 39). In a similar vein, commenting on the non-proliferation dialogue between the EU and the United States, an EU diplomat put the emphasis on the ‘rapidity and depth’ with which the participants of the dialogue covered the issues on the agenda due to their expertise. The same observation has been made for the Balkan dialogue: ‘It is an area with very close coordination anyway, so the dialogue goes very fast through all the details. Literally, we coordinate to the same degree, and with a deep preciseness that is incredible’ (Interview no. 24). In sum, this remarkable ‘joint performance’ whereby both sides display their expertise and capability to work so well together, reinforces their relationship identity as partners. This high connivance on certain dossiers<sup>32</sup> is amplified in the dialogical setting (compared to other forms of communication),

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<sup>32</sup> This point is particularly valid for the dialogues that are the most technical and the less politicized (Interview no.23).

because it is in itself a very challenging exercise to cover so many issues with such rapidity and a high degree of expertise. As such, the face-to-face interaction proves once more particularly valuable to make these features more salient.

***The tone of the dialogue: hectoring style, superiority and humiliation***

While most of the interviewees report positive experiences of their dialogues with their American counterparts, there were a few exceptions worth underlining, as they all referred to the ‘arrogant attitude’ of some of the US officials. In line with the theoretical framework emphasizing the importance of emotions in the process of recognition (p.30), it is interesting to note here that the perception of not being adequately treated by their US counterparts generated negative emotions of anger and humiliation, revealing a lack of recognition in this specific instance. Several interviewees expressed negative memories over the way certain dialogues were conducted, precisely because they did not feel they received the proper treatment to which they were entitled. For example, a European diplomat recounted a Justice and Home Affairs Dialogue (JHA) that was particularly ‘difficult’ because the American side brought to the table of discussion two very qualified lawyers to make their case. This ‘surprise’ related to the unexpected nature of the participants has been perceived by the Europeans as a violation of the rule of the games and of the principle of equality in the dialogue. It left the Europeans with a bitter feeling of being treated with arrogance and superiority, as they interpreted this American move as a rejection to play equal as equal. Bringing the best lawyers of the country in this field to the dialogue was also read by the Europeans as signalling a very offensive approach to the dialogue, which eventually turned out to be the case (Interview no. 37).

In a similar vein, other European participating in completely different dialogues mentioned the recurrent feeling of being treated with ‘arrogance and a sense of superiority’ by their American counterparts. For instance, an EEAS official emphasised the uncomfortable position in which the Europeans find themselves when the United States starts ‘preaching’ them about the most appropriate migration policy to adopt: ‘Frankly, the EU representatives would never dare saying the same kind of things or behaving the same way towards the US. The Americans would tell us for instance: “We are contemplating sending to France representatives of our administration to monitor how well you manage the integration of refugees in your suburbs in Paris”. Could you imagine us [EU] telling them: “Well, we will also send inspectors in your own suburbs in Chicago to oversee the police response to racial violence there”? This kind of statement would without any doubt infuriate them. We don’t do

it but they feel entitled to behave in such a way with the others. This is very awkward' (Interview no. 24). For others, these dynamics do not quite reflect a dialogue among equals:

I think the Americans see themselves a bit above us. It's up to us to equalize the perspective. The US is quite often an over-confident player on the world scene as we all know. This comes to the level of the administration, how they come across and how they see themselves. Our job is precisely to make sure that there is a dialogue among equals and we are working on that (Interview no. 36).

This quote is particularly telling as it shows how the power dynamics at the macro-level strongly reverberate at the micro-level in the dialogical interaction itself.

#### *Informal activities: coffee breaks and dinners*

In the framework of these dialogues as well, there are a few opportunities to socialise outside the formal meeting room, albeit to a lesser degree compared to the TLD, for instance. Long meeting days in particular typically include a few coffee breaks, a working lunch, and possibly a dinner (Interviews no. 23, 24, and 39). As one EEAS official put it, 'Despite the time pressure, there is always a social dimension and this is the most important part' (Interview no. 32). In fact, these informal moments are deemed particularly important as they nurture personal relationships and bonds of trust that in turn influence the quality of the formal dialogue, thereby reinforcing the relationship-identity as partners. As will be shown in the last sections, these personal relationships developed during the informal moments become at a later stage institution-to-institution relationship, practically anchoring the strong partnership identity of the EU with the United States.

First, while many interviewees talked about the strong personal relations established after years of communication on a daily basis with their American counterparts (Interviews no. 23, 24, and more), it is essential to recall here that the dialogue gives the platform for creating these personal relationships in the first place and particularly so during the informal moments. Indeed, the rotation policy of the EU foreign service and the change of staff induced by the regular change in American administration makes the face-to-face encounter particularly valuable in fomenting these bonds of trust: 'The regularity of the dialogue is good because people change and you need to have these face-to-face meetings and interactions to get to know well your counterparts' (Interview no. 29). In light of current change in American administration, the same official maintains, 'All these dialogues will be important opportunities for the EU to meet the new people in the new administration. The networking effect of these meetings is important because it is where you get close relationships with your counterparts.'

It's a real function that impacts the quality of the dialogue afterwards'. Echoing the same idea, a high-level European diplomat also made the point that,

With the rotation policy of the EEAS, people are supposed to move to another job after four years. People change and this is the same on the American side. Therefore, what we do thanks to the dialogue is a continuous process of building relations. Lunches, dinners, breakfast –all these less formal moments are very important for this. It's basically over a lunch or dinner table that we will try to build these relations (Interview no. 32).

Secondly, as explained in the theoretical chapter, it is easier to develop these close relationships during the informal parts of the dialogue, which are deemed particularly important as they open the space for more personal interactions and franker side conversations. These informal moments are valuable in allowing both sides 'to experience together' thereby breaking the dynamics of the formal regular discussions. For this European diplomat, 'Sometimes the most important achievement of the meeting is not on the meeting agenda at all. It's taken on the side discussions, it happens quite often' (Interview no. 35). Concurring with this point, another EU diplomat amusingly even referred to the experience of 'smoking together' as allowing more fruitful conversations: 'The most important things sometimes are made on the corridors based on the bilateral more personal discussions. I understood with experience that you should start smoking to get something sometimes' (Interview no. 37). Linking back the development of these close bonds during informal moments to the meeting room and the quality of the discussion ensuing, this European heavily emphasised: 'You realize that in the non-proliferation case – where they (US and EU) had very good and *trustful* relationship – literally you don't have to convince people – if they say they are going to do it, you know that they will do it. They know each other very well and it definitely changes the nature of the dialogue' (Interview no. 24).

In short, this sub-section highlighted the particular features of the face-to-face interaction within the meeting room characterising the EU-US executive dialogues. It showed that the EU takes advantage of this opportunity to assert its distinctive values and interests, hoping that their American counterparts will be inclined to take these seriously as a sign of thick recognition for the institutional identity of the EU. More importantly, both the rationale and the quality of the exchange in terms of trust and expertise contribute to anchor the institutional identity of the EU as a competent and relevant partner of the United States. As to the few informal moments shared outside the formal meeting room, they prove crucial in establishing relevant contacts and emotional bonds of trust that are instrumental in the thickening of the relationship as partners.

### **8.2.3. After leaving the room: celebrating recognition outside of the room**

The cooperation and communication between the relevant EU and US officials unfolds on an ongoing basis and with a remarkable intensity, as this comment from an EEAS official exemplifies: ‘There is not a day that goes by without having an EU official sitting down and having a chat with a US administration representative. It is a very intense relationship and this happens at all levels’ (Interview no. 32). In fact, many other interviewees mentioned the constant communication between EU and US officials (Interviews no. 23, 24, 29, 32, 35, 36, and 37) along these lines: ‘I am in touch with US staffers from the State Department three or four times a day, it’s a perpetual (on-going) exchange. In the political section of the delegation, we all have these constant interactions with our American counterparts’ (Interview no. 23). These exchanges developing out of the formal dialogues are ‘hidden’, go unnoticed and unfold with such an intensity, that even the highest-level officials are struggling to keep track of all the informal meetings and daily conversations going on across the Atlantic. To ‘visually’ make this point, a high-level official in the EEAS North American division showed me a scheme representing ‘all the dialogues that have been proliferating over the last years’ (Interview no. 32 and appendix 4). In this sense, one can argue that the formal executive dialogues play an important function, namely making this intense and rich relationship visible and more tangible to all. In this context, it is of paramount importance for the EU to celebrate the recognition of its institutional identity using all kinds of anchors – visual, discursive, and practical. Clearly at the executive level, the dialogue helps formalising the process when control seems sometimes to be lost.

The first way through which the recognition process is clinched is through the use of visual anchors. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, photographs are powerful representations and carriers of symbolic messages. Whenever it is possible, the EU and US representatives participating in the dialogues do not miss an opportunity to capture their ‘physical coming together’, thereby giving a tangible, visual expression of their cooperation and relationship identity as partners. The same logic applies regarding the recording of press conferences following the dialogues at a high level of representation. These symbolic and emotional images become not only part of institutional memory but are also used by the institution to project a positive image of its recognised identity – in this case, as an effective, competent partner of the United States. The European delegation to the United States is particularly active in tweeting these symbolic images as can be seen below, for instance.

*This tweet by the EU Delegation to the US of the EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting in Malta in June 2017, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

The second way through which the recognition of the EU institutional identity is completed is through the use of discursive anchors. Following the same logic as the pictures, the dissemination of the press releases – corresponding to the only collective tangible outcome of the meeting – serves as an additional anchor of institutional identity. It is indeed the only collective tangible outcome available to the public and contains key messages in terms of institutional identity.

First, the relevance of the EU as an international player is often mentioned in the proceedings and joint declarations publicised. For instance, in one of the last Justice and Home Affairs ministerial meetings, there has been an emphasis on the fact that, ‘the US delegation highlighted the excellent operational cooperation at the EU level with Europol’ (September 2016, Bratislava, 12385/16). Using the same kind of congratulatory wording, the proceedings mention that, ‘the US *applauded* the efforts of the Member States to cope with the difficult situation related to the migration flows to Europe’. By the same token, dealing with the exchange of best practices, another paragraph of the declaration stresses that, ‘The US delegation was interested to learn from experiences of EU Member States – in particular on how to empower credible voices within local communities’. Through these declarations, the United States is discursively giving credit to the hard work and competency of the EU. The fact these remarks are written in black and white on the paper and accessible to all definitely contributes to anchor the EU institutional recognition as a competent international actor.

Secondly, a heavy emphasis is systematically put on the common values and objectives linking the EU and the United States (i.e. reiteration of common values, portraying the two actors as partners). For instance, consider the very first lines of the Joint Press release of the high-level dialogue on Non-proliferation, Disarmament and Arms Control that took place in 2015: ‘In his opening remarks EU Special Envoy Bylica declared: "This year brought yet another important proof that the United States remains the EU's key partner in successfully dealing with global proliferation challenges through diplomatic means". Assistant Secretary of State Countryman said that "the EU-US partnership is essential to preserving the achievements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to creating the conditions for further progress in disarmament”’ (EEAS, 2015h). It is interesting to note here the *reciprocity* explicitly expressed in the appreciation of each other as partners.

Related to this point, the press releases capturing the strong relationship identity of the EU and the United States as partners serves also to send a signal to stakeholders and to third countries. In the diplomatic jargon of the EU-US officials, this so-called ‘joint messaging’ further anchors the image of the EU and the United States standing together (the West against the Rest) (Interviews no. 13, 24, and 47).

Finally, the last way through which the recognition of institutional identity is carried out of the room is through the continuation and intensification of the dialogue.

First, the dialogue has an internal/built-in forward-feeding mechanism. The fact that the dialogues always encompass the forward-feeding stage in which the next steps for cooperation are being discussed ensures that a follow-up meeting will take place. As several interviewees recount, ‘After having reviewed examples of good cooperation and expressed our mutual appreciation of the good cooperation, we typically address remaining issues that need to be worked on, or things for the future that we would like to do’ (Interview no. 37), and ‘we always agree on the work that has to be taken forward, on the next steps – it’s an integral part of the dialogue’ (Interview no. 23). This commitment to keep working together and to reconvene is then enshrined in the joint press releases, such as in the case of the EU-US JHA: ‘Underlining the progress made and the continued need to face terrorism and crime together, the European Union and the United States of America remain committed to continue common work and meet again in the first half of 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria’ (European Commission, 2017d). The participants of the dialogue therefore leave the room with a date on their agenda for the next meeting with a reinforced sense of institutional identity.

Furthermore, in line with the theoretical framework, the dialogue provides a strong practical anchor by transforming the personal relationships built during the interaction at the micro-level into a strong institution-to-institution relationship outside of the room. As this interviewee accurately describes, ‘I really think that the dialogue is not a waste of time because there is relationship-building and the relationship-building becomes important when someone has a problem and they pick up the phone to call the counterpart. What you want is to create an *institution-to-institution relationship*. The formal dialogue serves the important function to build the relationship *well-beyond* the formal dialogues’ (Interviews no. 29, 23, and 32) (emphasis added). Similarly, another diplomat mentioned, ‘It’s all about the relationship, when you have to make a telephone call because something happened, you already have this friendship basis and can easily contact your counterparts. It’s the basis of diplomacy’ (Interview no. 39).

In sum, this sub-section has shown that in the case of the executive dialogues where the communication between EU and US officials is ongoing and often happens ‘off the radar’, the formal dialogues generates different types anchors that allow the EU to make this intense relationship visible and thereby to further anchor its institutional identity as a competent partner of the United States, i.e. as a relevant player on the international scene. Besides the use of visual and discursive anchors, the institutional identity of the EU is strongly anchored through the inter-personal, micro-links created at the individual level that becomes institution-to-institution relationships.

### 8.3. The outcome: “We are partners”

This last section examines the prevailing discourse among European participants to assess the extent to which they feel that their institutional identity has been recognised and reinforced. This assessment is then contrasted with the American perspective to see if their perception is aligned with the reality. I show that the executive dialogues between the EEAS/European Commission and the US State Department largely contribute to reinforce and anchor the EU institutional identity, particularly in terms of its relevance as a competent partner of the United States.

#### 8.3.1. EU perspective: “We want to equalize the US and are getting there”

For many EU officials, the dialogue serves among other things to equalise the United States, to make sure that the EU remains relevant in its eyes. In fact, one outspoken ambition of the EU is clearly to be recognised by the American other as a *relevant* actor. In the words of an EEAS diplomat, ‘For the EU, there is always an element of wanting to show a greater profile, to be recognized as an equal partner because the US is a stronger power and the EU is after all a young organization in foreign policy and always in competition with its biggest member states. Clearly, there is an issue on the European side with being relevant and being seen as relevant’ (Interviews no. 23 and 24). Echoing this comment, the head of the America desk in the EEAS explicitly mentioned that, ‘The overall objective of these dialogues for the EU is to continue to ensure that the US sees the EU as the most relevant partner in world affairs’ (Interview no. 32). Put in even blunter terms, another EU officials argued: ‘Our aim is to equalize them’ (Interview no. 36).

With this aim in mind, the analysis of the data reveals a general sense of satisfaction regarding this issue, denoting some progress in the ‘right direction’, i.e. towards a more

egalitarian/equal kind of relationship. I provide below empirical support to this claim. First, many European interviewees perceive a clear improvement regarding the importance that the United States ascribes to the EU in terms of its relevance: ‘There is a growing appreciation on the American side of what we can do as the EU. Ten years ago, the situation was different. Now the Americans ask more automatically this kind of questions; how can we engage with the EU? What do the Europeans think of that specific issue? Etc’ (Interview no. 23). Reinforcing this point, another EU diplomat expressed confidence in the fact that, ‘With the restructuration of the European foreign service, they (Americans) now better understand why it is in their interest to deal with the EU’ (Interview no. 24).

Yet at the same time, Europeans point to certain instances in which the United States still fails to fully appreciate and hence recognises the EU’s distinctiveness. In this regard, a sense of frustration is palatable among certain EU interviewees. Often taking the form of complaints, European diplomats point to the lack of basic knowledge about the subtleties of the European Union and the specificities of its individual societies. As one EEAS official involved in the Human Rights Dialogue with the United States recounts,

Even though we have a very strong dialogue with the US, I think that they (US) don’t know the European Union well enough. The lack of understanding of certain subtleties related to the European political culture, its ideas and traditions is sometimes very striking. This is the case for example regarding the concept of “*laïcité*”. Even at the level of the administration, the staffers – who are supposed to be well-versed in religious affairs – do not manage to grasp the meaning of this concept, arguing that *laïcité* is simply the negation of religion. This is quite disappointing (Interview no. 24).

Based on the realisation that many EU’s achievements were not yet well recognised by their American counterparts, several EU officials perceive the dialogue as an opportunity to rectify that. In the field of foreign affairs and defence issues for instance, ‘It is still pretty much the case that what the EU does in ESDP is not known by the US administration. Obviously, the EU is not a big military player but there is a lot of security, stabilization activities that the EU does that’s oftentimes overlooked on the US side so there is a lot of explaining, informing and liaising that has to do with that in the framework of the dialogue’ (Interview no. 23, 24, and 36).

