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Trump Presidency and Transatlantic Relations

edited by
Jadwiga Kiwerska



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Instytut Zachodni

Series: „IZ Policy Papers” nr 20

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Poznań 2017 – wersja elektroniczna
Poznań 2017 – wersja drukowana

Publishing house: INSTYTUT ZACHODNI
61-854 Poznań, ul. Mostowa 27
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ISBN 978-83-61736-69-1

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CONCLUSIONS

- Despite the initial turbulence, the Obama administration relations with Europe can generally be described as favorable; the threats posed by Russia's expansive policies have been the main driver for strengthening military and political links between the US and its European allies; the two sides have also succeeded in developing a common position on climate change.
- Towards the end of his second term of office, President Obama showed complete appreciation for the European Union and support for its strengthening. He particularly valued the special role played by Chancellor Angela Merkel, whom the US treated as the leader of Europe.
- However, the Obama administration proved to be indecisive about the war in Syria, thus contributing to the emergence of new threats for both the US and the European Union, including those of terrorism from ISIS, the massive influx of migrants to Europe, and the strengthening of Russian influence in the Middle East.
- Trump's electoral victory distraught Europe, which was taken aback by his critical rhetoric on transatlantic cooperation, and in particular by his questioning of NATO's significance and his disdain for the European Union.
- Placatory statements by the new administration emphasizing the significance of NATO and the EU failed to assuage Europe's fears, which were actually compounded by the categorical approach to burden sharing and Trump's refusal to endorse the unconditional application of art. 5 of the Washington Treaty on collective defense.
- Relations with the European Union were rocked further by the protectionist leanings of the Trump administration and its rejection of the Paris climate agreement signed by Obama; such actions confirmed the continued relevance of Trump's campaign trail slogan "America First" portending a priority treatment of narrowly-defined US interests.
- Trump's transactional approach to economic relations called into question the WTO-rules-based liberal global trading system; the loss of America as an ally in building a liberal order in world trade poses a threat to the EU while opening up new expansion opportunities for China.

- The Trump presidency may be said to have shaken European politicians' confidence in Washington's commitment to strengthening bonds with Europe and extending preferential treatment to transatlantic collaboration; the new administration was therefore added to the list of the European Union's external challenges that endanger its unity.
- Prior experience with the Trump administration (fears of the US reducing its commitment to European security) triggered across Europe a wider debate on the EU's international role; efforts were also made to strengthen and give a new dynamic to the CSDP.
- Unlike his predecessor, the current US president appears not to recognize the role and importance of Germany; he is clearly treating Berlin as a hostile economic rival of the United States.
- However, despite Trump's disquieting election rhetoric, US-Russian relations did not considerably improve at the expense of European security during his first six months in office; this was due in part to concerns over the new administration's suspected links with the Kremlin.
- Despite many discrepancies in transatlantic relations, the US and Europe see eye to eye on a number of issues in which their security priorities are well aligned. Combatting terrorism is one such area of cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The Transatlantic Alliance, which tied Europe and the United States in political, military and economic terms, has for decades served as a centerpiece and a key factor defining the international order. The Alliance underpinned European security while serving as an indisputable pillar of America's power and role in the world. The Transatlantic Alliance was built on shared political, economic and social values, principles and standards. The bond that held the two sides together was originally cemented by the potential threat of Soviet aggression and, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, by common concern for Europe's security and international stability. Although US-European relations were not without snags that undermined the effectiveness of the transatlantic community, the awareness of the significance of this unprecedented (in contemporary history) alliance persisted on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit with varying strength.

The key question that arose following the election victory of Donald Trump (who even in his electoral campaign questioned the value of the Transatlantic Alliance, chopping away at its key pillar, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and downplayed the significance of European integration as achieved by the European Union), concerned the future of US-European relations. Would the opinion that NATO was "obsolete" and art. 5 of the Washington Treaty on collective defense did not necessarily have to apply unconditionally, remain pure electoral rhetoric or would it set a new course for the Trump administration's relations with Europe? Would the treatment of the European Union not as a big achievement of the Old World but as a hostile competitor of the United States define Trump's approach to the European integration process? Will Washington's prior commitments to Europe continue to be respected? Will the team of the new president turn out to be sufficiently competent and knowledgeable to offset the New York billionaire's unfamiliarity with international relations and his transactional approach?

These are the questions that were on the minds of the Europeans. Another unknown was the approach to the new Washington administration that the European allies of the United States would adopt? Could they convince President Trump about the significance of the Transatlantic Alliance and its main pillar: NATO? Would the new administration and Brussels be able to establish good mutually-beneficial relations? If Trump's election campaign rhetoric casts

a shadow on the behavior of the new administration, determining its direction and style, what should the European community do? And finally, what is the future of US-European relations?

The above questions stand at the core of the analysis presented in this material. The authors attempted to describe Trump's first six months in office and outline the key steps taken by the new administration towards Europe. Emphasis was placed on security and defense, associated primarily with NATO, as well as Russia and political and economic relations with the European Union. An additional topic was the fight against terrorism, which inevitably accompanies transatlantic relations.

The point of departure for the discussion was Barack Obama's presidency, whose achievements in the international arena were certainly short of outstanding, despite the unquestionable success the Obama administration achieved in relations with Europe. Obama not only strengthened NATO making it again an effective contributor to European security but also managed to align the positions of the United States and the European Union, not least on Russia and the Ukrainian conflict.

What, against this background, is the record of the first six months of the new administration? Is there continuity in any area? Have any fundamental changes been made? Where is the administration headed? All of these questions were tackled by the authors. Their analysis focused on two areas: the United States and specifically the actions taken by the new administration, and Europe, where a description and an assessment was provided regarding the reactions of European allies and their attempts to deal with the challenge which Trump's presidency appears to pose for Europe. However, each article in this collection has been written in an individual style that is characteristic of its author(s). Each is a self-standing paper written independently of the others. Such an approach inevitably resulted in thematic overlaps. Despite that, attempts were made to ensure that each article offers satisfying answers to the key questions.

