

## Anthony Gardner: 'Disdain for EU' in Washington brought about diplomatic downgrade

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News

A former US ambassador to the EU has angrily condemned President Trump's decision to "downgrade" the role of his counterpart in Washington.



Donald Trump | *Photo Credit: Press Association*

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Anthony Gardner told this website the move was "symptomatic of a general disdain in Washington for the European Union."

His withering comments come after the US administration downgraded the diplomatic status of the European Union's delegation to the United States. The demotion happened at the end of last year without notice.

The snub is just the latest irritant in US-EU relations since the Trump administration took office. Under President Donald Trump, the US has sparred with the EU on a number of issues, including trade, the Iran nuclear deal and support for the Paris climate agreement, and has failed to consult it on decisions that affect European security.

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Gardner, who was US ambassador to the European Union from 2014-2017, added, "The EU's ambassador to the United States should of course be treated with the same deference as all other bilateral ambassadors. The fact that this administration apparently did not do so does not surprise me at all."

## DISDAIN FOR EU

Speaking on Thursday, Gardner, who was a Barack Obama appointee, said, "It is symptomatic of a general disdain in Washington for the European Union, an essential partner of the United States on a wide range of critical regional and global issues."

Gardner, who has been vocal in his criticism of Trump since leaving office, said, "That disdain was very evident in Secretary Pompeo's recent speech in Brussels -- one of the most insulting and misinformed speeches I have ever read. The speech represented a radical departure from 60 years of bipartisan US foreign policy."

"It would be nice if our government officials and diplomats actually bothered to learn something about how the EU works and the important work that it does," he added.

"That disdain was very evident in Secretary Pompeo's recent speech in Brussels - one of the most insulting and misinformed speeches I have ever read. The speech represented a radical departure from 60 years of bipartisan US foreign policy" **Former US ambassador to the EU Anthony Gardner**

The European Parliament was quick to react to the news, broken by a German newspaper, that the US had downgraded the diplomatic status of the EU's embassy in Washington.

The move, according to a source, means the EU ambassador has "lost his position on the Diplomatic List of Precedence and was moved down to permanently remain at the bottom of the list."

## 'INCREASINGLY HARMFUL' US APPROACH

MEPs who sit on the delegation for EU/US relations condemned the "surprising" move, adding that it

“is no way to treat partners, especially as neither the EU high representative nor the EU ambassador to the US was formally notified of this change, as would be expected under customary diplomatic practice.”

A letter by the delegation reads, “Such moves play into the hands of rival global powers and can only lead to greater fragmentation rather than much needed increased cooperation.”

“Together, we can address cross-border challenges coming from climate change, economic inequality, digitalisation and global terrorism. Yet in order to do so, we need to strengthen and not undermine each other.”

MEPs said that Parliament is “concerned” about an “increasingly harmful” approach from the White House when it comes to Transatlantic relations.

The statement said, “When President Trump, Secretary of State Pompeo and the US Ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, speak about Europe, they lambast the EU as bureaucratic, make no secret of their preference to deal with individual member state governments bilaterally, and have praised populist and nationalist movements.”

The MEPs said they “look forward to working with you (the US) across the Atlantic” and hoped that “politicians in liberal democracies join forces” rather than being at war with each other.

According to the German media, the EU was told of the move at President George H. W. Bush’s funeral in December when EU ambassador David O’Sullivan’s name “was not called up in the usual chronological order from the longest-serving to the newest ambassador.”

Deutsche Welle newspaper said, “He was called up as the last person.”

O’Sullivan was Secretary General of the European Commission for five years. Prior to his appointment as EU ambassador to the US, he was the Chief Operating Officer of the European External Action Service, or EEAS, in Brussels.

He was also head of former European Commission President Romano Prodi’s cabinet (1999-2000).

The Irish-born official did not respond to a request from this website for a comment.

## About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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