### **8.3.2. US perspective: “the Europeans are definitely key partners”**

The general European perception of a positive development in terms of recognition is matched by American commentators. First, the multiplicity of the formal dialogues as well as the intense trans-governmental communication characterising the current state of transatlantic relations is

interpreted by the Americans as a testament to the EU's relevance as a key player for the United States: 'The evolution from the first budding institutional relationships established by the dialogues in the 90s to the proliferation of informal dialogues and intense communication that we are witnessing today is impressive and it shows that Europe is really our partner for many endeavours' (Interview no. 39). The same idea was reiterated by several other US state department officials: 'This high level of coordination and consultation are characteristic of these self-sustained relationship and mature relationship that *partners* normally entertain' (emphasis added) (Interviews no. 20, 21, and 28).

Drawing on his rich institutional memory, the former head of the European Affairs division in the State Department equates the prolific development of the dialogues with the importance the EU has gained as an interlocutor in the eyes of the Americans. Recalling the 1990s, he mentioned:

For a long time, the European Union was knocking on the door in Washington, trying to get the US government as a whole to take the EU as a serious political actor. By 1995, the process got a bit of traction: these dialogues were established very consciously as a way to begin a discussion between various agencies and the US government on the one hand and their counterpart organizations in the EU on the other hand. It was a huge success, we proliferated these dialogue beyond belief (Interview no. 29).

Further comparing the situation ten years ago, he insists: 'I used to pull teeth to get people to go to these meeting. They hated it, asking constantly: "Who is the EU? Never heard of them! What do they do? Seriously, I meet with Brits and Germans all the time. Why should I meet with the people from Brussels?" Then they realized that it was necessary to manage the relationship with Brussels as well' (Interview no. 29).

What makes the proliferation of these dialogues and their continuation so meaningful in the transatlantic context is the fact that the Americans are less inclined to 'talk for the sake of talking' than their European counterparts. In other words, the renewed commitment to the dialogue must not be taken for granted, as the Americans use to make very clear that if the dialogue turns out to be a 'waste of time' (i.e. if it does not achieve anything concrete), then the dialogue might die off. This resonates with old complaints voiced in the mid-1990s by US participants according to which consultations were in reality briefings for their counterparts for which they obtain little in return (Gardner, 2001, p. 89). Today such complaints are not being voiced. On the contrary, most of the US interviewees praised the EU participants for their level of preparation, expertise, engagement, and capability to deliver, as this quote from an American diplomat testifies: 'The dialogue triggers more desire to work with the EU because it proves

that it is *effective*. We learn a lot from the EU' (emphasis added) (Interview no. 14). Previous research has shown that the diplomatic corps of the US delegation are generally educated and possess the relevant expertise in the areas they are responsible for (Winand, 2001, p. 135). The finding, according to which they are also rated as extremely professional by outsiders, is confirmed by my own data. The data is replete with comments on the positive perceptions that Americans have of European diplomats, describing their engagement and competence (Interviews no. 13, 14, 38, and 39). In the account of this US diplomat, the Europeans' honesty – and even perhaps assertiveness – as partners is very much appreciated:

Our European partners have been fantastic in the fact that they have been so cooperative and efficient. What I appreciate the most is that when there is a problem or disagreement, they would let us know. I really like this honesty and their high degree of engagement. I never went to a dialogue where I felt that any counterparts were not less than 150% engaged – this is really what makes this dialogue so worthwhile for us. In this sense, the dialogue is really an opportunity to sit down with your partners (Interview no. 39).

For another US official, there is no doubt that 'the EU is our key partner for solving global problems' (Interview no. 13).

Finally, judging by my material, the American participants acknowledge they better understand the specific characteristics of the EU thanks to the dialogue (in terms of recognition of the EU's distinctiveness as an actor). Certain diplomats openly confess that indeed, 'there are a lot of moving pieces and it is not always easy to follow the EU. But the dialogue allows a better understanding of how complex the EU machinery is' (Interviews no. 14 and 47). While this type of comment can arguably be seen as an effective exchange of information, it is also a testament to the fact that the American participants better appreciate the complexity of the European Union and the way it functions, elements that are part of its identity as an institution. As such, this exchange of information and the impact it has on the Americans' understanding and appreciation of the EU amounts as an implicit act of recognition of the EU's identity.

To sum up, the analysis shows that overall the dialogue contributes to anchor the institutional identity of the EU – particularly as a competent and trusted partner of the United States. While certain challenges persist when it comes to the understanding and recognition of certain subtleties of the values of the EU, there is generally a sense of progress towards more equality in the relationship. This is largely confirmed by the American participants who emphasise how their perceptions of the EU positively evolved, pointing to the extraordinary intensity of the exchanges as a testament of their recognition of the EU as a competent partner.

## 8.4. Alternative explanations: a short discussion

As mentioned in the theoretical framework (pp. 32-35), besides the quest for recognition, dialogues can also be used to fulfil different roles in international relations- including the quest for security in the realist vein and the quest for profit and progress according to the institutionalist liberal and constructivist approaches. In this section, I briefly discuss the alternative explanations proposed by the traditional IR theories outlined in the theoretical chapter.

Considering the coercive type of dialogue envisioned by the realist school of thought, the analysis showed no evidence of the exchange of threats or promises following a give-and-take bargaining kind of mechanism. As mentioned earlier, when asked about this specific aspect of the dialogue, interviewees dismissed it all together and rather emphasised the fact that this kind of discursive engagement is not something that happens with their American counterparts (at least in the framework of the EU-US political dialogues).<sup>33</sup> By contrast, they often mention the occurrence of such “threatening speech acts” with other partners, such as China, with which the interaction is much more confrontational: ‘With the US, we have a trustful relationship, so we don’t need to threaten them. But with China, we would typically emphasize that if they don’t do enough to tackle (this) specific problem, they will have to bear the consequences for it’ (Interview no. 23). The same idea resonated on the American side, whereby ‘most people (i.e. US diplomats) approach the meeting as talking with strong partners, you don’t come with your frustration, finding enemies or negotiating hard on your positions’ (Interview no. 39).

The most relevant alternative explanation of what is going on during the dialogue corresponds to the liberal institutionalist take according to which dialogue is basically a forum for the exchange of information allowing the promotion of cooperation (pp.33-25). In fact, many participants emphasise the important role that the dialogue plays as an exercise in policy assessment, whereby the progress made is reviewed and the next steps planned (Interviews no.13, 23, 24, 36, and 37). In line with a key idea of the institutional liberal approach, the dialogue is also appreciated for the opportunity it gives to redress information asymmetry between the two cooperating agents: ‘The dialogues are useful particularly when there is a clear

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<sup>33</sup> Obviously, in a different context such as the rounds of discussions about TTIP, we could expect to see more of these bargaining dynamics at play due to the ultimate goal of the interaction, which is to negotiate a far-reaching trade agreement.

asymmetry of information: we use to share the information on both sides and as a result, we come to a better perspective on the situation in a specific country' (Interviews no. 13, 23, 24, 38, and 39). Finally, the added value of the dialogue – characterised by spatial and temporal immediacy – comes to the fore as well in this context. First, the display of emotions is instrumental in recognising the level of importance attributed to an issue, and therefore influences the actors' behaviour in conditions of uncertainty. Referring to the shadow of the future, this EEAS diplomats explained very well the importance of body language in this context:

In the EU-US relationship, we are not talking about a one-time transactional relationship but about an ongoing long-term relationship where things you are doing today affects decision and actions down the line. So, there is always an issue with things that you don't want to do to the other because you want to keep the good and cooperative relationship. In this respect, the face-to-face interaction is helpful because you feel if this is very important to them (for instance through the tone they take to speak about it, their determination...), you understand that it's better to accommodate and vice versa' (Interview no. 23).

Secondly, the temporal immediacy is also appreciated for allowing less rigid types of interaction: 'There is always value in sitting down and in having these conversations – we shouldn't underestimate the value of simple engagement with one another because the dialogue allows this space where you can ask for clarifications, follow up on what the others have just suggested; there is a lot of value just in talking. We really build the relationship by talking' (Interview no. 38).

As to the constructivist take on the dialogue, according to which the dialogue allows the emergence of shared understandings through processes of persuasion and arguing, it does not feature in a prominent way in the analysis of the data. Indeed, I found that persuading the 'other' of the rightfulness and validity of his/her positions does not apparently constitute the primary goal of the participants, as both sides are well aware of the low probability of success of such an endeavour. Consider for instance this quote by an EU official addressing this issue: 'You don't enter the meeting room thinking that they (US counterparts) will change their mind as a result of the discussion' (Interview no. 24). Similarly, when asked how much convincing was happening in these dialogues, another European official simply answered: 'You almost never convince somebody if he has the opposite opinion. The dialogue is not about convincing, it's not about a full-change of position – this is something that almost never happens' (Interview no. 23). This is confirmed on the American side, as this quote suggests: 'The dialogues do not change our opinions but it definitely helps shaping the process' (Interview no.

13). At the same time, however, there are instances in which ideas and arguments are genuinely exchanged and have an impact on the position of the other. In this account of the Western Balkans dialogue, an EEAS diplomat recalled:

For a long time, we were discussing the question on how to move forward the reform process in Bosnia Herzegovina. The EU had typically favoured a gradual small-step approach going through economic and legal reforms whereas the US thought that a bigger overarching change at the constitutional level needed to be done. In the end, the EU convinced the US not to push for that because it would have been too unsettling for the whole structure of the country. So, we decided to try first the gradual approach and see how far we could get with the institutional reforms in the first place. In this case, the EU won the argument (Interview no. 23).

This kind of occurrence seems, however, to be the exception rather than the norm – as only one interviewee out of 15 referred to this kind of dynamic in the dialogue.

To conclude, among the alternative explanations/takes on the added value of the dialogue, it is the liberal institutionalist approach that describes the best what is going on during these face-to-face encounters, in the specific context of the EU-US political dialogues. The findings show that the dialogue also serves the purpose of promoting cooperation thanks to the intense exchange of information. My contention however is that the dialogue cannot be reduced to the mere exchange of information between rational actors. The way the exchange of information proceeds is indicative of the type of relationship that the actors in presence maintain towards each other. In the case at hand, the interaction characterised by a high degree of trust, shared understandings, and an outcome-oriented nature acts as a mechanism reinforcing the relationship identity as partners. It is this socio-psychological aspect of the interaction that this study unravels – without, however, dismissing all together the alternative explanations.

## Conclusion

This chapter shed a new light on the executive political dialogues conducted between the EU and the United States by focusing on the subtle dynamics of recognition and anchoring of institutional identity at play during these face-to-face exchanges. Beyond the institutional function of the dialogue – consisting of furthering cooperation through a review of the progress made and identification of common grounds – the analysis has shown that from the EU's perspective, it is also the recognition of the EU as a competent partner of the United States that is at stake during these dialogical encounters. The recognition of this part of their identity is

part and parcel of the diplomatic work. Therefore, through their performance during the dialogue, European diplomats need to live up to the high expectations that the United States holds from the EU in this respect. This is why so many European diplomats refer to the ‘pressure’ they feel to be well prepared and to come across as a competent and unified actor vis-à-vis their American counterparts.

In practice, the analysis demonstrates that the EU achieves this goal to a great extent during the dialogues: already in the preparatory phase, the process is perceived as being well-balanced and there is no blatant asymmetry in terms of engagement between both sides. Moreover, during the interaction itself, the spatial and temporal immediacy of the setting allows the display of verbal and non-verbal cues that confirm the relationship identity of the two entities as partners: whether it is ‘strategizing’ vis-à-vis other actors, or enjoying the high level of connivance and trust among themselves, all these implicit acts of recognition do matter and contribute to the perception of ‘being treated adequately by the other side in line with one’s self-image’. Yet a few cases were reported in which the arrogant attitude sometimes displayed by the American participants generates anger and frustration as emotional cues of lack of recognition.

The celebration of the recognition outside the meeting room fulfils a particularly important function in the context of the executive dialogues because it gives visibility to the intense communication and cooperation linking both political entities that go unnoticed in between the formal dialogues. Put another way, the visual and discursive anchors emanating from the dialogue give a concrete expression to the strength of the relationship and to the identity of both actors as partners – the aim being ‘to be seen talking together’.

In sum, this chapter demonstrated that there is a positive sense of progress in terms of recognition from the European perspective. The general feeling among Europeans is that thanks to the dialogue – the EU is better understood by the United States and perceived as a relevant partner. This assessment is shared by the American participants, who recognise the shift that has occurred from the mid-1990s until today in their understanding and realisation that the EU matters. In the next chapter, we turn to another type of dialogue, namely the transatlantic dialogues taking place at the civil society level.

# Chapter 9 – Transatlantic Civil Society Dialogues: a case of indirect institutional recognition

## *TABC as a dialogue among “associated rivals” and TACD as a dialogue* *among one big family*

This chapter looks at another type of dialogue – namely, the transatlantic dialogues at the civil society level created by the European Union and the US government in the mid-1990s. Among the myriad existing transatlantic civil society dialogues,<sup>34</sup> this chapter focuses on the Transatlantic Business Council (TABC),<sup>35</sup> previously known as the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD), and on the Transatlantic Consumers Dialogue (TACD) established under the impulse of the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) in 1995. These two dialogues deserve particular attention as they have been the most active civil society dialogues in transatlantic relations since their creation (Bignami & Charnovitz, 2001; Green Cowles 2001). These transatlantic civil society dialogues have originally been designed to fulfil two official objectives. First, they provide input to, and support for, the decision-making process as a result of regular dialogues and consultations with representatives from the EU and US government officials in the framework of a ‘quadrilateral negotiation forum’. Secondly, these dialogues have the mission of nurturing transatlantic bonds among civil society actors on both sides of the Atlantic in the form of regular dialogues between business groups on the one hand and consumer groups on the other hand (NTA, Title 4, 1995). These regular dialogues, organised among working groups and policy committees, refer to the preparation stage whereby members of civil society first develop their positions and discuss strategies before entering into consultations with EU and US official representatives.

The specific format of these transatlantic civil society dialogues featuring participants who are not EU officials as such provides interesting and compelling insights regarding the overall argument about the quest for institutional recognition of the EU developed in the

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<sup>34</sup> For a comprehensive review of the different types of transatlantic civil society dialogues, see Bignami and Charnovitz (2001, p. 256).

<sup>35</sup> The Transatlantic Business Council (TABC) was created as a result of a merger between the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) and European-American Business Council (EABC) in January 2013.

previous parts of the thesis. First, the analysis of the dialogical interactions among European and American members of the civil society provides a different picture in terms of recognition compared to the previous chapters where formal EU representatives were the main actors of the dialogues under study. In this case, the quest for recognition of institutional identity is much less acute as the participants of the dialogues (i.e. CEOs, businessmen and representatives of consumer organisations) have their professional identities already well anchored in another framework. In other words, for most of the participants, belonging to TABC and TACD are not defining features of their identity. As we will see, participation in these dialogues is not as symbolically meaningful as it is for the representatives of the EU institutions who are much more focused on gaining recognition of their relevance vis-à-vis their American counterparts. In this specific case, the participants come together in order to advance a common cause (either business/profit or defence of consumer's rights, which takes precedence over their being American or European). However, this does not preclude the fact that interesting identity dynamics are at work in these interactions. The analysis shows that TABC members establish and maintain a relationship identity as 'associated rivals' while TACD members interact in a way more reminiscent of the relationships among 'members of a big family'. Another particularity of this chapter is that the analysis takes into account not only the physical meetings but also virtual and online dialogues, as they are the most dominant forms of interaction whereby most of the work in these frameworks (TABC and TACD) is done.

While adopting 'Mill's method of difference' to emphasise the difference in the type of actors participating in the dialogue and the link to the quest for recognition, the main question remains: Why has the EU institutionalised these transatlantic civil society dialogues? The chapter shows that the dialogues at the civil society level *indirectly* reinforce the EU institutional identity. By creating these dialogues in the first place, the EU makes itself even more relevant and indispensable in the eyes of the civil society at large – and not just in the eyes of diplomats or other politicians from other countries. The chapter therefore presents this dialogue as a case of indirect recognition through the less-normatively charged involvement of non-state actors. These non-state actors (NSA) indirectly contribute to the recognition of the European Union as a distinct and competent institution because their involvement in the policy-making process captures the EU's attachment to the value of democracy and ensures that the EU enacts more efficient and acceptable policies.

To substantiate these lines of argumentation, the chapter proceeds in three main sections. It begins with a short background on the specificities of these dialogues involving non-state actors and on the context of the emergence of these groups. It then highlights the

different dynamics and parameters of the civil society dialogues to show that in this dialogical interaction, the actors are not primarily motivated by the quest for recognition compared to the previous dialogues involving EU actors. The fine-grained analysis covers the different phases of the dialogue: preparation/entering in the room, the exchange itself, and the leaving of the room. It reveals that both in the case of TABC and TACD, European (and American) participants are neither primarily concerned with getting recognition for their relevance nor for their unique traits as distinctively *European or American* members (i.e. the distinctive component of institutional identity) during their dialogical interactions. Finally, the last section explains how these transatlantic civil society dialogues serve to legitimise and reinforce the relevance of the EU.

