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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND
HUMANITIES**

Master in European Studies

**Explaining EU-US Strategic Difference after the Cold
War: the Case of Iran's Nuclear Issue**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After the Cold War, with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, EU-U.S. relation changed from a firm alliance to continuing conflict and controversy. The different attitudes of the two sides regarding the Iraq War caused their relations to dip to their chilliest point. The issues dividing the two sides have expanded to national sovereignty, the use of military force, defense capabilities and economic relations. On the Iranian nuclear issue, an international hot-spot issue, the United States and the European Union, especially Britain, France and Germany have once again employed different strategies.

The root cause of the conflict is the strategic goal differences between the transatlantic governing bodies. In other words, it is a competition between the “multi-polar worlds”- the EU advocated international order and the “unipolar world” – unfettered U.S. hegemony. Different strategic goals lead to different means when dealing with foreign affairs. The European countries show great fondness for relying on international rules and organizations, dialogue and consultation, and do not advocate using military force to solve problem. In contrast, the United States is more accustomed to using pre-emptive force to resolve disputes, and ensure the national interests of the U.S. These differences are fully reflected in dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue. The EU looks highly on IAEA and UNSU’s role in resolving the nuclear issue, and actively develops bilateral relations with Iran through dialogue, agreements and other peaceful means in order to deal with the problem. These actions demonstrate the EU’s tendency for multilateral diplomacy. The United States on the other hand, is taking a tough attitude towards Iran, adopting of unilateral actions, using economic sanctions and military threats to push Iran to abandon its nuclear program.

In the future, the EU-U.S. relationship will change from the master-slave relationship seen during the Cold War to a more equal, competitive relation. Although the U.S. is still the superpower in the world today, and the EU needs American intervention in many aspects, the multi-polar world is an inevitable outcome. With the development of European integration, the EU will become a powerful force to constrain U.S. hegemony in the world.

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