JADWIGA KIWERSKA

Mid-Year Review of Trump Presidency

1. Obama – the impact of policies towards Europe

As he bid his final farewell to the presidential office in January 2017, Barack Obama left the world in a fairly poor condition. Although the outgoing president can hardly be blamed for any of the international problems and threats, he could not be absolved from such responsibility being a leader of the world's most powerful nation. On the other hand, on assuming his country's highest office in January 2009, he too inherited a range of challenges and unresolved conflicts from his predecessor, George W. Bush Jr. These included the global financial and economic crises, the unresolved war on terrorism, the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the failure to benefit in any way from the deployment of US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise of new global centers of power and ambition, tensions in relations with Russia, and finally, highly strained transatlantic relations.

The eight years of the Obama presidency failed to make the world a better place. One could in fact venture to say that the world was significantly worse off. While economies recovered from the global economic crisis, its consequences, and especially the spread of populism and globalization aversion could be seen across both America and Europe. The year 2015 marked the conclusion of an agreement with Iran, which obliged the Ayatollah regime – in return for the lifting of sanctions – to curb its nuclear ambitions. US troops pulled out of Iraq and partially from Afghanistan, although neither country could be described as stable. A mention is also in order of the restored diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana in 2014, and the Obama administration's joining of the fight against climate change and its signing in 2015 of the Paris climate agreement, in which close to 200 states committed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

However, during the same period, the world saw the emergence of new threats and challenges which the Obama administration was too ineffective, too inactive or perhaps too helpless to resolve. Rather than democracy and

peace, the Arab Spring brought chaos and radical rule. Moreover, the Middle East witnessed the emergence of the most dangerous embodiment of terrorism: ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). Since 2011, Syria was swept by a war that had tragic and perilous consequences, its impact spreading as far as Europe. The nuclear threat was growing, this time through the fault of North Korea, while China became a stronger source of economic and political pressures. Last but not least, Russia revealed the full extent of its neo-imperial aspirations, as dramatically experienced by Ukraine in the early 2014.

There was nevertheless one issue – transatlantic relations – on which President Obama ended his eight years in office on a positive note. What made his success all the more impressive was the fact that he inherited a hugely devastated transatlantic system from the Bush “era”. Its disintegration was caused, *inter alia*, by the policies of the Republican president who put arrogance and muscle-flexing before diplomacy and soft power. One should nevertheless admit that Europe too was to blame for growing tensions between itself and the United States. As integration gave Europe a renewed sense of strength, it became more assertive towards the American superpower. Citizens of Europe increasingly disapproved of President Bush, which consequently resulted in a declining popularity of the United States. Nevertheless, it was America, the strongest member of the Transatlantic Alliance, that was the most responsible for its weakening. As a result of these developments, the United States lost a great deal of influence and prestige in the international arena with the sensibility of preserving the transatlantic community called into question.

As it changed the tone and style of its diplomacy, focusing on dialogue, negotiations and commitment to cooperation and greater reliance on soft power, the Obama administration was relatively quick to improve its relations with the rest of the world. It adopted a more pragmatic approach and consulted more of its moves with its partners while abandoning ideologized politics and authoritarian decision-making. In this way, President Obama managed to restore America’s positive image.

Improvements were seen also in relations with European countries restoring the hope that the Transatlantic Alliance would once again be the most effective and credible political defense alliance of our time. After a good start, however, certain developments weakened the cooperation between America and Europe. Having resorted to a new style of politics, based mainly on dialogue and understanding, the Obama administration expected Europe to provide it with more support and engagement in resolving global problems. “We want strong allies. We are not looking to be patrons of Europe. We are looking to be

partners of Europe”, said Obama during his first presidential visit to Europe in April 2009¹.

As it quickly turned out, Europe was poorly prepared to assume more responsibility for global events. The US administration was particularly disappointed with the European Union, a structure which appeared to aspire to the role of a key player in the international arena, as was clearly spelled out in the Lisbon Treaty. As it turned out, the EU displayed extreme restraint in responding to the suggestions of the US President, as if rejecting his offer of “partnership in leadership”. Therefore, discouraged by Europe’s inaction and the EU’s paralysis, the Obama administration turned to other players, choosing to focus on alternative geographical areas, a spectacular example of which was its famous “pivot to the Pacific Rim”².

Obama’s waning interest in Europe resulted from the simple fact that its security did not seem to be particularly at risk from the US perspective. President Obama saw Europe mainly in the context of other problems considered to be a real challenge in terms of American interests and priorities. Some of the top concerns included China, which posed a challenge for the US both economically and politically. Meanwhile Europe, no longer a major security obligation of the United States, was either subjugated to other goals of American foreign policy or relegated into the background.

The brunt of these changes was felt by the states of Central and Eastern Europe which paid dearly for a “reset” in Washington’s relations with Moscow. Improvements in relations with Russia became a focal point for the Obama administration since it assumed power in the White House. The reset was justified by a number of issues whose resolution without Russia’s involvement appeared to be daunting if not impossible. These included bringing the disarmament talks (START) to a close and securing routes across the post-Soviet airspace to supply the allied forces deployed in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the policy of resetting relations with Russia led to the abandonment in September 2009 of the deployment of US missile-defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic, in the wake of vehement protests from Moscow. The Obama administration chose to make relations with Russia its priority, relegating the anxieties of Central and Eastern Europe to the back burner.

All this changed diametrically in the aftermath of the Ukrainian events. By having its armed forces invade Crimea in the late February and early March

¹ Cited in: M. E. O’Hanlon, *Obama’s Solid First Year on Foreign Policy*, www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0101_obama_foreign_policy_ohanlon.aspx

² M. S. Indyk, K. G. Lieberthal, M. E. O’Hanlon, *Bending History. Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 2014, pp. 56-59.

2014 and then attempting to take over Ukraine's eastern regions, neo-imperial Russia became a threat to European security. The Obama administration realized that Europe's stability could not be taken for granted and that the sense of security in Europe may have been both illusory and fleeting. Russia has again become a threat to the established order on the European continent and a challenge to the global role of the United States. It became advisable for Washington to keep Europe in focus and actually make it one of its key if not the topmost security concerns. Only by acting jointly can America and its European allies ever effectively deal with Russia.