The empirical data used in this chapter has been collected through 18 semi-structured interviews with the organisers (staff members) and participants of the TABC and TACD (i.e. representatives of companies and representatives of consumers groups) on both sides of the Atlantic. When deciding who to interview, I specifically targeted the chairmen and participants of the most active working groups in the TABC (i.e. the Trade WG and the Information and Communications Technology WG). The same rationale applies for the interviews conducted with TACD. I collected insights from American and European members of the Steering Committee as well as the chairmen and participants of the most active policy committees (i.e. the Information Society Committee (InfoSoc), the Intellectual Property Committee, and the Food Safety Committee). The analysis also relies on official documents issued by these organisations, including resolutions and recommendations, as well as visual data (i.e. pictures and videos of these meetings when available).

## 9.1. Background on the TABC and TACD: a hybrid form of diplomacy

### 9.1.1. The involvement of civil society groups in the transatlantic decision-making process

What is particularly remarkable in the case of the Transatlantic civil society dialogues is the involvement of non-state actors explicitly sponsored by governments to provide inputs into the policy-making process. In fact, the active cooperation and deliberation of these civil society groups across the Atlantic – with their respective European and American counterparts – suggests a new form of diplomacy (Cooper & Hocking, 2000; Langhorne, 2005; Pigman,

2010). In order to understand the necessity of involving these new actors in the diplomatic process, one needs to return to the context of the 1990s, in which these dialogues were created. In this new era of globalisation, business-government relationships have started to dramatically change as the trade agenda expanded significantly to embrace not merely traditional trade issues but also ‘behind-the-border’ issues areas, such as competition policy and environmental protection. This increased the number and nature of stakeholders related to the development of the EU-US relations and led to the emergence of the so-called ‘triangular diplomacy’ (Strange, 1992), in which the lines between public and private sectors became increasingly blurred. It is in this rapidly changing environment that the transatlantic civil society dialogues have emerged in the transatlantic context.

### **9.1.2. Official mandate: formulating policy recommendations for the EU and US government and building bridges across the Atlantic**

In the specific context of the transatlantic relationship, the creation of the Transatlantic Business Dialogue in 1995 reflected the understanding by the US government and the EU that in order to promote their pro-liberalisation economic agenda and gain wide support in its favour, they needed input from the business community, on both sides of the Atlantic, which had higher stakes in this endeavour than before (Hocking & McGuire, 2002). Thus, from long being the ‘silent partners’ of the transatlantic relationships (Sbragia, 1996), EU and US corporate stakeholders came together to become a real policy machine with the creation of the TABD, which was established under the impulse of the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) in the mid-1990s. The TABD, which has subsequently merged with the European-American Business Council (EABC) becoming the Transatlantic Business Council in 2013, is a business-driven process designed to provide input from business leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to governments on how to enhance the transatlantic economic relationship, with the ultimate goal of the TABC being to create a barrier-free transatlantic market between the United States and the EU (TABC, 2017). More specifically, it corresponds to a group of European and American Chief Executives Officers (CEOs) who aim to promote integration between the EU and the United States by providing policy recommendations indicating when Europeans and American businesses feel cooperation is necessary and feasible. Subsequently, they exert pressure on the relevant officials to follow up on their recommendations (Green Cowles, 2001b; Pollack, 2005, p. 914; Steffenson, 2005, p. 73). The criterion for membership is theoretically straightforward and requires that the CEO is pro-liberalisation and pro-trade, represents a transatlantic company, and is deemed constructive to the policy process (Coen & Grant, 2001, p. 39).

However, in practice, the membership to the TABC is quite exclusive in nature. Indeed, according to an official document issued by the institution itself, TABD membership is *by invitation only* at the discretion of the two co-chairs (European and American) who seek to secure a strong membership base, geographical distribution, mix of sector activities, and representation of small- and medium-sized businesses. The choice is often also made in order to ensure the ‘blue chip membership’ of TABD (Interview no. 42). In terms of funding, representatives of companies pay fees to be part of this dialogue and all related activities (Interviews no. 30 and 31). In a way, they ‘buy’ the privilege to sit on the dialogue while covering the expenses of the organisation.

As a way to counter-balance the most influential TABD, another civil society dialogue was pushed by the European Commission to balance the interests of the process by bringing the concerns of the consumers into the equation. It is in this context that the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) was established in 1998. The clearest statement about such a commitment comes in the Transatlantic Economic Partnership, in which the parties agreed that the TACD will ‘feed into the TEP process’ (statement, section 15; Action Plan, art. 3.8). TACD membership is open to all EU or US consumer organisations<sup>36</sup> working on a national and/or international level that are independent of business and political interest (TACD, 2017). Since its formation in 1998, TACD has developed into a thriving network of over 75 leading organisations. Consumer organisations apply to become members and then typically take on responsibilities on a volunteering pro-bono basis (Interview no. 43). The dialogue has survived a series of financial difficulties and disagreements to become a relatively effective body in facilitating networking between US and EU consumer organisations and the establishment of joint positions on key issues within the TACD’s various working groups (Pollack, 2005, p. 914). Similar to TABC, TACD attempts to influence the transatlantic decision-making process in favour of its own agenda. It develops and agrees on joint consumer policy recommendations to the US government and European Union to promote the consumer interest in EU and US policy-making (TACD, 2018a). It describes itself as ‘championing the consumer perspective in transatlantic decision making’ and aims to ensure that EU/US policy dialogue promotes consumer welfare on both sides of the Atlantic and is well informed about the implications of policy decisions on consumers (Ibid).

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<sup>36</sup> For the whole list of members, see TACD (2018).

### **9.1.3. Parallel organisational structures: secretariats, executive body, and working groups/policy committees**

Both dialogues are organised in a similar way due to the fact they fulfil the same function. As they are expected to give inputs in the form of concrete actionable recommendations to official governments, both organisations need to speak with one authoritative voice representing the business and consumer transatlantic communities, respectively, if they are to be effective. This inevitably requires as a first step an intense process of dialogue among the members of these two distinct communities before entering into consultation or other kinds of lobbying activities addressed towards decision-makers.

In respect to TABC, the executive board is composed of all member company principals, it operates by consensus, and sets the TABC's annual policy priorities, work programme, and the funding structure. It normally meets twice a year and its decisions regarding the policy priorities determine the topics of the working groups at the expert level. The TABC is led by rotating chairs, one European and one American, in an effort to mirror the transatlantic nature of this endeavour. As to the secretariats, they are based both in Brussels and in Washington and are responsible for organising the scope of contacts with the European Commission, US government officials, MEPs, and US Congress. They also take responsibility for organising the annual conferences and act on a day-to-day basis as a contact point for the US/EU working group chairs (Coen & Grant, 2001, p. 39). These basic responsibilities have remained constant in the history of the TABD through today in the framework of the TABC. Following the agenda determined by the board, TABC members discuss strategies and forge joint policy recommendations on a wide variety of issues before submitting them to official US and EU decision-makers. The TABC policy work has typically been facilitated by a working group structure, reflecting the policy priorities previously determined by the Executive Board. While some of the topics covered by the working groups have remained constant, others have been created in light of new challenges and recent political and economic developments. For instance, a new Working Group on Brexit has just been set up in July 2016 in order to follow real-time developments related to Brexit and to prepare comments to share with EU-UK and US officials on issues affecting member companies (TABC, 2016).

A similar structure exists for TACD. TACD's strategic direction is led by a Steering Committee that has monthly calls or meetings. The steering Committee is composed of four representatives of US Consumer Organizations and four representatives of EU consumer organisations. As of today (March 2018), the two co-chairs of the Steering Committee are

Monique Doyens from BEUC and Ed Mierzwinsky from P.I.R.G. on the American side. Twice a year, the two policy chairs of the various policy committees (one American and one European) meet with the Steering committee in the framework of the so-called ‘policy chairs meetings’. It represents an opportunity for the chairs to present to the Steering Committee an overview of what each committee plans to do for, and discuss, funding strategies (Interview no. 11). Another important institution of the TACD is the Secretariat based in London,<sup>37</sup> which is tasked with the organisation of the annual multi-stakeholder conference, meetings with decision-makers, and the main point of contact between the different policy committees (Interview no. 43). Finally, the substantive work of the TACD is done in the framework of five Policy Committees dealing with: Food Safety, Intellectual Property, Information Society, Financial Services, and Product Safety and Chemicals (this group has recently expanded the remit of the nanotechnology policy committee). Here as well, each policy committee is co-chaired by an American and European representatives of consumer organisations (Interviews no. 11, 33, and 43).

As this background section clearly shows, the composition of these dialogues is fundamentally different from the previous dialogues studied in chapters 7 and 8, as they involved members of the civil society – be they businessmen or representatives from consumers organisations – and not EU and US officials. As we shall see, this will have consequences for the dynamics at work during the interaction. In fact, the analysis reveals that the participants of these dialogues are not as much seeking the recognition of their institutional identity compared to the EU formal representatives participating in the other dialogues. This is the case because their professional identities are not anchored in the EU governance and neither of them identify with the EU. These quotes from TABC and TACD participants are telling as they reveal the secondary ‘role’ and minor importance that the involvement in the dialogues has compared to their main professional activity: ‘We are part of a virtual organization that is very easy to forget in everyday life as we are all busy with our own jobs and activities. The dialogue does not reside in the heads of its members that much’ (Interview no. 46). A similar sentiment is echoed on the TABC side when even the co-chairmen of the working groups are not always very active: ‘I might attend two events a year, and participate to the development of written comments or letters – maybe twice or three times in the two years that I have been involved in the TABC but this is not my job, I can’t dedicate to this too much time’ (Interviews

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<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that there is no similar ‘counterpart/office’ in Washington. This is mainly due to the fact that Consumers International, which is based in London, has taken the lead as the main coordinator of TACD (Bignami & Charnovitz, 2001, p. 261).

no. 45 and 40). In addition, the fact they come together in order to achieve a common objective that transcends their respective identity as Europeans or Americans also explains why the quest for the recognition of identity is in this case much less salient.

## 9.2. The most different case: when the recognition of one's institutional identity is not at stake

This section analyses the dialogical interactions among European and American members of civil society in the framework of the TABC and TACD. It looks at two different formats of communication used by the participants of these dialogues: (1) the virtual and online dialogues conducted regularly during the year ahead of the annual meetings; and (2) the dialogue in its face-to-face variant bringing American and European participants together for the annual meetings.

Two important insights emerge from the analysis. First, it appears that in neither framework of interaction (neither TABC nor TACD) are the participants interested in gaining recognition for their relevance as Europeans or Americans. What matters to them in these physical and virtual 'comings together' is the advancement of their common cause in an action/result-oriented manner. Secondly, differences exist in the dialogical dynamics among TACD members on the one hand, and TABC members on the other hand. While the TACD's dialogical interactions point to a case of genuine cooperation at a profound level where no competition at all is discernible among members ('like in a big family'), the same cannot be said for TABC, which appears more like a place of hidden competition and more superficial cooperation among 'associated rivals'.

### 9.2.1. Entering the room or the virtual space

First, the specific format of interaction in the framework of these dialogues is worth emphasising: it mainly consists of virtual exchanges through emails, phone calls, and only occasionally physical meetings. Indeed, with respect to TABC, the day-to-day policy development work is steered by senior-level company representatives who mainly interact with the members of the working groups via emails and conference calls (approximately three times a year), and only occasionally face-to-face (once a year during the annual conference). Most of the drafting process of the recommendations is done via email. But when it is difficult to find an agreement based on the written comments (or if any clarification is needed), a working

group call can be arranged (Interview no. 26).

It is interesting to note the hybrid aspect of this ‘online communication’ at the working group level, which entails simultaneously elements of virtual and physical meetings. Indeed, the members of the working groups come together simultaneously in Brussels and in Washington and then call their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic through a video conference; this happens around three times a year. The representative members who cannot be present at the physical meeting are invited to dial in to participate in the transatlantic conversation (Interview no. 30). In the words of one of the TABC participant, ‘We have a physical exchange regionally and a virtual one across the Atlantic’ (Interview no. 40). The process is similar in the case of the TACD: there is one annual physical meeting with all the members, either in Brussels or in Washington, and regular monthly meetings at the steering committee level. Apart from that, the communication over the year among the members is done via emails. Video conferencing is less common than in the case of TABC (Interview no. 11).

What drives the choice for this mode of communication is mainly pragmatism, deprived of any symbolic significance. The fact that the bulk of the dialogue is done virtually and not physically is compelling in itself: no symbolic importance is attributed to the physical presence of the American or European members in this kind of framework and this is reflected in the lack of comments on this aspect by nearly all of the interviewees. Most of them emphasise the high costs related to the meetings and the unavailability of members to attend as the main reasons for not setting up more meetings: as a few interviewees commented, ‘unfortunately not a lot of people meet in between the annual conferences because of funding problems’ (Interviews no. 11, 22, and 33), and, ‘It’s really a question of not having enough funding’ (Interview no. 43). At the same time, however, they acknowledge and appreciate the value of a more direct, verbal form of communication when it comes to contentious issues – indeed, one that requires clarification through a more instantaneous follow up between the interlocutors and is not easily done in written form: ‘Meetings are very expensive and the communication is not the most cost-effective way to achieve results because nowadays, you have web-seminars, video conferences, so this is a good solution’ (Interview no. 44). Thus, typically, they would pick up the phone or set up a video conference in which more substantial discussions need to take place (Interviews no. 22, 30, 31, and 43). In this sense, the communication aspect being privileged here is the temporal immediacy allowed by a verbal oral discussion in exceptional cases where key problems related to the advancement of cooperation cannot be solved otherwise. Less importance is attributed to the spatial and emotional immediacy that would be involved in a physical meeting.

Second, already at the preparation stage there are telling indicators suggesting that the civil society participants of these dialogues are *not* especially looking for the recognition of their relevance/distinctiveness in the eyes of their counterparts. Indeed, I found no evidence of any form of pressure whereby one side tries to make good impression over the other or to live up to high expectations to avoid disappointing the other side. While in the other dialogues studied, the European side is particularly concerned with being well prepared ahead of the meeting vis-à-vis their American counterparts – including rehearsing their team performance – in this case, the preparation is by itself a joint endeavour in which the decisions and drafting are done in full collaboration among European and American members.

Both in the case of TABC and TACD, once a relevant topic for policy-making has been identified and enough interest demonstrated by the members, a ‘back and forth’ of policy recommendation drafts starts among two leading co-drafters and the rest of the working groups and policy committees, mainly via emails. In the case of TABC, it is either the chairmen of the working groups or a lead company that drafts the first paper before circulating it to all the members of the group (Interview no. 26). Similarly, for TACD the responsibility for drafting the first version of the resolution falls upon the EU and US chairmen of the policy committees or upon a volunteer organisation (Interview no. 20). In any case, strict rules need to be respected: ‘For all our policy positions, we must have two lead drafters – one EU and one US – to make sure that we have both viewpoints covered’ (Interviews no. 43, 33, and 40). Then, all the representatives are invited to make written comments via track-changes and to send them back to the chairs, who then do their best to incorporate their demands into the final text (Interviews no. 30 and 31). It is at this stage that ‘hybrid’ video conferences and phone calls are sometimes necessary to clarify or explain different points that cannot be easily resolved via emails (*Ibid.*). The revised version is then sent back for validation to all the members both in TABC and TACD (Interviews no. 28 and 33).

In addition, contrary to other transatlantic dialogues such as the TLD, no symbolic or crucial importance is attributed to the attendance of the American participants to either the virtual phone calls or the meetings. The issue of attendance is not a big deal. Indeed, even in the case of relatively low attendance by American representatives to these important virtual or physical meetings, the situation is not perceived as a sign of disrespect or a lack of interest and recognition for the relevance of their European counterparts. Rather, as mentioned earlier, the rarity of the face-to-face meetings and of the (sometimes) low level of participation in these activities are associated by most of the interviewees with the very practical constraints linked

to funding problems.<sup>38</sup> In the same vein, European staffers of these dialogues do not strive to design appealing programs with the aim of attracting and persuading their American counterparts to participate in these important activities – unlike in the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue. In sum, the physical presence in these encounters is not considered to be relevant and thus does not have the same symbolic value as in the dialogues involving representatives of official institutions like the EU. The fact that the participants are not attributing any symbolic meaning to the attendance of these dialogues proves that they do not need the dialogue to reinforce their sense of identity and that the added value of the dialogue between themselves lies elsewhere. They attribute importance to the success of their common endeavour but do not emphasise the relative presence of more or fewer European representatives.

In terms of setting, during the physical interaction itself, no particular importance is attributed by the participants to the ‘fanciness’ of the dinners or to the elegance of the location – elements that in other contexts would signal a strong message in line with the status of the guests. All what matters here is the functionality of the meeting rather than the fancy ornaments that typically accompany formal meetings among official representatives. In a different symbolic way, an informal setting is being created along the lines of a ‘home’s living room’ in the case of the TACD. Commenting on the social activities following the internal meetings among TACD members, a staffer mentioned: ‘We had a screening of a documentary at BEUC – it was so nice. Small meeting rooms, we ordered pizzas, all the members came together. It really created a nice atmosphere’ (Interviews no. 33 and 34). In the TABC context, due to financial constraints it is often the member companies that host the internal meetings ‘as they have fairly *large offices* compared to our secretariat’ (Interview no. 31) (emphasis added). Here again pragmatic thinking seems to prevail.

Another notable practice deals with the seating arrangements during the meetings among representative members. These plans are not meant to convey any sense of hierarchy. Contrary to the other, more formal, types of dialogue, in which typically all the European members would face their American counterparts (Interviews no. 33 and 34), the idea is rather to ‘have everybody randomly sitting around the table. We even don’t make name tags so that it is easier for people to interact without being impressed by others. That’s the way we like to

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<sup>38</sup> The European Commission has traditionally been the most important funding resources for the European consumers’ organisations but its contribution remains modest, while the US government has not been significantly contributing to the TACD endeavour because it does not generally fund the private sector (Bignami & Charnovitz, 2001, p. 263).

go' (Interview no. 43). This idea of equality in status and respectful attitude among all members is highly appreciated by the participants: 'I would never have thought this would be the case. These people are all directors of their organizations, very high profile and influential in their fields and yet they are so nice, approachable and down-to-earth' (Interviews no. 43 and 33). The emphasis in the case of TACD is put on the functional nature of the dialogue, and on the down-to-earth and close-to-normal personal style.

### **9.2.2. In the room and on the net: communication and interaction**

During the communication and interaction within the room, European and American members downplay their differences and emphasise above all their unity of purpose. In fact, they stress much more their commonalities rather than their distinctiveness and do not seek specifically the recognition of their achievements in the eyes of their counterparts, reinforcing my argument that they are not seeking the recognition of their institutional identity. Rather, what emerges from the interviewees' comments is their staunch willingness and determination to advance their common cause, transcending the European and American divide.

Many participants insist on debunking the myth according to which disagreements emerge only along European and American fault lines during the dialogues. For a TABC official, 'An important thing to underline is that it is not the EU and the US disagreeing with each other, that's not the case at all. The disagreements actually emerge much more often across different sectors and even within sectors' (Interviews no. 26, 28, 40, and 42). The same holds true for TACD. One prominent member emphasised the existence of deep disagreements among TACD policy committees themselves when they have to tackle the same issue through different perspectives:

Let's take the example of "wearables" like the Apple watch – these devices collect all our data when we walk. For the privacy protection group, this is clearly a problem whereas for public health, this is considered as a great opportunity to make progress in this field.(...) But at the end of the day, we all want a better world and we find a way to solve these issues (Interview no. 22).

It is not only that divisions exist across different sectors, within companies, or working groups challenging the European-American dichotomy. For some interviewees, it is particularly important to stress that there are actually no critical differences between American and European groups. In the case of TABC, the transnational character of the businesses is by itself telling: the fact that companies have such considerable investments in both American and European markets make difficult the conceptualisation of their interests as purely domestic in

nature (Green Cowles, 2001b, p. 216). For a senior TACD participant, ‘The EU and the US do not disagree at all. We might have different tactical approaches but on the rest, we are much more alike than different. There is absolutely no question about that: the consumer groups are completely with each other: we all want safe food, cheaper affordable drugs that are safe and safe toys for our children’ (Interview no. 27). Echoing this claim of unity of purpose and downplaying the differences among EU and US groups, another TACD observer noted: ‘We all want the same thing and a better world – it’s just how we go about it that might be different’ (Interviews no. 22, 33,34.).

These comments are testament to the fact that the recognition for the particularities of European and American groups (as consumers or businesses) is not at stake here. To further substantiate this point, it is also striking to notice the lack of expressions conveying the importance of ‘being heard’, or of having the chance to express one’s concerns, compared to the two other dialogues where this affirmation for one’s values, positions and achievements was particularly important from the standpoint of the participants. It is notable that no European or American participant of these dialogues take pride in any achievements according to their belonging on the basis of their ‘Europeanness’ or ‘Americanness’. In other words, no one among the interviewees of either dialogue hinted that one side was more successful than the other, more prepared than the other, or brought more added value to the dialogue and joint endeavour. On the contrary, they like to highlight that they really learn from each other during these interactions:

On food safety and privacy for instance, the Americans want to duplicate the European model as the standards are higher but on other issues such as toys safety or the safety of medical devices, we want to copy them (US): the way they control the safety of these products is at a higher level and corresponds better to the consumer’s expectations. In short, we really learn from each other. What matters the most is defending the Consumer’s interests rather than the EU or the US models (Interview no. 33).

Reinforcing this view, another participant emphasised: ‘We don’t try to perpetuate the image that you often see in the media according to which the EU is more advanced and the US is bad when it comes to consumer protection. There are also a lot of things that the EU could learn from the Americans, we are recognizing that and it is a great opportunity for us as well’ (Interview no. 34).

Finally, the analysis at this level of dialogue features no expressions of complaints or frustration related to a feeling of being treated with arrogance or with a sense of superiority coming from the other side. The only nuance one could add to this point though is the remark formulated by a few European participants that highlight the very different style of interaction

characterising Americans in general. For instance, in the words of one European TABC participant, ‘When we dial to our American colleagues, the style is very different. The Americans are much straighter forward than Europeans. The emails are also very direct and blunt. They would for instance write us: “Do this as soon as possible”’ (Interviews no. 30 and 31). Similarly, another TABC participant that has been involved for years in the dialogue also mentioned that, the ‘US side usually adopts a more *confrontational* approach in the dialogue whereas the Europeans are more geared towards consensus-building’ (Interview no. 40) (emphasis added). For both of them, however, this direct style of interaction is not interpreted as a sign of disrespect or arrogance. It is either considered as ‘a more efficient way to communicate and get things done’ (Interviews no. 30 and 31) or as a feature related to the political culture prevailing in the United States (Interview no. 40). Most of the interviewees, however, describe a friendly work atmosphere (Interviews no. 41, 42, 43, 44, and 45).

### **TABC as “associated rivals in the quest for profit” and TACD as “one big family” defending consumers’ rights**

So far, I have pointed to the commonalities between the interactions among these two distinct groups. Yet, while the quest for recognition is not at the forefront of these dialogical interactions, more nuances can be introduced to characterise the dialogical interaction within these two different groups. For example, on the one hand there is TABC, as a dialogue among associated rivals, and on the other hand, TACD as a dialogue among family members.

In the case of TABC, the representative members are clearly in the quest for profit and as a result, their interaction reflects an image of ‘associated rivals’. What matters the most to them is to reach an agreement to hopefully maximise their profit in a business-oriented manner in the global transatlantic space (i.e. interest-based membership in making profit). While certain interviewees talk about their motivations to be part of TABC as an expression of their passion for the transatlantic relationship, analysis of the discourse reveals a more economic/profit-based approach to the question: As one TABC interviewee mentioned, ‘Being a member needs to be worth it, otherwise there is no point being there’ (Interview no. 28). For another TABC staffer, ‘We really need to make sure the companies are happy – otherwise they might quit’ (Interview no. 31). This relationship of patron/client between staffers and representatives is also expressed in one of the latest comments of Tim Bennett, the former CEO of TABC: ‘I personally know several of the partners who will be involved in managing TABC’s policy work and outreach and am certain that TABC’s *members will be very well served*’ (emphasis added) (Bennett, 2018). The idea of a service being provided is here very strong.

There are a few indicators pointing to the fact that a certain degree of competition still persists in the framework of the dialogue, turning them to ‘associated rivals’. In the words of an American TABC participant, ‘TABC creates an interesting situation where you see competitors sitting next to competitors because both are interested in the same specific issue. In the framework of the dialogue, they work a lot together and support each other a lot’ (Interview no. 26). In other words, representatives of companies often in rivalry with one another temporarily accept being partners in the framework of the dialogue, but inherently they remain fierce competitors. For one TABC interviewee, ‘There is a team spirit as much as it can be in a company. Companies remain profit entities and for sure, there is a certain competition for new investments. I would say that the working spirit is more on the corporate side’ (Interview no. 40). In a similar vein, ‘In terms of personal relationships among members, I would call them dominantly professional partners driven by common professional obligations’ (Interview no. 42). Put even more accurately, this TABC member argued:

I suspect the interests are largely commercial and this is an organization that really serves commercial interests. Most of the members see it as a means of enhancing their opportunities to sell goods with a minimum of governmental interference so they promote things like free trade - all companies benefit from the opportunity to trade more freely so in this regard, their interests are aligned but at the end of the day, they are still competitors (Interview no. 45).

This lack of trust due to competition among members is reflected in the drafting process that remains completely anonymous among the members: only the chairmen of the working groups know who wrote which comments. As one TABC co-chair commented:

I think people are more willing to be more open in their comments if they know that they are only responding to head of the TABC because sometimes obviously, you have competitors who are part of this organization. So, if you have somebody from BMW and somebody from Volkswagen Audi, they will be more forthcoming in providing comments just to the head of the organization than they would be in providing comments to everybody including their competitor (Interview no. 45).

More strikingly, he mentioned the fact that not all the recipients are on the mailing list so it is virtually impossible to know with whom you are exchanging and engaging (Ibid). By the same token, many TABC members emphasised a more adversarial type of exchange among themselves: ‘This is quite rare, but yes, you can have heated discussions around certain recommendations’ (Interviews no. 30 and 40). In the description of the drafting process, another TABC staffer used quite confrontational language, arguing that, ‘When each side starts giving its input on the draft proposal, this is where you see the *fight* happens’ (Interview no. 26). Reinforcing this line of argument, another TABC staffer mentioned that ‘coming to a

consensus was sometimes a very painful process' (Interview no. 31).

The story in the case of the TACD is slightly different due to the nature of the institutions represented and the causes they defend. The dedication for the consumers' movement is deep and constitutes the ultimate goal of the participants of these dialogues. Members in key positions (on the steering committees and as policy co-chairs) have often been involved in these activities for a long time and have developed a genuine personal attachment to the organisation and its success: 'What is really fascinating about TACD is the fact that many members have been here basically since the beginning. It's not because there is some sort of dictatorship that we don't want other people to take over but it has really been the case of them having renewed their commitment and no one else really wanted to take over because they have done such an amazing job' (Interviews no. 43, 20, 22, and 44). In addition, the fact that they have been investing so much work on a voluntary basis amplifies the significance of the level of engagement in this endeavour. It suggests that participants are willing to dedicate effort and time for a non-profit activity in the service of a more important cause/value they truly believe in: 'Everybody has a regular job so the TACD is just something we do on the side but it is important for all of us' (Interviews no. 20 and 22). Another TACD participant echoed this idea: 'Even though members have full-time jobs, the policy positions they produced are always really well-researched and well-articulated. I am surprised every single time at how dedicated members are and how they really do this out of passion for their job and for the consumer movement' (Interview no. 43).

The fact that the representatives are all engaged in the defence of the consumers on a non-profit basis makes a huge difference in terms of the interaction. The analysis shows that in the case of the TACD, certain practices unfolding during the dialogical interaction point to an even deeper level of proximity and familiarity among the participants whereby the participants consider each other as 'members of one big family', as part and parcel of a network. In the words of a senior member, 'We are a very bonded community. We all work towards the same goal, we very much like each other, and have become very good friends over the years, like a big family' (Interview no. 44). This metaphorical description of the relationship between participants is further reinforced by the fact that Europeans and American members meet in very casual places, often literally in homes: 'Last year, we had a dinner at the chair's place with the chairs of the committees and people from TACD. It's more than a network, it's like a family' (Interviews no. 33 and 34). Echoing this idea, another participant reported that, 'the

last time I was in Washington, one of the chairs of the working groups invited us to his house, we had a big BBQ. You can see how deep the ties are between ourselves’ (Interview no. 43).

In this big family, ‘there are no family secrets’. The absence of comments regarding the degree of openness of the members during their virtual discussions and physical meetings is telling. It suggests that members are naturally honest and open in an authentic way. At the very least, they are not *perceived* as withholding any relevant secret information from others. To put it differently, the issue of trust and honesty in sharing relevant information is not mentioned here because there is an expectation and a shared understanding that representatives are fully cooperative and working towards the same goal in a common endeavour. This trait of the dialogue reflects the trust prevailing among them. Particularly telling in this regard is the fact that members share the principle of being ‘as transparent as possible in the drafting process of the resolutions’. In the exchange of emails, everybody can see and know which modifications were required by whom (Interview no. 46). This contrasts with the case of TABC, in which the very same process develops in complete confidentiality in order to preserve the interests of the members, who remain competitors despite their participation to this common endeavour.

Finally, the fact that the representative members identify themselves as big a family working towards defending the same cause is also reflected in the sense of solidarity among themselves that goes *beyond* the framework of the dialogue. In the case of the TACD, many members refer to the utility of the network that brings so many consumer organisations together. For example, in the framework of lobbying activities (i.e. dialogues and hearings with decision-makers), ‘sometimes member organisations do lobbying on behalf of TACD when TACD staffers are unable to attend the event. People from BEUC, for instance are based in Brussels, they are close to the institutions and always very supportive. They would send a BEUC member to represent TACD – like it was recently the case in a hearing in the EP on privacy shield’ (Interviews no. 43 and 46). Similarly, in the United States a senior TACD participant recalled proudly the achievements of KEI’s work, mentioning that ‘it was not a purely TACD initiative but we helped provide the argument and the platform for James Love’s endeavour and are very proud of the results’ (Interview no. 27). In other words, the relationships forged during the meetings turns the dialogue into a ‘power-multiplier’ whereby members of the network can work more efficiently to promote their common goals.

### **9.2.3. After leaving the room or disconnecting from internet: no anchoring needed**

In contrast with the previous dialogues in which the EU representatives were particularly keen to celebrate the recognition of their institutional identity outside the room, this is not the case here. The only types of activities fed to the press relate to the relations between the transatlantic civil society groups and the EU and US decision-makers (such as recommendations and letters put forward or pictures of meetings featuring the group with decision-makers). But nothing transpires regarding the internal dialogues among European and American members. This absence of discursive and visual anchors related to the dialogical interactions at the civil society level reinforces the main argument, according to which European and American consumers' and businesses' representatives are not looking for recognition of their institutional identity in this particular setting. Contrary to other dialogues, there is no particular need to visually capture these moments together to disseminate them.

### **9.2.4. What is at stake during the TABC and TACD?**

If the quest for recognition is not a central feature of the interaction, then what is at stake in these virtual and physical dialogues? As in the previous cases of dialogues, the liberal institutionalist approach provides an accurate analysis of the discursive interaction among the participants. As an interviewee accurately put it, 'We are basically fostering transatlantic understanding and not transatlantic wars against each other' (Interview no. 40). In fact, what transpires from the participants' descriptions of the dialogical interaction is the 'imperative' to achieve an agreement reflecting the most accurately as possible the 'transatlantic' position on a given issue. Compared to the TLD, in which the mere participation of American Congressmen was considered a successful dialogue, the main indicator of success for both TACD and TABC participants is the level of activity of these dialogues and the resulting initiatives. In other words, success is related to the vitality of the dialogue measured in terms of joint actions (How many resolutions? How many policy drafts and lobby activities together?). The emphasis here is really put on joint action and on what European and American can concretely achieve together – going beyond the mere exchange of views (Interview no. 43). Therefore, the best possible outcome in the eyes of the participants is the production of precise policy recommendations/resolutions representing a genuine transatlantic position on this issue (rather than uploading the preferences of one side or the other, as in the case of traditional diplomatic dialogues). Both participants of TABC and TACD agree that, 'the real value at the end is that you have a truly transatlantic position' (Interview no. 29); and, 'the

substance we created was always representative of a transatlantic viewpoint: it was never purely the US or the EU viewpoint. That was fundamental for us: we never compromised on the transatlantic nature of our message' (Interview no. 42). At this level of dialogue, the different parties are expected to eventually come to a joint position that will then be advocated and hopefully heeded. Compared to the TLD, in which the negotiation of the joint statement is conducted on the margins by only a small number of actors (see chapter 7), agreeing on a policy recommendation is the ultimate goal of the dialogue and stands at the core of the interaction. The most important function of these dialogues is to allow interest groups to reach common positions on various issues that they can take to governments and press for ongoing bilateral negotiations (Bignami & Charnovitz 2001, p. 256).