The Obama administration had every right to be disillusioned with the European Union's feet-dragging on the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia. While Washington adopted political and economic restrictions against Moscow nearly immediately upon its invasion of Crimea, certain EU member states put dialogue with Russia ahead of "hasty sanctions", which could spoil their economic relations with the Euro-Asian superpower on which they heavily relied for fossil fuels. It was for those reasons, as the US saw it, the Ukrainian conflict exposed the EU's weaknesses on both the political and economic fronts. The European community turned out to be largely incoherent and excessively inert.

It was not until the downing of a Malaysia Airlines plane over eastern Ukraine by Russian-backed separatists in July 2014 causing the death of 298 passengers, including the citizens of many European states, that Europe mobilized for action. In the late July 2014, the EU imposed sanctions on Russia (which were then renewed on several occasions and retained to the present day) targeted mainly at key sectors of the Russian economy and undoubtedly painful to Russia. This response by the EU met Washington's expectations – the action was taken despite the fact that Russia's retorsions hurt Europe more than the USA. Both the US and its European allies appeared to view Russia as a state that has lost its rationality and constructive spirit. Both considered Vladimir Putin's regime is a threat that they needed to contain jointly. Well-thought-out actions taken in unison by the US and Europe turned out to be the most effective way to handle Moscow.

There was also another aspect to the problem. The threat of Russia's expansion provided an impulse to strengthen military and political ties between the United States and its European allies, which had been weakened severely, in part as a result of the American "pivot to the Pacific". There is no exaggeration in saying that Putin's actions against Ukraine and his new aggressive style made European security a central challenge for the Obama administration. As

a consequence, the world witnessed a “pivot to Europe” of sorts. Washington’s declarations to strengthen and expand the US military presence in Europe came almost immediately after the Ukrainian conflict erupted. It was quite obvious that by violating established standards and setting out on an undisclosed course of action, Russia became dangerous for its immediate and remote neighbors and, as such, for all of Europe. If the United States were to maintain its credibility and retain the trust of its allies while demonstrating its determination and effectiveness against Russia, it had to reassert its security commitments to Europe. This applied especially to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which, due to their geographical locations and historic experience, felt the most threatened by Putin’s imperial policies.

This very point was on the agendas of the US President’s visit to Poland on the 25th anniversary of Freedom Day, in June 2014, and of Obama’s visit to Tallinn three months later. On both occasions, Obama offered assurances of US assistance and commitment to protecting the region’s security. “I’ve come to Warsaw (...), on behalf of the United States, on behalf of the NATO Alliance, to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Poland’s security”, said the US President to a crowd gathered in Warsaw’s Castle Square³. In the Estonian capital, he assured that “the defense of Tallinn and Riga and Vilnius is just as important as the defense of Berlin and Paris and London”⁴. With these words, he reasserted his obligation to honor art. 5 of the Washington Treaty, which says that if any member state is attacked, all of the others will automatically come to its defense (“one for all and all for one”).

The statements were followed with specific actions aimed primarily at strengthening NATO’s eastern flank. Vital decisions were made during the NATO summit in Newport, Wales in the early September 2014. Noticing a real threat, the heads of the member states resolved to create the so-called NATO spearhead, i.e. a very high readiness joint task force (VJTF) comprised of approximately 5,000 troops and prepared to deploy rapidly to respond to potential challenges and threats within 48 hours. They also found it necessary to strengthen the defense capabilities on the eastern flank of NATO, even by going as far as the deployment of NATO troops and command structures in the region. The town of Szczecin was to become the main logistic hub of the

³ *Remarks by President Obama at 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day – Warsaw, Poland*, April 6, 2014, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/04/remarks-president-obama-25th-anniversary-freedom-day-warsaw-poland

⁴ *Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia*, September 3, 2014, White House, Office of the Press Secretary, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia

“spearhead”. US troops would also maintain an at least rotational presence in the region. Military maneuvers would be stepped up in the states of the Central and Eastern part of the Alliance⁵. These fundamental decisions turned NATO again into an effective and the most crucial pillar of transatlantic cooperation, deterring potential adversaries. In this allied mobilization, the United States unquestionably played the role of an initiator and the key supplier.

The trend to strengthen NATO was reflected in the wording of the new American National Security Strategy published in February 2015. The document stressed the roles of Europe and NATO as the key allies of the US in maintaining security. The Strategy’s authors assured that the defense guarantees given by the United States to Europe within the framework of NATO were unwavering. However, the US clearly expressed its expectation to see the other member states of the Alliance make contributions to ensure that NATO would be stronger and more cohesive⁶. Such greater mobilization and allied solidarity were demonstrated by action.

In evidence of that, NATO held another summit in July 2016 in Warsaw. This was another stage of a massive effort to strengthen the Alliance’s defense capabilities and, most of all, demonstrate the United States’ commitment to Europe. This care for Europe’s security set the 2017 defense budget of the US at US\$ 3.4 billion, intended to increase its military capabilities in Europe. The amount was four times greater than the spending in 2016. However, the truly fundamental decision was to maintain a continuous presence of American battle groups made up of an armored brigade in six Central and Eastern European states, including Poland. Any groups completing their exercises would be immediately replaced, thus ensuring a permanent rotational presence of a large number of troops (in excess of 4,000). The plan included fitting the brigade with tanks, armored vehicles and other modern equipment. Financing for the deployment would come from the aforesaid US\$ 3.4 billion budget of the United States. Among other decisions, four multinational battalions were to be placed in the Baltic states and Poland, at least one of which would be under US command. This meant more equipment and logistic and military experience on NATO’s eastern flank. And, first and foremost, a greater US military presence in this part of Europe.

⁵ Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council Wales, September 5, 2014, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm

⁶ National Security Strategy, February 2015, www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf; see also W. Lorenz, M. A. Piotrowski, *Miejsce Europy i NATO w nowej strategii bezpieczeństwa USA*, Biuletyn PISM, No. 31, March 24, 2015.

The problem, as seen by the United States, lied in burden sharing among NATO members. The US had raised it repeatedly in the past (as in 2011, when the US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, famously rebuked other NATO members). Notably, the US defense spending in 2016 (which was close to US\$ 600 billion) amounted to an amazing 70% of the combined value of the defense budgets of all NATO member states (which total approximately US\$ 900 billion). While the member states committed – during the Newport summit – to increase their defense spending to at least 2% of GDP by 2024, only five of them delivered on that commitment before the Warsaw summit (the United Kingdom, Poland, Greece and Estonia, whereas the USA spent more than 3% of GDP). Meanwhile, Germany, which is the European Union’s strongest economy, spent a meager 1.19% of GDP, with defense spending cuts observed in Italy, Bulgaria and Croatia. All this brought burden sharing to the Warsaw summit’s agenda. It was therefore notable that on declaring its readiness to achieve 2% of GDP relatively soon, Chancellor Angela Merkel additionally appealed to all other NATO member states to fulfill this duty. The declarations they made were nevertheless empty, unsupported by any clearly-defined timelines. Thus, the problem remained unresolved.

All this notwithstanding, in the face of a new aggressive style seen from Russia and the resulting events in Ukraine, the Transatlantic Alliance achieved long unseen levels of consolidation and strength. Being the only armed force capable of tackling Russia, the transatlantic community appeared to have recovered its *raison d’être*. This was due largely to the fact that America returned to its role as the leader of Europe. President Putin’s aggressive policies sparked US politicians to action that led to the country’s “pivot to Europe”. Our continent again became a key security concern for the United States. In declaring stronger-than-ever willingness to provide such security, President Obama strengthened the transatlantic community.

Obama changed his approach to the European Union, which his administration used to see as incoherent and indecisive, pointing to divisions among its member states as an impediment or barrier to quick decision-making. However, despite certain delays and resistance, the European community got its act together and showed allied solidarity in the face of Putin’s imperial policy, demonstrating its potential to play an important role internationally. While earlier, at the start of his term in the White House, President Obama showed skepticism and limited interest with respect to the EU, even refusing in 2010 to take part in a US-EU summit and, if at all, limiting himself to bilateral relations with the main European capitals, he became its great advocate towards the end

of his presidency. Obama saw the EU as America's most crucial partner. He was unafraid by its federalization and further integration of which he was actually a supporter. He made it his priority to negotiate the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which he nevertheless failed to finalize. The outcome was rather far from those intended – a wave of protests swept across Europe as reluctance grew towards the American “dictate” and imposition of US agricultural product standards on Europeans.

At the end of his second term, President Obama demonstrated his full support for the European Union in an extraordinary and nearly historic manner. During his visit to Europe in April 2016, he first went to the United Kingdom where he attempted to influence the Brexit referendum campaign, pleading to the British to remain in the European Union. He then traveled to Germany in which he sent a crucial message about Europe, transatlantic relations, shared values and dangerous challenges. Having acknowledged that the EU was undergoing a very severe crisis, Obama commenced his Hanover speech by saying: “So I’ve come here today to the heart of Europe, to say that the United States, and the entire world, needs a strong and prosperous and democratic and united Europe”. It is hard to deny that President Obama has never showed such dedication of the EU, its problems and ways to solve them. At least not so forcibly. “Perhaps you need an outsider, somebody who is not European, to remind you of the magnitude of what you have achieved from the ruins of the Second World War”, stressed the US leader⁷.

President Obama spoke at a moment that was crucial and challenging for the European Union, at time of skepticism regarding the sensibility of the European project, its present structure and institutions. Since the only life that many EU residents knew was one in the community, it was hard for them to imagine the fatal aftermath of Europe's disintegration. In his address, the US President recalled the devastating consequences of rivalry, intolerance and extreme nationalism which consumed Europe in the last century. He pleaded for an integration effort that would include various ethnic and religious groups, including Muslims. He warned of mutual separation (“Don’t turn inward”), growing populism and doubt stressing that “a strong and united Europe is a necessity for the world” and that without a strongly united European Union, its American partner would not resolve global problems⁸.

⁷ Cited in: P. W i n t o u r, *Barack Obama says world needs a united Europe*, “The Guardian” April 25, 2016.

⁸ *Ibid.*

This very powerful appeal for a strong and integrated Europe, resounding particularly strongly as it was spoken by a US President who still enjoyed popularity on the European continent, was nevertheless Obama's farewell bids. And this, to our disappointment, undermined the strength of his message. Nevertheless, by engaging for Europe and its concerns at a time so critical for the Old World, President Obama stood "on the right side of history".

There was yet another aspect of Obama's visit to Germany, one that defined the end of his presidency. It was not without a good reason that he chose Germany as the country from which to appeal to Europe. Despite prior friction in US-German relations, caused e.g. by the phone-tapping scandal, when it turned out that the world leaders surveilled by American intelligence agencies included Angela Merkel, as well as Washington's disappointment with Berlin's relative reluctance to engage militarily in NATO operations, e.g. in Libya and Syria, it was Germany that became the main European partner for the Obama administration. Chancellor Merkel brought hopes of effectively overcoming the challenges faced by the European Union, i.e. initially the economic and subsequently the refugee crisis.

There is no exaggeration in the claim that Obama considered the head of the German government to be Europe's most important leader. He was also certain that he could trust her fully. He declared with absolute conviction: "You have been a trusted partner throughout my entire presidency". And even though one cannot overlook the courtesy nature of Obama's visit to Germany (it appeared at the time that it would be the last and therefore farewell visit of the president nearing an end of his second term), it also had specific significance for both leaders. There could hardly be more appreciation for the head of the German government, which at the time was the target of strong social and political condemnation from Germany itself as well as from certain other European capitals, than Obama's recognition that by opening Germany to an unprecedented wave of migrants, Merkel ended up "on the right side of history"⁹.