This objective inevitably implies a series of discursive activities geared towards reaching an agreement on key relevant issues – including an exchange of views and consensus-finding. First, the actors emphasise the importance of understanding the different realities in which they operate (in terms of legal procedures, economic, and political constraints). But contrary to the other dialogues, there is no quest for recognition behind this practice. It is important as long as it allows to reach more efficiently a consensus among the different members. For instance, in the case of food issues, one interviewee reported: 'We do not have the same expectations when it comes to labelling or issues like GMOs. On the US side, some organisations are worried about import checks (i.e. control at the border), whereas for us, this is not an issue as we have good controls at the border and legislative procedures in place. So, we were surprised to see that our US counterparts had concerns regarding the influence of TTIP on the frequency on of the controls. Once we understood that thanks to the dialogue, we could start working on the joint document taking into account their concerns' (Interviews no. 33, 22, and 40).

Building on this exchange of information, the dialogical interaction involves intense consensus-building around the content of the resolutions/recommendations. In the case of TABC, participants emphasise that despite differences, 'We (they) would always strive for consensus and convergence and this is always what drove the ongoing discussions' (Interview no. 42). In the exact same vein, another interviewee insists that, 'The goal is always to find consensus and to find a compromise' (Interview no. 30). More specifically, participants described the dialogue as a way to, 'first, really understand the topic we look at and then to discuss how the TABC is going to deal with this' (Interview no. 26 and 40). For instance, 'When there is a new policy proposal from the Commission that is relevant to our work and on which we don't have a position yet, we would discuss and see how we can move forward in

the framework of the TABC' (Interview no. 30). Or: 'We are trying to understand the perspective of the other side and always ask ourselves: what's the problem? What do we want to achieve? What is the message we want to send? This is important because the resolution is really here to send a recommendation to both sides in terms of policy' (Interview no. 33). In this process in which the different interlocutors try to come to a joint position, there is an intense exchange of best practices towards harmonisation upwards: 'If countries are working on issues involving trade and regulations, we work together to harmonize upward the message. Some countries have protected people better than others, so we want any European law to be at the level of the highest country not at the lowest. We want the same in the United States. So, we are constantly communicating with each other about these kinds of fights' (Interview no. 27).

Particularly remarkable in this regard is the emphasis by a majority of participants on the fact they almost always find a consensus, i.e. the common denominator eventually transcending differences (whether EU-US, or across sectors). In the case of TACD for instance, a regular participant commented: 'Since I joined, there has not been any instances of disagreements in the organization that have prevented a policy resolution to be adopted' (Interview no. 43). In the same vein, another observer stressed that, 'Even when there are disagreements among ourselves, we all know that we are on the same side and we ultimately find a solution' (Interview no. 22). Similarly, a TABC participant reported that, 'During my (his) time at TABC, there was only one case where we couldn't find compromise' (Interview no. 28) (emphasis added). The bottom line is that the most important objective shared by the members of these dialogue is to reach an effective agreement to promote their common goals, irrespective of their American or European belonging. If any reinforcement of identity happens it is more likely to be of their own identity as successful international businessmen and consumers' champions.

### 9.3. TABC and TACD as indirect instances of recognition for EU's identity

It is my contention that the transatlantic civil society dialogues have an additional role beyond the functions traditionally attributed to them in terms of policy input and building communities across the Atlantic. These dialogues, created by the EU and the US and involving non-state actors, also serve to reinforce the institutional identity of the EU and as such constitute an indirect case of recognition. Taking the view that the EU wants to prove its relevance and

distinctiveness, I will explain how the creation and involvement of these groups serve to reach this goal.

### **9.3.1. Indirect recognition of the EU's distinctiveness: the attachment to democracy**

The establishment of the transatlantic civil society dialogues are by themselves a strong manifestation of a key institutional trait of the EU, namely its deep attachment and commitment to representative and participatory democracy, reflected in the stakeholders' participation and civil society engagement in the decision-making process. Put it differently, the EU organises these dialogues in order to be perceived as engaging with civil society, thereby anchoring this trait of its identity.

In the EU's perspective, the civil society dialogue was regarded as a means to 'foster a sense of solidarity and of citizenship and provide the essential underpinnings of our democracy' (European Commission, 1997). This trend towards more involvement of the civil society in the EU institutional machinery has developed throughout the 1990s with the European Commission taking the lead in the facilitation of the cooperation with different interest groups (European Commission, 1992, 1997, 2000). This is exactly during this timeframe that the TACD and TABC came into being. Eventually these efforts culminated in the 2001 White Paper on European governance and the importance of 'civil society' was further underlined by introducing the principle of 'Participatory Democracy' in the draft of the EU constitutional Treaty in 2004 (Finke, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, this attachment to the idea of involving civil society as a key feature of democracy is also reflected in the EU development policy as these lines from the European Commission testify: 'An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset in itself. It represents and fosters pluralism and can contribute to more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth' (European Commission, 2017e). In the specific context of the transatlantic relations, Commissioner Liikanen liked to emphasise that 'the business-community was the driving force of transatlantic economic integration' (European Commission, 2003).

So, how does the TABC and TACD concretely reinforce this component of the EU's institutional identity? First, EU (and US) decision-makers have given more access and more opportunities to interact with these civil society groups. In the case of the TABC, many interviewees commented on the fact that there has been an improvement in the opportunities to interact over time in different frameworks (both formal and informal). In the first years after

its creation, the main forum of interaction between CEOs and the relevant policy-makers was restricted to the TABD yearly conferences where US regulatory agency officials would sit down with their European counterparts and the heads of major US and EU companies to discuss regulations and at times resolve procedural difficulties (Green Cowles, 2001, p. 215). It traditionally brought together each year over 100 EU and US business leaders and high-level representatives of the European Commission, US administration, Congress, and European Parliament for a two-day conference.<sup>39</sup> Time-wise, it coincided with the EU-US Summit meetings (the last one dates to 2014) (Interview no. 28).

In 2007, with the creation of the TEC – the political level body established to oversee transatlantic economic cooperation – another opportunity was given to the TABD to exert influence on policy-making. TABD has been designated as the official business adviser to the TEC and, since then, TABD co-chairs have actively participated in TEC meetings. According to a former TABD official:

The participation [in] the TEC was highly valuable, in the sense that people in the working groups could directly work on things that were relevant to governments and that made our group very special, not really a lobby – but a real business stakeholder organization engaged with governments. For instance, on the e-mobility agenda advanced by the TEC, the work done at the TABD level was highly valuable (Interview no. 28).

In addition, the TABC gained access for its member companies to EU and US government officials at the margins of official EU-US dialogues, including the EU-US Energy Council, the Joint EU-US Financial Regulatory Forum, the EU-US Information Society Dialogue (ISD), and the Transatlantic Intellectual Property Rights Working Group (TIPRWG) (TABC, 2017).

Besides these formal high-profile events on the transatlantic calendar, the discussions between the TABC representatives and EU and US officials also occur on a more regular informal basis (i.e. the so-called ‘consultations’). According to Cowles Green (2001), a contact point list for TABD had even been established to allow the organisation to easily talk to the relevant EC officials according to the issue at stake. These regular informal government-business contacts have extensively been used, as the comment of this former European policy officer testifies: ‘I felt that the government access was really good. In the TEC and in DG trade, there was a person leading the stakeholders’ efforts and I would meet with her every couple of weeks or so. That was a really good working relationship- it was very practical, reasonable and

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<sup>39</sup> Government attendees of the annual summit have included the EU Commissioner for Trade, the EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Information Society, the US Commerce Secretary, the USTR, the US Vice President, and the WTO Director (Steffenson, 2005, p. 74).

useful for both sides' (Interviews no. 28 and 32). Similarly, according to another participant, 'The meetings between the TABC representatives and the officials are on an ongoing basis. It's not as institutionalized as it was in the past, it is much easier now. They would not turn us down. When we reach to them, they are available. It's part of democracy' (emphasis added) (Interview no. 31). The same is true for TACD: members have the opportunity to interact with policy-decision makers in two different formats: (1) during the annual conference; and (2) on a more regular basis during consultations with relevant representatives either in Brussels or Washington. For instance, the staffers of the Secretariat get to meet representatives from DG Justice and Consumers, DG trade, DG Sante, and European members of Parliament three or four times a year (Interviews no. 43 and 44).

In addition, importance is also given to these meetings with transatlantic civil society dialogues through the high level of representation of EU (and US) officials in these annual meetings. Both TABC and TACD members emphasised their satisfaction regarding this fact. For a TABC member, 'We really appreciate the commitment of high level governmental officials – including from time to time the level of US president or a Commissioner and even national leaders, such as Angela Merkel' (Interview no. 42). The same sentiment can be found on the TACD side: 'The dialogue gives us a special opportunity: we met several times with Commissioner Malmström when she came to the US. We can also get meetings with Michael Froman, the US trade representative whenever we want. At least every three and six months' (Interviews no. 27 and 20).

During the dialogues themselves, decision-makers show a genuine interest in gathering input and understanding the complexities of the issues. As this interviewee describes: 'It's always the government stakeholder reaching out. They would typically say: 'we saw your statements. Can you elaborate a bit further on your concerns on the IP chapter on CETA?' Following this kind of request, there would be a more detailed exchange in which the companies would explain that they have experienced these difficulties etc.' (Interview no. 40). An additional feature of the dialogue that also reflects on the democratic values of the EU is the principle of transparency and accountability. For TABC members, 'Key in these dialogues is that there is nothing secretive about it. This is not a process that lacks transparency or accountability. On both sides, there is complete accountability – it requires the disclosure of activities, governmental records and of our activities. There is no secretive behaviour' (Interview no. 42). Reinforcing this point, another interview emphasised: 'The interaction and dialogue are full, rich, open and frank. This is very good. I never had the experience of a non-open dialogue' (Interview no. 28). In the context of the negotiation of trade agreements – such

as TTIP, which was at the focus during the times of the interviews – the EU has also traditionally been more committed to transparency than its US counterparts, as underlined by many interviewees:

The systematic stakeholders' events where people can attend in front of the negotiators are a big thing. For TTIP, there is also the idea of a special advisory group with current advisors plus public participation where anybody could come and ask questions and give input so this is something very important. The commission is really trying to make an effort. By contrast, there is no real effort on the side of USTR. They even cancelled questioning with stakeholders in New York because they argued they needed more time to negotiate. This is problematic because it is much less transparent and open than in the EU. Here (in the EU), since January of last year – there have been a lot of systematic stakeholders' events (Interview no. 33).

Echoing this claim, an American member of TABC highlighted this key difference in transparency between the EU and the United States:

In the US, we do not have real time access to the documents– the same way the Europeans do on their side. We constantly argue that we do not understand why the American government does everything like a military-type agency. Everything is secret: trade negotiations are viewed like war negotiations, this is crazy in our opinion. So we fought the transparency issues (Interviews no. 27, 20, and 21).

The issue of inclusiveness goes hand in hand with the rationale behind the setting up of this dialogue from a principled perspective (i.e. democracy and better representation of civil society interests). In this regard, the EU encouraged more inclusiveness in the opinions being represented through the TEC:

One of the key roles of the leadership was to make sure that you can build a possible coalition – much bigger and leading to be heard. That role of coalition participation was required in the TEC but it was also a sensible way of ensuring that the broadest possible view was on the table. We became a formal channel that other business organizations used because we represented a partnership. It meant that there were additional opportunities for synchronization and convergence through debates and discussion of viewpoints (Interview no. 42).

Similarly, the TACD is very much aware of the value of its resolutions as 'they represent the position of all the EU and US consumers' groups, that is the position of 80 groups in total that have millions of members on both sides of the Atlantic' (Interviews no. 20, 27, and 44).

Finally, a crucial point to take into account relates to the extent to which the advice and resolutions given by these groups are eventually translated into policy. The responses of the interviewees were mixed, but a slight majority had a positive point of view on this issue. For members of the TACD, the degree of success in terms of influence varies:

During one of the round of TTIP negotiations, they noticed that most of our concerns were taken into account and we could see it in the final text. So, this is where we could see that there is an added value and we were listened to by the European negotiators in the EU commission. It was really powerful and we were quite positive about it. On the other hand, their efforts failed when it came to the investment-court system in CETA. They should have listened to us because now they are facing a huge criticism from civil society and we were right. So, it depends on the topic really (Interview no. 33).

A similar position was expressed by another TACD member: ‘I think that we definitely have an influence, otherwise we wouldn’t do all that. But sometimes you lose some, sometimes you win’ (Interviews no. 20 and 27). As to TABC members, they also have a rather optimistic take on the question: ‘We felt that we were listened to. For instance, on trade secret, there was a big issue at the time with India (with very weak protection of IP). The input of the working group was used in the discussions with the Indian government and it was very rewarding’ (Interviews no. 28, 20, 23, and 34).

Last but not least, the use of visual data to document the stakeholders’ meetings with officials also contributes to my argument according to which the EU wants to be seen as talking and engaging with civil society actors because these help it to enhance and anchor its institutional identity as a proponent of democracy and transparency.

*This tweet from the official account of the EU TTIP team part of DG Trade on a meeting with civil society members, has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

### **9.3.2. Indirect recognition of relevance: making the EU more efficient**

The second way through which the transatlantic civil society dialogues indirectly reinforce the EU's identity as a relevant actor is by making it more efficient. As the EU seeks recognition for its relevance, the recognition of powerful business leaders and representatives of consumers' groups contribute to giving it legitimacy but also provide valuable input that makes the EU more competent. While this claim has already been advanced in the literature (Kohler-Koch, 2001; Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007), my take is that behind the rationale for more efficiency there is a deeper quest for recognition as a relevant and competent actor. In the context of the TABC and TACD, the inputs given to the EU officials aim not only at making the EU more effective but also indirectly reinforce its centrality as the authority responsible for trade deals.

First, at a more general level, the systematic meetings and consultations between TABC and TACD members with EU officials arguably act as a mechanism reinforcing the relevance of the EU as the main negotiator of trade agreements. The establishment of these dialogues and the consultation arrangements have been deliberately thought to have these non-state actors engage with the EU and reinforcing its importance in this field. The possibility for these groups to influence the policy-making process provides them with an incentive to directly engage with the EU's institutions making it more relevant: 'Our group (TABC) was able to influence and shape the way governments would look at certain issues. For instance, the TABD was the driving force behind the e-mobility initiative – we would push the topic as part of the TEC' (Interview no. 28). Subsequently, the vitality of these groups indirectly and positively reflects on the European Union.

Second, the EU's acute challenge in shaping effectively trade agreements acceptable on both sides for the relevant stakeholders is well perceived by the civil society actors. For this TABC member, 'We had a lot of EU and US officials tell us they really like to receive inputs from us because they know that we already had a lot of fights internally that they will not have to have in creating policies between the two' (Interview no. 26). In a similar vein, another TABC participant emphasised the value of the consensus already reached among themselves from the policy-makers' perspective: 'We have really a transatlantic consensus on positions. If you take that to policy makers, it carries some weight especially within the TTIP context. They know that they don't have to fear to take this proposal to their constituencies: nobody will say that it is unthinkable and in this sense, it is very practical for them as well' (Interview no. 31); In the same vein, other participants emphasized: 'Thanks to the dialogue, officials are ensured

that they have CEOs on board and that they can implement these proposals' (Interviews no. 40 and 28). To achieve this goal, conscious efforts are made on the civil society actors' side to deliver 'actionable advice' that would be more easily taken into account by American and European officials: 'The key for us is to deliver clear and operational policy recommendations that they could easily implement' (Interviews no. 28, 43, and 45). This seems to be working, as reflected in this quote that nicely puts into sharp relief the difference between a group where consensus has already been reached and when this is not the case: 'In several of the meetings I attended with decision-makers, it was striking to see the split among EU and US institutional representatives whereas it wasn't the case for consumer people: we backed each other, people talk through each other. You really could feel that the transatlantic consumer dialogue was representative of the transatlantic view rather than EU here and US here' (Interview no. 34).

## Conclusion

This chapter offered an original take on the transatlantic civil society dialogues (TABC and TACD). First, the fine-grained analysis of the dialogical interactions among European and American members of civil society (both among CEOs and representatives of consumers groups) showed that the participants of these dialogues are not primarily interested in having their distinctiveness and relevance recognised by their counterparts in the framework of their virtual communication and face-to-face meetings. In this context, no particular importance is given to the symbolic elements so crucial in the diplomatic settings. What matters is the action-oriented nature of the dialogue, whose success is not measured in terms of recognition of identity but on how much they achieve together in drafting actionable resolutions and recommendations for policy-makers. In these dialogues, the end product is more important than the process itself, compared to the other dialogues in which the process of the dialogue – as a way to experience the institution – was particularly important. This key difference is due to the fact that the actors' institutional identities are already well anchored elsewhere and that they come together to advance common interests that transcend the European/American divide – be it the promotion of economic liberalisation in the case of TABC or the protection of consumers for TACD. In this respect, this chapter presented the most different case compared to the previous ones (Chapters 7 and 8) as the interaction under analysis did not involve formal representatives of the European Union. Secondly, the chapter has shown that even if there is no dominant recognition process at play among the members of these transatlantic civil society dialogues, these dialogues still serve the quest for recognition of the EU as they indirectly reinforce its institutional identity by constituting an indirect act of recognition. The

establishment of these civil society dialogues and the way they are conducted can be seen as an expression of the EU's attachment to the value of democracy (accountability and transparency), which is a key feature of its institutional identity in terms of principles. In addition, the involvement of these non-state actors feeding into the activities and agenda of the EU is also a way to give recognition to the EU's relevance in this field. The EU constitutes the platform that allows them to operate. If the EU were to collapse, they would not meet again, as the EU provides them with a target (i.e. decision-makers). They might perhaps still exchange best practices but their *raison d'être* is primarily to influence decision-makers at the EU level. In other words, the vitality and success of these transnational civil society dialogues act as an indirect recognition of the relevance of the EU.