That Obama saw Merkel is the real leader of Europe, and a true mover and shaker, was confirmed during his last visit to Germany in mid-November 2016. On the occasion, this otherwise emotionally guarded president used every opportunity to complement Chancellor Merkel and placed almost all responsibility for upholding the values and principles of the western world on her shoulders. He repeated his words from a few months ago that she was his best partner, a wonderful leader and a person of great morality. "If I were

⁹ Cited in: A. S m a l e, M. D. S h e a r, *Obama Joins Angela Merkel in Pushing Trade Deal to a Wary Germany*, "The New York Times" April 24, 2016.

German and I had a vote, I'd support her", he said during a press conference¹⁰. In this extraordinary way, Obama celebrated the special US-German partnership forged and strengthened during his presidency.

The question that remained was whether such accomplishments in US-German and transatlantic relations showing a great deal of mobilization and allied solidarity amidst the conviction that the only way to be effective was by working together, could be maintained in the foreseeable future. Would the change of White House administration threaten the durability and resilience of America's relations with Europe? What place in the optics of the new president would be taken by Europe and the European Union? What about NATO and the continued commitment of the US to protecting Europe? And what to do with Russia, on which the position of Washington and major European countries in response to events in Ukraine appeared to be well aligned? Will Obama's successor in the White House live up to the task and strengthen the Transatlantic Alliance recognizing it as a vital factor for international order?

2. Presidential candidate Trump – a new style in European relations

The election victory in November 2016 of the eccentric New York billionaire Donald Trump, a man with no experience in holding public offices and never before engaged in the international arena, added to the urgency of questions about the future of the Transatlantic Alliance. Widespread misgivings and concerns resulted from the behaviors and statements of the Republican candidate, whose stances and style appeared to deviate widely from any approaches and principles seen previously in the internal as well as external politics of the United States. Trump's views on the international situation embodied a striking naiveté. In a manner characteristic of dilettantes, he spoke out on foreign policies and affairs finding simple solutions to the most challenging international problems, clearly impressing many Americans all the while adding to the anxiety of foreign observers. Trump continued to come up with controversial ideas that could threaten America's position in the world and jeopardize its foreign relations.

Even his election campaign slogan "America First", treated as the main indicator of the new foreign policy, sounded ominously as it alluded to the

¹⁰ Cited in: B. T. Wieliński, *Obama stawia na Merkel*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" November 18, 2016; see also C. Stelzenmüller, *Is Angela Merkel the leader of the free world now? Not quite*, "The Washington Post" November 17, 2016.

slogan used by US isolationists from the 1920s and 1930s. Then and now, these words mean that American interest will always come first. Expectedly, all this could significantly affect the international situation. A decision of the United States, a superpower of unprecedented potential, to stay away from international problems and foreign affairs only because they are not linked directly to the country's vital and narrowly-defined interests, would go against the grain of maintaining order and stability in the world and would make it effectively impede the resolution of a number of issues. Thus, if embraced in its original isolationist meaning, the slogan "America First" would be dangerous for the world and in particular for Europe.

All the more so that Trump referred to European relations in an unusual and downright perilous manner, questioning the significance of the Transatlantic Alliance, including its main pillar, i.e. the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In doing so, Trump focused on undermining art. 5 of the Washington Treaty, which is the core of NATO. In one of his statements, Trump noted that in the event of a Russian attack on any of the Baltic states, one has to think about whether or not the US should come to its rescue¹¹. No significant US politicians, and especially not any US president or any significant presidential candidate, has ever gone as far as to question this axiom. Not until Trump. This Republican presidential candidate called into question the very existence of the Atlantic Alliance, dismissing it as "obsolete" and suggesting that perhaps an alternative structure needed to be put in its place. He cited an old argument used in the US in the early 1990s, which is that NATO was there to ensure protection against the Soviet Union, which no longer exists. He blatantly ignored the significance of this most powerful political and military community for standing up to the neo-imperial policies of Putin. He undermined the usefulness of the Alliance by arguing it was not focused on combatting terrorism, forgetting, for instance, more than a thousand NATO troops that perished in Afghanistan.

To justify his controversial opinion on the Atlantic Alliance, the Republican candidate found a purely populist argument that readily appealed to the American taxpayer. He made a clear stance on the unequal sharing of financial burdens among the allies within their common security policy. The issue was far from new, as it had been raised by the Obama administration, and remained unresolved despite the Newport agreement under which all of the member states committed to bring their defense spending to at least 2% of GDP by 2024. The novelty in Trump's approach was to be the first US politician to propose such far-reaching solutions. "The countries we are defending

¹¹ Cited in: "The New York Times" July 21, 2016.

must pay for the cost of this defense – and if not, the US must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves”, announced the New York billionaire, contradicting art. 5 of the Washington Treaty which called for unconditional solidarity to be shown in the event that any member states is attacked¹². Such statements could terrify the European partners, as negating the core of NATO put a question mark over its future.

As difficult as it is to deny that the majority of the European member states were less than generous in paying for their own security, it is nevertheless clear that the questioning of the American security obligations for what one might call mercantile reasons, delivered a powerful blow to the Atlantic Alliance. Trump appeared not to accept or understand that the enormous global interests and commitments of the United States had to involve a greater cost. Moreover, it is only the US that has the capabilities that are beyond the grasp of the majority of its European allies. Trump also forgot that NATO was a major factor behind the influence and role of the United States in the international arena. World leadership comes with a price and requires substantial spending.

By taking a transactional approach to the US obligations towards Europe, i.e. by focusing exclusively on the bottom-line, Trump missed the point of why the transatlantic community of values and principles existed in the first place. He focused on securing specific US interests which, as noted by commentators, was a throwback to the 19th-century world order¹³. This was all the more dangerous considering that in the 2010s, both Europe and the world went through an exceptionally difficult time as the existing international order was threatened, its stability was found to be more tenuous than was previously expected, and severe challenges arose which required a responsible and effective response, not only to achieve narrowly-defined aims. The best way to address such challenges would be for the western world, i.e. the world of shared values, to join forces and work together.