## Chapter 10 – Conclusions

Recognition is a key mechanism in international relations whose saliency is often overlooked but that remains nonetheless part and parcel of world politics with far-reaching implications. My interest in the practice of dialogue and its magical powers, to paraphrase Yankelovitch (1999), dates back to the years when I was actively involved in a variety of civil society dialogues, bringing together young Israelis and Palestinians to advance mutual understanding and eventually peace, as well as dialogues between Israeli and European researchers of different think tanks, examining together the pressing security challenges characterizing the Middle East at that time. In both frameworks, the high expectations I held from the dialogue were dashed: mutual understanding was not easily reached and the exchange of views between the participants often left a ‘bitter aftertaste’ accompanied by a deep sense of frustration – palatable where both sides left the room without having made any significant step towards the other. This was a puzzling observation and at that time, I was unable to put my finger on the exact reason behind this disillusionment. I was just left with the intuition that a crucial element was missing for these exchanges to be more valuable.

Several years later with the first interviews conducted in the framework of this research, the missing intangible element that I could not identify back then became clearer. I realized that it was all about recognition. This ‘bulb moment’ occurred when the chairman of the EU parliamentary delegation to the US equated the success of a dialogue with the mere number of American representatives of the Congress, making the effort to travel to Brussels, to take part in the dialogue (Interview no.1). Given the fact that the transatlantic dialogue is one of the oldest and thickest dialogues, I was expecting a different measure of success related rather to the quality of the exchange. This answer was as surprising as instructive. It suggested that the transatlantic relationship was not to be taken-for-granted, and that what was at stake in these dialogues, was first and foremost, the recognition of the importance and distinctiveness of the other. Put another way, it revealed the basic need to have one’s identity recognised, whether we talk about a single individual participating in a people-to-people dialogue in a turbulent zone of conflict or a representative of a prestigious institution, such as the EU.

But why is recognition so important? Because it fundamentally relates to our most profound socio-psychological needs as human beings striving for respect and self-esteem. The quest for the recognition of our identity goes hand-in-hand with emotions that are by themselves so powerful that they can literally trigger wars or bring about extraordinary positive

changes in international politics. Recognition is omnipresent in social interactions and underpins other practices, such as the quest for security and profit. In fact, the social structure underpinning these two practices, assumes identity in the first place. In the absence of recognition for the relevance and particularities of the other, it is very difficult to build strong and enduring relationships.

Looking at the EU's impressive record of dialogues with third countries around the world and considering its deep attachment to the culture of debate and compromise, I decided to investigate the following research question: why has the EU promoted and institutionalized more dialogues than any other international actor in the world? What is actually going on during all these dialogical interactions? What is the rationale and most importantly, what is the added value of all these interactions that have become so numerous that they become almost impossible to quantify in an accurate way?

### 10.1. Discussion of the findings and of the research methods

Several theories of International Relations have already conceptualized what happens in a dialogue, defined as a face-to-face interaction in an institutionalised framework. While for realists, dialogical interactions are nothing more than a pure reflection of power constellations hinging on coercive mechanisms, liberal institutionalists consider this practice to be a real engine for cooperation, enabling intense exchange of information and views, and possibly leading to joint action. As to the constructivist approach, it considers dialogues as a site in which genuine processes of persuasion and arguing might develop, resulting in the emergence of common understandings and shared ideas. Without downplaying the relevance of these mechanisms at work, I took a different perspective drawing on insights from socio-psychology to reveal the underlying layer related to identity and the quest for recognition. While traditional IR approaches define the essence of the dialogue either in terms of power relations or in terms of communication revolving around the transmission of information and knowledge in a rationalistic/cognitive vein, I chose to bring to the fore the more intangible dimensions of human interaction related to identity and emotions.

From this perspective, the standpoint of this research shows that the main goal of the EU in conducting such dialogues with non-EU countries is to anchor its institutional identity by gaining recognition as a key international actor. In this quest for recognition, the dialogue offers an instance in which institutional actors can experience the institutional identity of the other and their own, as well as engage in recognition processes with far-reaching implications at the

macro-institutional level. In fact, the dialogue constitutes a framework of direct encounter in which temporal and spatial immediacy allows for non-verbal cues and emotions to take a prominent position alongside other forms of communications as mentioned above (Chapter 2).

In addition, it is worth remembering that not all the states or organizations have necessarily the same recognition needs. In this respect, the EU specifically constitutes a gripping and special case facing peculiar challenges in the recognition of its institutional identity: its *sui generis* hybrid nature as a political actor, its complex machinery of decision-making in constant evolution, and the ambiguity surrounding its end purpose are crucial to understand why it is so difficult for non-EU countries to fathom the EU's institutional identity. The multitude of internal and external challenges that the EU currently faces contribute to make its needs for recognition even more acute (Chapter 4).

Given these pressing recognition needs, it is no coincidence that the EU has the highest number of dialogues with parties in the world. Chapter 5 has comprehensively described how this entire 'dialogue system' incrementally came about from the early days of the EC until today, following different patterns of initiation. While the EC/EPC was very much a sought-after interlocutor in its formative years, the trend was reversed in the 1990s with the EU taking the lead and institutionalising more systematically dialogues with third countries. It is no exaggeration to argue that the EU is now championing the practice of dialogue: it currently conducts dialogues with almost all regional organizations and states in the world, from Albania to Zimbabwe, covering an ever-increasing range of issues (from human rights to nuclear non-proliferation) and with a wide variety of actors, including diplomats, parliamentarians, and civil society actors. In my view, this intense dialogical engagement with the world can be explained by the EU's acute needs in terms of recognition of its complex institutional identity.

The practice of dialogue serves to anchor the EU institutional identity through an ongoing and iterative process of recognition, achieved in the face-to-face interaction between representatives of participating institutions. To substantiate this key argument, I devised a theoretical framework detailing the exact process through which the anchoring of institutional identity occurs at the micro-level with implications at the macro-institutional level. Drawing on my working definition of dialogue as a 'face-to-face interaction in an institutionalised framework', it was crucial to first emphasize the particularities of this distinct form of communication. In fact, it is the temporal and spatial immediacy allowing for the display of non-verbal and emotional cues that make the dialogue such a favourable setting for processes of recognition and anchoring of institutional identity to unfold. This argument in turn sheds light on the added value of the physical encounter and the persistence of this form of dialogue

even in the age of fast-moving technological changes. Despite technological advancements, representatives of states and institutions keep travelling to be physically in the presence of each other, as no other form of interaction can better satisfy their needs for recognition.

I unpacked the mechanism of anchoring of institutional identity hinging on recognition at three critical moments of the dialogue: (1) the entering of the room, i.e. the preparation and the setting; (2) communication and exchanges in the room; (3) and leaving the room. For each one of these phases, I pointed to the variety of verbal and non-verbal cues that can be used and interpreted by the actors in presence, as recognition acts or markers of recognition-seeking behaviour. Following the symbolic interactionist tradition *à la Goffman* (1959), I showed that the dialogue can be thought of as a performance in which actors can experience first-hand the institution they represent in all its relevance and uniqueness. In fact, in this symbolically framed interaction, the actors project the identity of the institution they represent in terms of values, interests, and procedures, through the way they act and interact. The symbolic dimension of these encounters is key: while the interaction unfolds among individual representatives at the micro-level, its significance transcends the meeting room due to the power of symbolism. In this regard, the third phase of the process (i.e. leaving the room) is crucial, as it definitely clinched the recognition that has taken place in the room by projecting it to the outside world. This is achieved thanks to the enactment of visual, discursive, and practical anchors of institutional identity.

In order to test this model, I investigated the constellation of practices related to the dialogue, as well as the perceptions held by European and American participants of the added value of these interactions. The analysis revealed that in addition to the exchange of information characterizing these dialogues, the quest for recognition of the EU's institutional identity features predominantly, albeit in a more subtle and hidden manner. Indeed, the application of the theoretical framework to the three case studies corresponding to different levels of dialogue between the EU and the US has shown that all kinds of actors (legislative, executive, and civil society) participate in this large identity recognition game, like cogs in a big machine. Instead of disaggregating the different EU institutions, the argument remained at a broader level and dealt with the recognition of the institutional identity of the EU as a whole. Put another way, the findings across the different empirical chapters point to the fact that the EU does anchor its institutional identity through the dialogical interaction. There is indeed a widespread perception among the European participants of these dialogues that 'the treatment they get during these dialogues matched to a great extent with their self-image' (Lindemann & Saada, 2012, p.17-18), which amounts to the recognition of their institutional identity.

Importantly, this perception of enhanced recognition is shared by the American participants, suggesting that the Europeans are not fooling themselves cultivating an illusion of recognition. In fact, the analysis has shown that for a majority of American participants, the dialogue does help to better fathom and appreciate the EU in its complexity and distinctiveness.

Upon closer examination, different shades of equality emerged in each one of these cases. In the case of the Transatlantic Legislators' dialogue (Chapter 7), I told the story of a dialogue among friends. At the inter-parliamentary level, the asymmetry between European and American participants in terms of commitment and participation to the dialogue is particularly striking. But the analysis of the interaction in the room and the informality of the session exposed strong indicators of recognition of the relationship identity as friends. As to the case of the executive EU-US dialogues involving diplomats (Chapter 8), it features the recognition of the relationship identity as partners who are more oriented towards the achievements of concrete results in the form of 'deliverables'. Compared to the TLD, the efforts put in the dialogue by EU and US representatives are more even, both in terms of engagement and participation in the dialogue. The nature of the interaction within the room confirms to a great extent the partnership relationship that both sides maintain with each other: whether it is 'strategising' vis-à-vis other actors, or enjoying the high level of conviviality and trust among themselves, all these implicit acts of recognition do matter for the anchoring of the EU institutional identity. As to the civil society dialogues (TABC and TACD), they differ from the two other empirical examples in two fundamental ways (Chapter 9). First, at this level of dialogue, where the participants are not official representatives of the EU, the quest for recognition of their institutional identity is not crucial at all. Rather, what matters in the interaction between American and European businessmen or consumers is their common interest in advancing a common cause, and their willingness to find a consensus and reach a transatlantic agreement that would hopefully influence the policy-making process. Even though recognition does not feature predominantly in this case, the interaction among the participants of this group reflects different shades of equality in the relations among associated rivals in the case of TABC and among family members in the case of TACD. Furthermore, keeping in mind the acute quest for recognition of the EU, the analysis has also shown that this type of dialogue at the civil society level established by the EU itself also contributes to the recognition of the EU as a competent and distinct institution. Overall then, successful processes of recognition are at play across all the case studies confirming the thesis that the EU engages so prolifically in political dialogues in order to anchor its institutional identity.

Yet a few points need to be underlined in order to challenge the rigidity of the theoretical framework presented in the thesis.

First, the concept of identity which constitutes a core component of the recognition process at play during the dialogue has largely been treated here as a thin concept – encompassing the ‘relevance and distinctiveness’ dimensions of institutional identity in a rather general way. According to my theoretical framework, institutional identity is expressed both in the values for which the institution stands and in its unique procedures. While the analysis has shown that in each one of the dialogues, the European participants promote certain values that have traditionally been associated with the European Union as a normative power (Manners, 2002), such as the promotion of democracy, the respect for human rights, and multilateralism – more explicit links could be made to these thicker conceptions of European identity. In other words, the conceptualization of identity can be refined by focusing more exclusively on the values characterizing the EU as a distinct actor. However, the analysis has shed light on how the values cherished by the European Union are also reflected in the procedures and practices it pursues in the framework of the dialogue. For instance, the strong European commitment to democracy is well-mirrored in the importance attributed to the representativeness of the delegations (particularly so in the case of the European Parliament). Similarly, the positive way through which Europeans traditionally approach every single opportunity for dialogue is well-aligned with the EU’s clear preference and deep attachment to the practice of deliberation and diplomacy more generally.

Secondly, by delving into the intricacies of the different dialogues, more nuances have been uncovered. The aim of the following paragraphs is therefore to sharpen the differentiations and variations observed within the recognition seeking processes across the different chapters.

First of all, as mentioned above, my thesis treats the EU as a predominantly unified entity, such that the European participants within each type of dialogue present a common front in terms of recognition. I argue that they are all carriers of the EU institutional identity and typically seek recognition of this identity in terms of values and procedures in their interaction with their American counterparts. However, this does not mean that each institution composing the EU has necessarily the same recognition needs. In fact, the analysis of the three different types of dialogues has revealed that each institution (the European Parliament, the EEAS/Commission and the non-governmental actors) have various degrees of recognition needs. This variation could possibly be illustrated along a spectrum of neediness featuring the European Parliament at one extreme with the most acute needs for recognition, and the

transatlantic non-governmental dialogues at the other extreme, functioning more like a network with no real need for recognition among the organization members. Where does this variation in neediness come from and what impact does it have on the recognition processes at work in the dialogue? While all these institutions (in particular the EP and the EEAS/Commission) promote the values and interests of the EU as a whole, they also have their own vested interests and organisational culture and history. Depending on the institution's degree of "neediness" for recognition, the recognition processes at play during the dialogue can be more or less salient. In this study, it comes as no surprise that the European Parliament is the "neediest" institutional actor in terms of recognition: it has been trying hard to assert its role as a new foreign policy player – not just vis-à-vis the United States but also vis-à-vis other European institutions, such as the EEAS for instance. This idea was often mentioned in the interviews: MEPs and their staffers were proud to be able to reach *unique* transatlantic agreements that would profoundly matter for future executive decisions, thereby highlighting the added value of their participation in the European decision-making process when it comes to foreign policy. In the middle of the spectrum, one finds the EEAS, which has also to deal with its own recognition challenges as a relatively new foreign policy institution established by the Lisbon treaty. In future research, it might be interesting to compare the conduct of the EEAS and its degree of neediness in terms of recognition under the respective leadership of Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini. Finally, at the other hand of the spectrum, one finds a different type of actors whose role in the recognition process of the EU is only indirect: the non-governmental actors in the framework of the TABC and TACD. Among themselves, the recognition for institutional identity is not at stake. They operate much more like a network advancing common causes where identity matters do not feature predominantly. As a result, the recognition dynamics particularly salient in the two other types of dialogues are absent in this case. This variation in the degree of recognition sought by the different actors in the framework of the dialogue is interesting in itself but it does not weaken the general claim according to which they are all imbued with the same mission of recognition on behalf of the EU when interacting with outsiders.

Apart from the nature of the actors involved, the predominance of the recognition processes varies also according to the policy area discussed during the dialogues. When it comes to policy areas where the EU has a comparative advantage over the United States, the recognition processes at play during the dialogue will be more intense. Such policy areas include for instance Justice and Home Affairs with a special emphasis on data privacy and protection as well as topics related to development and security. Aware of its expertise in these

fields, the EU will typically project with more confidence and determination its institutional identity and as a result will also have higher expectations in terms of recognition, as it is much more invested in the process in the first place. By contrast, if the EU does not get the expected recognition when it comes to the dialogues on these specific topics, the emotional negative response might be particularly acute. In the dialogues analysed in this study, I found a fair degree of alignment between the high expectations of the European participants and the “extent of learning” experienced by the Americans. In fact, both at the inter-parliamentary and executive levels, the American participants explicitly praised the European participants for their expertise in these policy areas – thereby recognizing the EU’s competence in these specific policy areas. More generally, any acknowledgement on the American side that they have *learnt* something from the EU is perceived as a recognition act on the European side.

A third background condition that impacts the saliency of the recognition processes at play during the dialogue deals with the level of familiarity between European and American participants (i.e. turnover in terms of membership). As mentioned in the theoretical section, due to the repeated nature of the interaction, strong inter-personal links can be forged over time, leading potentially to the thickening of the institution-to-institution relationship. The development of these relationships is an inherent part of the recognition process. In fact, the existence of these links (as practical anchors of identity) are the testament that recognition has already been granted. As such, a dialogue in which European and American participants are well-acquainted and have already the experience of working together will feature less prominent recognition processes. Alternatively, in a situation where new members enter the dialogue, the recognition challenge comes to the fore again. This can be nicely illustrated by the lack of recognition processes at the non-governmental level where members have known each other for years on the one hand, and the renewed pressure to seek recognition at the inter-parliamentary level and executive level with the change in the American administration on the other hand. In fact, anticipating the first months of the Trump administration, many European participants clearly reiterated the challenge of being perceived as competent and credible in the eyes of their new American counterparts.

Furthermore, variation in the intensity of the recognition processes at play during the dialogue might also be due to the different levels of visibility of the dialogues. As the recognition process unfolding in the meeting room needs to be effectively projected to the outside world, the possibility to disseminate the results of the dialogue is crucial. In fact, the more such possibilities exist, the more acute the recognition process will be with the actors taking advantage of every single opportunity to project the recognition of their identity. In the

case of the TLD where the recognition process is the most salient, the participants are well aware of the possibilities to publicize these meetings and their results. In fact, the meetings are quite transparent, they are even sometimes accessible online. A lot of pictures are taken in the course of the inter-parliamentary meetings and are then extensively disseminated along with the joint statements. Being aware of the availability of so many visual and discursive anchors, the participants of these inter-parliamentary dialogues invest more in the quest for recognition as its outcomes can more easily be projected to the world. This stands in contrast to the other two dialogues that benefit from less visibility. In the case of the EEAS, the meetings are much more confidential and there are typically not as many visual anchors in the form of pictures available. As to the case of the non-governmental dialogues, this visibility aspect is not relevant at all when the interaction is just among member organisations as they are not looking for the recognition of their identity as institutions.

Finally, a comment is in order regarding the long-term consequences of the recognition processes for the European Union as a polity in general. While the theoretical framework makes the connection between micro-processes of recognition unfolding within the meeting rooms and macro-processes defined as the impact of recognition at the institutional level, it does not explain the specificities of the potential gains these processes have for EU external action as a whole. In fact, due to the *diffuse* nature of these ongoing and iterative processes, it is difficult to establish a clear causal link between successful recognition instances and the EU external action as a whole. One might however be able to discern a trend whereby the EU will be more assertive in its foreign policy with a strengthened sense of identity guiding its actions in the international realm. Further research will be necessary to assess with more precision the impact these recognition processes on the conduct of external policy by European actors.

### **Critical discussion about the research methods**

Turning now to the research methods used in this research, a few comments about their suitability in terms of generating useful data and analytical insights are in order.

Overall, the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants of the dialogue, the participant observations and the analysis of key official documents and visual data were highly effective in answering the research question on the added value of the EU-US dialogues. Taking a socio-psychological approach to the study of the EU dialogues, it was absolutely crucial to use a great variety of sources in order to provide a rich description of the phenomenon under study and to capture the subjective understandings of the participants in this specific social context (i.e. EU-US dialogues). More specifically, the

use of ethnographic data collection tools, in the form of semi-structured interviews and participant observations, was key in generating useful data. They allowed to uncover the subtle socio-psychological dynamics at play during the dialogue that would not have been discernible otherwise. In fact, the very open exchanges I had with both American and European participants of the dialogues have enabled me to understand how the representatives of the institutions interpret and assess what they are doing in this specific context, referring regularly to the idea of recognition. Undoubtedly, qualitative interviewing is one of the best research methods to grasp the perceptions of the main actors of these dialogues. This method provided an original insider's perspective on these dialogues - one that has been blatantly missing in the literature so far.

As to the participant observations of the meetings, they nicely complemented the accounts collected during the interviews. In particular, they allowed me to grasp in real time the non-verbal, emotional and ritual elements that are so important in the realm of socio-psychology. Being present in the meeting room, observing the subtle gestures of the participants while listening to the content of their exchanges definitely helped me to get a more precise and concrete sense of what was going on during the dialogue from a practical and symbolic perspective. Equally important was the participation in the informal moments following the official dialogues themselves. Indeed, being present in the "debriefing" discussions where the participants openly talked about their feelings and impressions regarding the dialogue that had just taken place, was extremely useful in comprehending their subjective assessments of the interaction. However, a caveat is in order here. While participant observations are particularly valuable in generating useful data on the conduct of the dialogues as they unfold, the access to the room remains a serious challenge for researchers due to confidentiality matters. While I have managed to attend *only* two meetings at the inter-parliamentary level, the observations I made during these sessions, reflected to a great extent the descriptions I previously heard from a number of interviewees – thereby reinforcing my confidence in the validity of my findings. In addition, the analysis of the official documents and visual data emanating from the dialogues was highly valuable in making the link between the micro- and macro-levels. In fact, the wording of the joint statements and press releases, the *mise en scène* behind the pictures released on the internet - as well as the dissemination practices of these documents, were all significant indicators that needed to be taken into account when assessing the added value of these dialogues. They are the only tangible outcomes of the dialogues accessible to the public and to the world and as such, are not innocuous. However, while the comparative analysis of the wording of the documents over time and the analysis of the dissemination patterns are

insightful in and by themselves, they do not tell the whole story behind their *raison d'être*. In fact, their meaning and importance can only be fully understood when coupled with insights gleaned from the interviewees, i.e. from the actors that produced them in the first place. In the case at hand, interviewees recurrently pointed to the important function that these documents and pictures fulfil in terms of projecting an institutional identity to the world. In sum, for the purpose of this research exploring the practice of dialogue from a socio-psychological perspective, the data- triangulation, consisting in the analysis of a wide variety of sources, was of great import. It allowed to gain a thorough understanding of this practice in all its dimensions (practical, symbolic and subjective) and greatly enhanced the internal validity of the research. In terms of method, the thematic analysis supported by the QDA NVivo 11, was an appropriate and effective method to extract significant patterns of meaning from the interviews and other data sources in a very systematic and rigorous manner. In particular, the different queries available on the software enabled to discover interesting differences in the data both across and within cases (for instance, differences between the Europeans and Americans' definition of a successful dialogue). I would therefore recommend to any researcher interested in the rigorous analysis of a wide variety of data to use this type of software. It is extremely useful.

## 10.2. Contribution to the literature

This study makes several contributions to different bodies of literature, both theoretically and empirically.

First, the thesis sheds light on the added value of taking a socio-psychological approach to the study of dialogue in international relations. In fact, by closely examining the subjective understandings of the participants of the dialogue, who act as the carriers of institutional identity in the specific social setting of the EU-US dialogues, a new function of the dialogue related to the recognition needs of institutions, has been revealed. In other words, this theoretical lens has the merit to draw the attention to powerful socio-psychological dynamics related to the identity needs of institutions – that have traditionally been overlooked by the more conventional IR theories. The main idea according to which the dialogue *also* serves to anchor institutional identity by enabling recognition processes to unfold is by itself innovative and original and as such brings added value to the study of dialogue in international relations.

However, the salience of the recognition game at play during the dialogue does not mean that the other classical dynamics identified by more conventional IR theories (realism,

liberal institutionalism and social constructivism) are not unfolding during the dialogues as well. Rather than eclipsing the other dynamics (in terms of bargaining, exchange of information and knowledge), I showed that the recognition process underpins the other kinds of discursive engagement taking place among the participants of the dialogue. Indeed, the socio-psychological approach is instrumental in explaining the nature and quality of the dialogical exchange, as described by the more classical IR theories. More specifically, if recognition is granted during the dialogue, this will inevitably be reflected in the quality of exchange among the actors of the dialogue. Inversely, in the case where recognition is not granted, the dialogue is most likely to be characterized by less effective persuasion processes and by a lesser degree of trust, influencing the nature of the information being exchanged etc. As such, the socio-psychological approach adopted in this study does not refute nor contradict the other IR theories regarding the role and content of political dialogues in international relations. It rather complements them by shedding light on an underlying dimension that has the potential to influence the quality of the exchanges, as described by the other theories. It therefore contributes to a richer conceptualisation of dialogue in IR rooted in the full appreciation of the identity factor and its effect.

While the thesis has mainly referred to the three conventional IR theories (realism, liberal institutionalism and social constructivism) and their conceptualisation of the role of dialogue, another set of approaches focused more specifically on the development and functioning of institutions, could also have been considered in order to explore the dynamics and added value of the political dialogues conducted between the EU and the world. In fact, there might be room for interesting combinations between the socio-psychological approach adopted in this research and different types of institutionalisms, such as historical and social institutionalism.

At first sight, historical institutionalism – which is primarily concerned with the study of patterns of institutional development - seems to be quite relevant in the context of this research, which describes the remarkable development of the architecture of dialogues between the EU and the US. Indeed, in its attempt to understand the processes that shape, reproduce and alter international political institutions over time, historical institutionalism puts the emphasis “on the micro-level processes that create incentives for individuals to reproduce (or not) designs during and after critical junctures” (Fioretos, 2011, p.375). This micro-level focus strongly resonates with the socio-psychological approach looking at the behavior of individuals in specific social contexts. However, for historical institutionalism, the preferences of the actors shaping patterns of institutional changes respond mainly to a rationalist interest-based

kind of logic. In fact, historical institutionalism explains the persistence of a specific institutional design thanks to the investments and costs that have been invested in them in the first place as well as the interests of the actors in these institutions to preserve their role (Fioretos, 2011, p.376). In other words, this account makes no reference to the psychology of the individuals nor of the institution in which they are embedded. By contrast, my analysis based on insights gleaned from the actors of these dialogues, shows that there is another rationale behind the decision to keep the dialogues going, namely the necessity to gain recognition to fulfill important internal and external identity needs. In this sense, the socio-psychological approach can be a good complement to historical institutionalist analysis, as it looks *also* at non-material considerations and makes an effective link between individuals and institutions in this context.

Another approach that could be relevant to this research is sociological institutionalism, which typically focuses on the ways through which institutions come to affect individual's behaviour (Jepperson, 1991). In this regard, the sociological institutionalist approach has the potential to explain well some of the dynamics described in this thesis – referring particularly to the process of socialization that the European participants of the dialogue undergo and through which they internalize their role as carriers of institutional identity seeking recognition when interacting with the US. Yet while sociological institutionalism is helpful in explaining how the institution shapes the behaviour of its agents, the socio-psychological approach is still needed in order to highlight the recognition needs of the institution and the ways through which the individuals engage in the recognition game as a performance. Put differently, a socio-psychological approach applied to institutions provides additional original insights on the needs of the institution itself while sociological institutionalism provides additional insights on the processes through which the constituting agents become imbued with this mission.

Taking this alternative socio-psychological view on dialogue has several implications both for researchers and practitioners. First, from a theoretical perspective, it invites scholars interested in the intricacies of dialogue to pay due attention to the powerful socio-psychological dynamics at play in any dialogical interaction, as these have the potential to bear on the way the exchange eventually takes place. Subsequently, it should encourage researchers to use ethnographic data collection tools in order to capture the thickness of this unique kind of human and social interaction that has much more to reveal than what transpires from the mere analysis of official documents or of speech utterances. Secondly, important lessons can be learnt for practitioners often involved in dialogues. Indeed, considering the omnipresence and significance of the socio-psychological processes related to recognition, more attention needs

to be given to the way through which the dialogue is being prepared, conducted and followed up within institutions. The fact that actors are so sensitive to the recognition dynamics at play during the dialogue has far reaching practical implications in terms of how the participants of the dialogue (i.e. practitioners) should approach it. For instance, more empathy and sensitivity should be displayed regarding the way others are treated, as a poor treatment (equating a lack of recognition) can have detrimental effects on the nature of the interaction when it comes to the exchange of information or bargaining etc. These intangible dynamics at play have the potential to turn the dialogue into a success or a failure. Therefore, the importance of the socio-psychological dimension of the dialogue should prompt a better and more conscious code of conduct when it comes to political dialogues from the practitioner's standpoint.

In addition, this research makes also a contribution to the distinct literature on recognition in international relations. First, the findings show that recognition permeates everyday diplomatic practices, with dialogical interactions being one of the most intense and favourable settings in which recognition processes can unfold due to the spatial, temporal, and emotional immediacy it allows. In this sense, my research enlarges the scope of 'recognition acts' identified so far in the literature, which remain situated mainly at the macro-level of interaction, be it in the form of legal recognition or public statements. This study therefore completes the picture by providing a detailed fine-grained framework of analysis to show how recognition is granted within the specific setting of dialogues, focusing at the practices of recognition at the micro-level with macro-level implications.

Secondly, while there is already a degree of acknowledgment in the literature about the crucial social dimension of recognition (Lindemann & Ringmar, 2012) (in addition to its legal aspect), this study provides a thicker understanding of these dynamics by taking into account the strong emotional components involved in the recognition process as well. In fact, the findings show that the recognition process is always accompanied by emotions that in turn can help the researcher to recognize recognition or lack thereof. These emotions appear very distinctively in the dialogical setting thanks to the spatial and physical proximity, in which the 'recognisees' and 'recognisers' interact. Typically, positive emotions such as trust, joy, and a sense of satisfaction emerge when recognition is granted whereas negative emotions like anger, humiliation, and a sense of frustration are more likely to arise when the participants perceive a mismatch between the treatment received and their self-image. The emotional layer is important to take into account, as emotions can be extremely powerful triggers of actions. Finally, this research has shown that a variety of actors other than states can be involved in the recognition game. This innovation contrasts with the literature on recognition that has

traditionally put a heavy emphasis on the state as the main actor seeking formal recognition and being able to grant it. In this study, I highlighted the specific recognition needs of the EU, as a complex and constantly evolving organization and the subsequent efforts being made to get recognition for its challenging institutional identity. This insight is crucial: not all institutions have similar needs in terms of the recognition of their identity. More research could be done on the theoretical front to better identify the evolution of the recognition needs of an institution at different stages of its life, for instance. The study also illustrated how non-state actors in the form of business and consumer groups partake in this complex recognition game. Contrary to the widely held assumption in the literature about the directionality of the recognition process, from states or international organization to non-state actors, this research shows that non-state actors can also indirectly grant recognition for the institutional identity of states or international institutions, like the EU.

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on the EU foreign policy. While political dialogues have typically been described in the literature as a foreign policy tool deployed in order to influence the behaviour of another party mainly through persuasion (Smith, 2014), my findings provide an additional rationale. Dialogues are not just intended to have an effect on the other party, but they *also* fulfil a key internal function related to the socio-psychological needs of the EU in terms of identity. In this sense, the study goes beyond the classical conceptualisation of dialogues as mere foreign policy tools and sheds light on the role dialogues play in the reinforcement of the EU's institutional identity, as a relevant and distinct foreign policy actor. This additional rationale behind the extensive use of these dialogues has so far been overlooked by traditionalist explanations. Any future study focusing on the EU practice of dialogue with other organisations, states, or even non-state actors should also consider the internal function that these dialogues play in terms of identity. The focus on the subjective feelings and perceptions of the participants coupled with the observation of the dialogue at the micro-level in real-time showed that the EU is indeed capable of anchoring its institutional identity, taking advantage of all the possibilities inherent in the dialogue as a specific form of communication (i.e. spatial and temporal immediacy and display of emotions).

The extent to which these findings, drawn from the specific transatlantic case, can be generalized and described as a key pattern in the conduct of EU foreign policy needs however to be critically discussed. In fact, a critical reader might question the external validity of these research findings giving the unique dynamics and power asymmetries characterizing the EU-US dialogues. To address this important issue, I will first briefly highlight the specific aspects

and findings that might be largely applicable only to the EU-US case before making the case for the wider relevance of the findings across a variety of other cases.

First of all, the intensity of the recognition process at play and its visibility might be very specific to the case of the EU-US dialogues due to the nature of the relationship between the two players. As explained at great length in Chapter 6, the transatlantic relationship has always been characterized by an ambivalent mix of cooperation and competition revolving around the key issue of equality. From the inception of the European project, it has been a challenge for the Europeans to assert themselves vis-à-vis the US in light of the structural power asymmetries between the two actors. In addition, the recognition granted by the US as a fellow democracy and powerful traditional alliance partner has a very strong significance. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the quest for recognition is so salient and visible in the case of the dialogues with the United States. This is true for the three distinct phases of the recognition process detailed in the theoretical framework: from the preparation stage where intense coordination efforts at the European level are made to come across as a unified actor vis-à-vis the US to the wide dissemination of the outcomes of the dialogues (in the form of visual and discursive anchors of identity). Whether the EU puts as much effort into political dialogues with other countries that are not as significant and powerful as the US, needs to be investigated in future research projects. Furthermore, another aspect that might only be relevant to the EU-US case, relates to the ease with which the recognition process unfolds due to the rich common cultural background shared by both sides. Even though there are a lot of important differences between the European and American models when it comes to politics and economics, their cultural proximity remains unparalleled when considering the other interlocutors of the EU. The fact that both players are born out of the same Western cultural heritage and are used to communicate and negotiate intensively in English might facilitate their mutual understanding and the common interpretation of the subtle gestures and language so present in the dialogical interactions. In other words, the recognition process might be facilitated by these common cultural understandings. This might not be so easy in other cases where the cultural backgrounds of the actors are fundamentally different – such as the case of the EU and China for instance.