An embodiment of such a community on the Old Continent was the European Union, which Obama came to appreciate and support tremendously towards the end of his White House term. As a matter of fact, it was nearly a rule for US presidents to treat the EU not only as an epitome of shared values, faith in democracy and human rights but also as a conflict-assuaging factor and a key trading partner. For that reason, it was hard to overestimate the role the US played as a driver of Western Europe's integration, which is why, for

¹² Trump's speech in The Center for National Interest (April 27, 2016), <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-foreign-policy-15960>

¹³ See Th. Wright, *Trump takes allies back to 19th century global order*, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/03/21/trump-takes-allies-back-to-19th-century-global-order/

the most part, Washington has given the European project due recognition in the successive decades. Trump, however, was highly dismissive of the European project, seeing the EU as an economic competitor of the United States, especially in trade. In the view of the Republican candidate, who presented himself as anti-establishment and a critic of elites of all kinds, the European project stood for the very world he opposed, i.e. one of “rotten liberalism” and annoying political correctness.

Almost at the very time that Obama visited the United Kingdom in April 2016 to persuade its citizens to remain in the EU, and to deliver his special message to Europe from Germany, pleading for a continued integration effort, Trump went to the UK to meet with the backers of Brexit and show them his full support. After the British decided to leave the EU in June 2016, he did not conceal his satisfaction calling the move “a great thing”. Trump also expressed hopes that Brexit would be followed by four further exists and that the European project would cease to exist. In this way, he fit perfectly into the anti-European trends escalating with varying strength in different states of the Old World.

Since, being a staunch supporter of trade protectionism, Trump announced he would reject or renegotiate the international trade agreements previously concluded by Washington (such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement of February 2016, which he called “a potential disaster for our country”), it was reasonable to expect that the TTIP agreement negotiated with the EU would have little chance of being concluded during his term of office. Since the TTIP was not signed under Obama, it would be considerably less likely to be concluded on the watch of Trump, a declared opponent of free trade agreements, which – in his view – moved production to other parts of the world potentially depriving the United States of jobs.

There seemed to be a good reason to suspect that, by perceiving Europe to be more of a rival than an ally, at the time he won the election, the Republican candidate would seek to weaken the European Union and, for instance, apply the typical Putin policy of differentiating and separating individual states of the European community and dealing with them individually by means of various negotiation tactics. It is a known fact that it is easier for an entrepreneur to do business with a partner that has previously been weakened and depreciated. Such a relatively simple strategy appeared to sit well with the crude style and behavior of the New York businessman. The consequences of such a policy not only for the European project but also, and especially so, for the Atlantic Alliance, would be unquestionable. It would tear Europe apart and break the collaboration between itself and America.

Equally menacing for many European allies could be the presidential candidate's speculations on Russia and US-Russian relations. In addition to opinions that denigrated NATO and could only be seen as good news for Moscow, it was also striking that Trump himself as well as some members of his campaign staff and aides spoke very favorably of Putin. In the case of Trump, this was the result of a fascination of sorts with the host of the Kremlin, his powerful leadership, effectiveness and overall style in which the end always justified the means. Being able to come to terms and cut deals with such an interlocutor would tickle the exotic billionaire's ego providing him with proof of his excellent skills. As for Trump's associates, their affinity with Russia stemmed most likely from their suspicious links with that country, some of which were laid bare even during the campaign.

At any rate, Trump proclaimed he would make deals with Russia to resolve international problems and tackle international challenges together. This would not be all that surprising as, after all, the Obama administration and, before it, the Bill Clinton and even G. George W. Bush administrations, also attempted to reset relations with Moscow at the outset of their respective terms. This time around, however, after a dramatic experience with the aggressive policies of Putin showing, in no uncertain terms, that Russia posed a serious threat, such declarations were very upsetting. One could easily see who would pay the price of such collaboration. Ukraine, the continuing sanctions against Russia, the Syrian issue, the eastern flank of NATO, and even European unity and transatlantic cooperation could become bargaining chips in the relations of the internationally debuting Trump team with the experienced and cunning Kremlin leader. The western community of values, glaringly dismissed by the Republican candidate, and treated with outright hostility by Putin, would become a commodity which Trump could exchange for an ego boost.

Under such circumstances, one should not be surprised by the reluctance that the Republican candidate expressed towards Germany, which strongly stood by an order based on common values. Although Trump never concealed his Bavarian roots, the references to Germany and to Angela Merkel herself made in his electoral campaign were hardly friendly if not critical. In a dramatic departure from Obama's assessment, Trump viewed the stance of the head of the German government on refugees as a "tragic mistake". In a post election victory interview, e.g. for the German daily newspaper *Bild*, he spoke of her humanitarian gesture as a disaster¹⁴. On another occasion, he noted he

¹⁴ An interview given also to "The Times" and "The Washington Post" January 15, 2017: M. Gove, *Donald Trump interview: Brexit will be a great thing*, "The Times" January 15, 2017, www.the-times.co.uk/article/donald-trump-interview-brexit-britain-trade-deal-europe-queen-5m0bc2tns

trusted her as much as he did Putin. To put a leader of an allied state and an aspiring imperialist into the same bag was at least unbecoming and certainly contrary to the political line set by President Obama.

Further departures from Washington's established policy came after Trump's election victory with the new President calling the European Union "an instrument of German domination" created to effectively compete as a trading block with the United States. A foray on this most powerful of EU countries and a skillful escalation of anti-German sentiments in Europe fit into Trump's overall approach to the European project and an attempt to weaken the European Union's unity.

The approach was presented as an expression of "concern" for US economic interests. A very influential message sent during Trump's electoral campaign was that a number of countries sold more goods to America than they bought from it. Threats were made to enter such trading nations on the black list of "unfair trading partners". Germany, whose economy is highly dependent on exports – as well as China – could well top the list. Equally serious accusations were made against Germany in connection with its meager defense spending. Without a doubt, a defense budget of under 1.2% of GDP was substantially lower than what Europe's biggest economy could afford. However, Angela Merkel had already committed to increase Germany's spending. And, notably, 1.2% of the German GDP constituted a whopping US\$ 41 billion contributed to defense in 2016. While such statements certainly harmed US-German relations, which until recently were referred to as "a partnership in leadership", they undoubtedly resonated well with US voters.

With Trump's election victory on November 7, 2016, this scenario, which bode ill for both US-German relations and the entire transatlantic community, became quite realistic.

3. President Trump's approach to Europe

a) "All the president's men"

The first six months in office should not normally be used to assess any new president or his team. However, in the case of the Trump administration, a tentative description could be provided of his style and domestic priorities. One could also appraise the performance of the new president's team in the international arena and identify the campaign trail promises of the Republican candidate that upset Europe and were actually put into practice. One could also

define the areas that saw continuity and those that constituted a major departure from the previous line. Other questions concerned the direction that the new team would be taking and the prospects for transatlantic relations after Trump's first few months in office in the White House.

Without a doubt, the 45th President of the United States was not off to an easy start. His problem was not as much the lack of experience in international affairs, as that would place him in the company of a large number of US presidents (such as Harry Truman, Ronald Reagan as well as Bill Clinton and George W. Bush Jr.). In time, all of them learned the ropes, and some even went down in history as outstanding effective architects of American foreign policy. The case of the New York billionaire was special for other reasons. Trump's incredibly controversial personality, his disquieting campaign trail slogans and, most of all, his fickleness, made the victory of the Republican candidate very upsetting. Especially in view of the massive foreign-policy-related powers vested in the US president in the American system. The president makes practically all decisions and effectively determines all foreign strategy. The enormous problems faced by the new US President are another reason why the world and Europe could use a leader capable of quickly responding to challenges rather than one who was still to begin to learn about the world and its troubles.

Even the team put together by the new president met with criticism from experts concerned with the direction the US foreign policy was taking. One of the most controversial of its high-ranking officials was retired general Michael Flynn. Gen. Flynn was put in charge of the National Security Council (NSC), an institution central for formulating and coordinating the foreign and security policies of the United States. Gen. Flynn's role had previously been held by such personalities as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzeziński, Samuel Berger and Condoleezza Rice. From the very outset, there was talk of Flynn's suspicious ties with the Russian government, adding more fuel to the fears caused by Trump's previous praise of Putin and Russia, and the suspicions of Russia's meddling in the US electoral process in favor of the Republican candidate. All this justified the expectation that Moscow would become the top partner of the new administration.

It also became known that Trump's closest advisor and one having a great deal of influence on the new president, would be Stephen Bannon, appointed to serve as White House Chief Strategist and a permanent member of the NSC, which further strengthened his role by the side of the president. Known for his highly conservative and even chauvinistic views, Bannon referred to the European Union as a "fallen institution" and stressed that the Trump

administration is more inclined to strengthen bilateral relations with individual European states, which certainly would not help maintain unity across the European community. Equally disquieting were the opinions that the new ambassador of the United States to the European Union would be Theodore Malloch, who at one time compared the Brussels-based structure to the Soviet Union, prophesied the collapse of the eurozone and, similarly to Trump, rooted for Brexit. In view of such a *dossier*, no one was surprised to see the European Parliament voice its opposition to the proposed candidature. For a little while, Malloch was considered as a possible US ambassador to Brussels, after which Washington withdrew his candidature.

Reservations were also justified regarding the nomination of Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State. Observers wondered how a businessman, the CEO of ExxonMobil, the world's largest oil and gas corporation, would fare in such an office. Tillerson became the first Secretary of State in at least a century with no prior diplomatic, political or military experience. The big question was whether his business links with the Russian industry and political circles would affect US policy choices. Tillerson knew Putin personally and received the Order of Friendship from the Russian president. He was also close to Igor Sechin, Executive Chairman of the oil company Rosneft. During Senate nomination hearings, Tillerson was reminded about his opposition to sanctions against Russia, which were contrary to the interests of his corporation as, among other things, ExxonMobil did prospecting work in the Russian Arctic. Concerns grew even after, following Tillerson's nomination as Secretary of State, numerous highly experienced State Department officials resigned leaving many of the key jobs vacant for a prolonged period.

Against this lineup, the new Secretary of Defense Gen. James Mattis, shined brightly. Gen. Mattis was considered to be an outstanding military commander as well as a highly competent and experienced individual with well-defined views on Russia and the threats posed by its policies. He was widely valued for his common sense which, considering the unpredictability of the president himself as well as the incompetence of many other members of his administration, was a great asset all in itself. Note that contrary to other prospective members of the Trump administration, Gen. Mattis was confirmed by the Senate quickly and without problems, with support coming also from the senators of the opposition Democratic Party.

Asked about Russia during Capitol Hill hearings, the future head of the Pentagon replied that, being a realist, he was in favor of dialogue with that country. He noted also that there were fewer and fewer areas of cooperation and ever

more issues on which the US was forced to oppose Moscow. With respect to Trump's controversial statements on NATO, Gen. Mattis argued that "Putin is attempting to break the North Atlantic Alliance, the most successful military alliance in modern world history. If we did not have NATO today, we would need to create it". He also expressed his support for a permanent US military presence in the Baltic nations¹⁵. When listening to such words, one could only get the impression that his vision of foreign policy was diametrically opposed to that championed by Trump. Thus Mattis inspired hope.

Less than a month after his nomination, Gen. Flynn resigned from his position, forced to do so by the disclosure of his peculiar links with Moscow. Soon afterwards, Bannon was removed from the National Security Council (while retaining his job as White House Chief Strategist¹⁶). Although welcomed with relief by many commentators, this nearly unprecedented situation put into question Trump's motivations for nominating such controversial figures to key positions. Along with Trump's choice of his son-in-law Jared Kushner to become one of his closest domestic and foreign policy advisors, a job for which he did not have any clear qualifications, showed only that the new president put family ties and loyalty of the nominees for key positions before actual competence.