However, while it is true that the EU-US dialogues might be an extreme case in terms of the recognition dynamics it displays, there are a few reasons to believe that the EU will still be seeking the recognition of its institutional identity *with other countries as well* through its intense dialogical engagement. First, the EU's recognition conundrum – emanating from a complex institutional identity that is often difficult to fathom by external players- holds true

for all the interlocutor countries- not only with the United States. Put it differently, it is not only a challenge for the United States to capture the complexity of the EU. Arguably, all the other countries are struggling with making sense of what the EU is and which powers it really has. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the EU will take advantage of every single political dialogue to project its institutional identity with the aim of being better understood – and thereby recognized by third countries regardless of their power or status. There is no doubt that the recognition coming from a powerful actor like the United States might be particularly valuable for the EU. Yet it does not mean that the EU will not pursue recognition from less important players as ‘there is never enough recognition’: for an institution that seeks to gain recognition for its relevance as an international actor, every single country matters.

Secondly, it is reasonable to think that the dialogue will always help satisfy (partly at least) the EU’s internal need to confirm its distinctive identity. In fact, the reinforcement of institutional identity takes already place in the preparation phase of the dialogue, whereby the different EU actors reaffirm their common values and interests with the view to come across as a consistent and coherent actor in the eyes of their interlocutors. During the dialogue itself, the importance given to emphasize the uniqueness of the EU as an institution (both in terms of values and procedures) also entails an anchoring of identity internally. This process is most likely to happen with other interlocutors as well and not just in the case of the US – albeit with perhaps a different degree of intensity. Thirdly, the research finding according to which different EU institutions have various recognition needs might well be a constant feature that goes beyond the specific interaction between the EU and US institutions. For instance, the fact that the European Parliament as a relatively new actor of foreign policy is needier when it comes to recognition than the EEAS or the Commission might be reflected in all the dialogues with third countries.

Lastly, the fine-grained analysis of the evolution of the EU-US architecture of dialogues and the examination of the micro-practices of communication among European and American representatives at different levels (parliamentary, executive, and civil society) contribute to the dense literature on the transatlantic relations. In fact, it brings further empirical evidence supporting the case for the solidity and vitality of the transatlantic relationship even amidst periods of deep disagreements between the two entities. In this sense, it is a welcome addition to the transatlantic literature that only rarely emphasises the strong cooperation between the EU and the US compared to the heavy focus on the crises and conflicts punctuating the relationship. The analysis conducted in Chapter 6 in particular shows the evolution of the cooperation and consultation patterns, with multiple channels of communication flourishing

over the years even in times of adversity. In fact, when the headlines in the newspapers were all about the “death of the West”, the West kept talking and institutionalized new forms of dialogues. As such, my emphasis on the thickness of the relationship in terms of communication channels and trust, as well as its resilience even in times of turbulences supports Pouliot’s argument about the strength of the transatlantic security community (Pouliot, 2006). However, as the study has shown, it is important to go beyond the mere existence and frequency of the dialogues and examine more closely the practice and content of the dialogues themselves in order to better assess the extent to which (1) both sides recognize each other as relevant partners and (2) accept and respect, rather than disdainfully dismiss, the concerns and sensibilities of their interlocutors. At this level of micro-resolution, the picture becomes more complex, as some fundamental differences opposing the EU and the US in their approaches to international politics quickly resurface. I would therefore call for a more balanced and accurate approach in assessing the strength of the transatlantic relationship, looking at the dialogue in all its dimensions. It is only when recognition for the institutional identity of the other is granted that the relationship really gets cemented and strengthened.

### 10.3. The way forward: what’s next?

More empirical and theoretical studies could build on this study. Indeed, the main discovery of this thesis –i.e. the fact that the political dialogues between the EU and the US serve to gain recognition and to anchor the EU institutional identity on the world stage– prompts the question of the extent to which this holds true in cases of dialogues conducted with different partners. In fact, the nature of the actors and the specificity of the transatlantic relationship display unique features that might render difficult the direct transfer of the findings to other cases. The characteristics of the EU-US relationship include a broad common cultural background, strong common interests and values, arguably equal power relations at least in economic terms, and a complex history whereby the US can arguably be conceived as the significant other of the EU. As a result, in this specific case study, the EU is seen as actively seeking recognition for its institutional identity through the dialogical interaction vis-à-vis the US. Moreover, due to the social proximity with and higher status of the US (as the US is a highly regarded player and partner), the *specific* recognition from the US is particularly valuable in the eyes of the Europeans. This might not be the case when the EU enters into a dialogue with a less significant partner. More research could be done about the nature of the “recogniser”: obviously the judgments of a superpower do not carry the same weight as the recognition given by a micro-

state. Another striking particularity of the EU-US dialogues is the absence of conditionality attached to it. The dialogue is renewed on an automatic basis, thereby depriving the EU from the use of political dialogue as a carrot or as a stick in its dealing with the US.

Bearing in mind these comments, future studies should focus on dialogues featuring variation along the following dimensions. In terms of power relations, what would the interaction at the micro-level look like when the EU has the upper hand facing a weaker interlocutor (for instance in the dialogues between the EU and the Maghreb countries, or the EU and the African countries or even micro-countries)? In other words, how different would the dynamics be if the EU was in a different configuration facing a weaker insignificant “other”? Would the EU still seek recognition with the same craving? The same question would be interesting to ask with partners having a substantially different cultural background, such as China, Japan, or India for instance. How good is the EU at navigating the challenges arising from different diplomatic cultures with different notions of respect, honour, and saving face in these countries (Cohen, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 1988)? Therefore, exploring the dialogical dynamics at the micro-level between the EU and other countries besides the United States with its own particularities would definitely be a valuable area of future inquiry. It could potentially give indications regarding the different roles that the EU holds depending on the partner of interaction and reveal its capacity to adapt to different situations. While in the case of the US, the EU seeks first and foremost to be recognised as a relevant and distinct player (i.e. institutional identity), it might be that in other dialogues it will seek to get other more specific parts of its identity recognised. For instance, in the case of the dialogues between the EU and Israel or between the EU and the PA, is it reasonable to think that the EU might seek to get recognition as a relevant diplomatic actor *in peace-making, as a mediator*? In short, a part of mystery in dialogues is yet to be unveiled

## Appendix 1: list of interviewees

<b>Interview n°</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Member of European Parliament, EU	Brussels	9 December 2015
2	EU Official	Brussels The Hague	10 December 2015 25 June 2016
3	EU Official	Strasbourg The Hague	16 December 2015 25 June 2016
4	Member of European Parliament, EU	Brussels	16 March 2016
5	Member of European Parliament, EU	Brussels	16 March 2016
6	Member of European Parliament, EU	Brussels	17 March 2016
7	EEAS Official	Brussels	16 March 2016
8	EU Official	Washington, DC	19 May 2016
9	US Congressional Staffer	Washington, DC	19 May 2016
10	US Congressman/woman	Phone interview	20 May 2016
11	US Member TACD	Phone interview	20 May 2016
11	Former US Intern in EPLO	Washington, DC	21 May 2016
12	Former US Congressional Staffer, Current Expert Advisor	Washington, DC	24 May 2016
13	US Official, State Department	Washington, DC	24 May 2016
14	US Official, State Department	Washington, DC	24 May 2016

15	US Official, State Department	Washington, DC	24 May 2016
16	Assistant to US Congressman/woman	Washington, DC	26 May 2016
17	US Congressman/woman	Washington, DC	26 May 2016
18	EU Official	Washington, DC The Hague	26 May 2016 25 June 2016
19	Assistant to US Congressmen/women	Washington, DC	27 May 2016 7 February 2017
20	US Member TACD	Washington, DC	1 June 2016
21	Former US Congressional Staffer, current Expert Advisor	Washington, DC	1 June 2016
22	US Member TACD	Washington, DC	1 June 2016
23	EEAS Official	Washington, DC	1 June 2016
24	EEAS Official	Washington, DC London	2 June 2016 9 February 2017 20 July 2017
25	Former US Congressional Staffer	Washington, DC	2 June 2016
26	US Member TABC	Washington, DC	2 June 2016
27	US Member TACD	Washington, DC	2 June 2016
28	EU Member TABC	London	4 October 2016
29	Former US Official, State Department	Brussels	2 November 2016
30	EU Member TABC	Brussels	3 November 2016
31	EU Member TABC	Brussels	3 November 2016
32	EEAS Official	Brussels	3 November 2016
33	EU Member TACD	Brussels	4 November 2016
34	EU Member TACD	Brussels	4 November 2016
35	EEAS Official	Brussels	4 November 2016
36	EEAS Official	Brussels	4 November 2016

37	EEAS Official	Brussels	4 November 2016
38	US Official, State Department	Washington, DC	21 February 2017
39	US Official, State Department	Washington, DC	21 February 2017
40	EU Member TABC	Phone interview	30 March 2017
41	US Member TABC	Phone interview	3 April 2017
42	EU Member TABC	Phone interview	6 April 2017
43	EU Member TACD	London	12 April 2017
44	EU Member TACD	Phone interview	31 May 2017
45	US Member TABC	Phone interview	1 June 2017
46	EU Member TACD	Phone interview	14 June 2017
47	US Official, US Mission to the EU	Phone interview	28 June 2017

**Information on participant observations and video resources:**

I participated in the preparatory meeting of the European Parliament's Delegation to the US in December 2015, which took place in Strasbourg, France.

I participated in the 78<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary meeting in June 2016 in The Hague, the Netherlands.

## Appendix 2: List of EU dialogues with third countries

### Levels of Dialogue:

0=No Political Dialogue, 1=Political Dialogue, 2=Human Rights Dialogue, 3=EU Countries

Countries	Dialogue
Afghanistan	1
Albania	1
Algeria	1
Andorra	0
Angola	1
Antigua and Barbuda	1
Argentina	1
Armenia	2
Australia	1
Austria	3
Azerbaijan	1
Bahamas	1
Bahrain	1
Bangladesh	0
Barbados	1
Belarus	2
Belgium	3
Belize	1
Benin	1
Bhutan	0
Bolivia	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Botswana	1
Brazil	1
Brunei	0
Bulgaria	3
Burkina Faso	1
Burundi	1
Cabo Verde	1
Cambodia	0
Cameroon	1
Canada	1
Central African Republic	1
Chad	1

Countries	Dialogue
Libya	0
Liechtenstein	1
Lithuania	3
Luxembourg	3
Macedonia	1
Madagascar	1
Malawi	1
Malaysia	2
Mali	1
Malta	3
Marshall Islands	1
Mauritania	1
Mauritius	1
Mexico	1
Micronesia	1
Moldova	1
Mongolia	1
Montenegro	1
Morocco	1
Mozambique	1
Myanmar (Burma)	2
Namibia	1
Nauru	1
Nepal	0
Netherlands	3
New Zealand	1
Nicaragua	1
Niger	1
Nigeria	1
North Korea	1
Norway	1
Oman	1
Pakistan	1
Palau	1

Chile	1
China	2
Colombia	1
Costa Rica	1
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Croatia	3
Cuba	1
Cyprus	3
Czech Republic	3
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1
Denmark	3
Djibouti	1
Dominica	1
Dominican Republic	1
Ecuador	1
Egypt	1
El Salvador	1
Equatorial Guinea	0
Eritrea	1
Estonia	3
Ethiopia	1
Fiji	1
Finland	3
France	3
Gabon	1
Gambia	1
Georgia	1
Germany	3
Ghana	1
Greece	3
Guatemala	1
Guinea	1
Guinea-Bissau	1
Haiti	1
Honduras	1
Hungary	3
Iceland	1
India	1
Indonesia	1
Iran	1
Iraq	1

Palestine	1
Panama	1
Papua-new Guinea	1
Paraguay	1
Peru	1
Philippines	1
Poland	3
Portugal	3
Qatar	1
Republic of Congo	1
Republic of Guyana	1
Romania	3
Russia	1
Rwanda	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Senegal	1
Serbia	1
Sierra Leone	1
Singapore	0
Slovakia	3
Slovenia	3
Somalia	0
South Africa	1
South Korea	1
South Sudan	2
Spain	3
Sri Lanka	0
Sudan	1
Suriname	1
Swaziland	1
Sweden	<a href="#">3</a>
Switzerland	1
Syria	1
Taiwan	0
Tajikistan	2
Tanzania	1
Thailand	0
Timor-Leste	1
Togo	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Tunisia	1

Ireland	3
Israel	1
Italy	3
Jamaica	1
Japan	1
Jordan	1
Kazakhstan	2
Kenya	1
Kiribati	1
Kosovo	1
Kuwait	1
Kyrgyz Republic	2
Laos	1
Latvia	3
Lebanon	1
Lesotho	1
Liberia	1

Turkey	1
Turkmenistan	2
Uganda	1
Ukraine	2
Union of the Comoros	1
United Arab Emirates	1
United Kingdom	3
Uruguay	1
USA	1
Uzbekistan	2
Venezuela	0
Vietnam	2
Western Sahara	1
Yemen	1
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	1

# Appendix 3: The architecture of the EU-US dialogues

First joint mention of a "strategic partnership" not identified. The EU mentions the USA as a strategic partner in the Security Strategy 2003.

Joint Summit, almost annual or on ad hoc basis since 1993 gathering CEU President, COM President, HR and President of the USA (latest 26.03.2014)							
<b>Political/ diplomatic dialogues</b>	<b>MFA meetings</b> (simultaneously with the joint summits)  Almost annual since 1993  MFAs, DG Trade	<b>Ministerial meetings</b> (in the margin of UN General Assembly)  Annual  National Ministers	<b>Ministerial meetings on justice and home affairs</b>  Biannual  DG HOME and DG JUST Commissioners, National ministers from presidency	<b>Political and security committee</b>  Biannual (flexible)  EEAS	<b>Political dialogues on</b>  -Africa ; -Maghreb ; -Asia; -Oceania; -Eastern Europe; Central Asia; -Latin America ; - Western Balkan; -Middle East/Gulf; -Middle East peace process; -OSCE ; -UN; -Consular Affairs -Disarmament/Non-proliferation; -Terrorism; -Arms export -Enlargement; -Human rights  Biannual  EEAS		
	<b>Transatlantic economic council</b>  Annual since 2007  DG TRADE Commissioner	<b>Informal macroeconomic dialogue</b>  Ad hoc  DG EFCIN, DG MARKT	<b>High-level regulatory cooperation</b>  Biannual  DG ENTR	<b>High-level meeting on the enforcement of competition laws</b>  Annual  DG COMP	<b>Joint customs cooperation committee</b>  Annual  DG TAXUD	<b>High-level working group on jobs and growth</b>  Throughout the year 2012  DG TRADE	
<b>Sectoral dialogues*</b>	<b>Energy council</b>  Annual since 2009 (Working groups meet regularly)  HR, DG ENV Commissioner	<b>Joint committee on higher education and vocational education and training</b>  Biennial since 1995  DG EAC	<b>GPS-Galileo satellite cooperation</b>  Annual  DG ENTR, ESA	<b>Steering committee on countering violent extremism</b>  3-4 per year  DH HOME, EEAS	<b>Steering committee on migration and refugee issues</b>  3-4 per year since 2010  DG HOME, EEAS	<b>Joint technical working group on nuclear technology research and development</b>  Annual  Joint Research Centre	
	<b>Dialogue on drugs</b>  Biannual  DG JUST, EEAS	<b>Working group on cyber-security and cyber-crime</b>  Annual (flexible)  DG HOME, DG CONNECT, EU Agencies, EU Counterterrorism Coordinator	<b>Working group on employment and labor-related issues</b>  Annual since 1996  DG EMPL	<b>Informal financial markets regulatory dialogue</b>  Biannual since 2002  DG MARKT	<b>Chemicals regulatory dialogue</b> (trilateral with Canada)  Annual  DG ENTR	<b>Technical commission on energy efficient labeling programs</b>  Annual  DG ENER	
	<b>Consumer product safety cooperation</b>  Several per year  DG SANCO	<b>Transport security working group</b>  Annual  DG MOVE	<b>Joint committee for air transport and air safety</b>  Biannual  DG MOVE	<b>High-level regulatory trilateral EU-US-China meetings</b>  Biennial  DG SANCO	<b>Joint senior level working group on development</b>  Biannual  DG DEV		
	<b>Parliamentary, Media and Civil society dialogues</b>	<b>Transatlantic legislators dialogue</b>  Biannual since 1999  Delegations of the European Parliament		<b>Transatlantic consumer dialogue</b>  Annual since 1998  EU Consumer representatives		<b>Transatlantic business council</b> Ad hoc since 1989  Business leaders	

Abbreviations :

COM : European Commission, CEU : Council of the European Union, DG : Directorate General, HR : High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, MFA : Minister of Foreign Affairs. \*Part of these dialogues have generated parallel talks in the framework of the FTA negotiations. The Website EPSO helped to fill some missing working group names in this document.

Source: Vivet & Lalande (2014).

E. Vivet, V. de Lalande, ESSEC IRENE



## Appendix 5: Sample of visual data

*These photographs of official meetings and of visits on-site during inter-parliamentary meetings – have been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

*Similarly, the MEP's tweets commenting on the different inter-parliamentary sessions, have been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation.*

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