On the other hand, the replacement of Flynn as head of the NSC with Gen. Herbert McMaster, an experienced military man (who, *inter alia*, was high commander in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan), a person known for his broad intellectual horizons (with a Ph.D. in US History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and for an exceptional ability to think strategically, appeared to be one of the new president's best choices. The selection seemingly assuaged concerns over Trump's ability to select members of his administration. The appropriate question was whether the people closest to President Trump would have decisive influence on shaping his foreign policy and what kind of an advisory staff they would form.

b) Security issues

Aware of the fact that electoral campaigns follow their own rules, and that campaign trail rhetoric is not always put into action, Europe eagerly awaited actual actions by the new presidential team. Considering the circumstances and Trump's personality, anxieties ran high. The first opportunity for the new US administration to publically present their intentions at greater lengths was

¹⁵ J. Mattis hearing in the Senate (January 12, 2017), www.npr.org/2017/01/12/509542750/senate-committee-questions-gen-james-mattis-in-defense-confirmation-hearing

¹⁶ S. Bannon departed the White House August 18, 2017.

the reputable Munich Security Conference held every February in the capital of the Bavaria region. On February 17-18, 2017, the MSC saw presentations by prominent officials of the new administration.

Vice-President Michael Pence, whose powers were very limited, strived to retain credibility as he assured “on behalf of President Trump” that the United States strongly supported NATO and would “be unwavering in their commitments to the transatlantic alliance”¹⁷. Similar assurances came from Secretary of Defense Gen. Mattis, who – three days earlier – met in Brussels with heads of defense of the NATO member states and spoke of the “fundamental” significance of the Atlantic Alliance and the enduring quality of American commitments to Europe. The new head of the Pentagon reiterated his declarations in Munich by saying: “The transatlantic bond remains our strongest bulwark against instability and violence. NATO exists to protect our way of life”¹⁸.

The Munich Conference saw also pledges by the US to continue strengthening the eastern flank of NATO. In fact, a deployment of US forces commenced towards the end of the Obama presidency continued in January 2017 with 3,500 troops of a US armored brigade arriving in Poland. The plan for June 2017 was to complete the deployment of 4,500 NATO troops in Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Washington did not at any time suggest that the new administration intended to abandon the prior agreements with its allies.

However, there was one particular reason why not even all of the speeches made by Trump’s high-ranking team members in Munich could dispel Europe’s doubts regarding the new administration. It was clear that all final decisions would still be made by President Trump, whose competencies and especially unpredictability were a great cause for concern. The problem was noted in Munich by America’s unquestioned authority on international affairs, Republican Senator John McCain, who recalled that: “The president (...) makes statements and on other occasions contradicts himself”¹⁹.

Such distrust of Trump’s declarations had to be applied even to his state of the union address delivered in Congress on February 28, 2017, in which he reaffirmed the United States’ strong commitment to NATO (“We strongly support NATO”). Describing NATO as “an alliance forged through the bonds

¹⁷ Cited in: B. J o n e s, *Team Trump meets Europe*, February 19, 2017, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/02/19/team-trump-meets-europe/

¹⁸ J. Mattis speech in Munich, February 17, 2017, www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/1087838/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-the-munich-security-conference-in-munich-germany/

¹⁹ Cited in: S. E r l a n g e r, *A Worried Europe Finds Scant Reassurance on Trump’s Plans*, “The New York Times” February 19, 2017; see also A. B l a k e, *John McCain just systematically dismantled Donald Trump’s entire worldview*, “The Washington Post” February 17, 2017.

of two World Wars that dethroned fascism, and a Cold War that defeated communism”, Trump struck a note never before heard in statements by other US presidents who saw relations with Europe not only as a game to protect American interests but also as a mission of sorts on behalf of the United States²⁰. Notably, such a tone has hardly been heard from the New York billionaire as it referred to values that were hard to assess in business terms. The question was whether this softening of rhetoric would be sufficient to make the European policy of the Trump administration more predictable and friendly. As necessary as the proper choice of words may be, it ultimately takes action to meet expectations.

The US President repeated his phrase on NATO’s significance in April 2017 during a White House meeting with Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General. At the time, he admitted that he considered the Atlantic Alliance as being no longer obsolete and that he recognized its significance and potential²¹. Such a declaration coming from President Trump somewhat reduced tensions resulting from the uncertainty of European allies. On the other hand, it was unheard of to have to receive assurances on a matter that for decades had remained an imperative of US and European security – the US presence in Europe and its commitments to meet obligations being a pillar of NATO and the most critical part of the Transatlantic Alliance. The fears were a simple and direct outcome of Trump’s prior rhetoric denigrating NATO and of uncertainty over the true intentions of the new White House host.

In both of his speeches, President Trump returned to his campaign-trail demand for the member states to increase their defense spending and “pay their fair share”, expressed in practically the same breath. In his Joint Address to Congress, Trump said: “Our partners must meet their financial obligations”²². The expectations were reiterated by Vice-President Pence during the Munich Security Conference as he noted that only four member states other than the United States meet the 2% of GDP defense spending criterion. “The promise to share the burden of our defense has not been fulfilled by too many for too long, and it erodes the foundations of our alliance”, said Pence. “The president (...) expects our allies to keep their word, to fulfill this commitment, and for most, this means, the time has come to do more”²³.

²⁰ www.whitehouse.gov/joint-address

²¹ www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_143135.htm

²² www.whitehouse.gov/joint-address

²³ Cited in: B. J o n e s, *Team Trump meets Europe...*

While the new president's position on NATO and its obsolescence underwent an evolution, the Trump administration remained unyielding and adamant on the issue of burden sharing. The US was strikingly persistent and firm in insisting on this demand. Its determination got to the point where Secretary of Defense Mattis, who met with NATO heads of defense in February 2017 in Brussels, made the extent of US engagement for Europe's security contingent on the presentation by the end of the year of a plan in which the member states would satisfy its obligation to spend 2% of GDP on defense. Turning to his NATO member state colleagues on the occasion, the head of the Pentagon said: "Americans cannot care more for your children's future security than you do"²⁴.

While it was difficult to disagree with this point, one should also recognize that the defense spending of the Alliance members and Canada increased in 2016 by a total of 3.8% or close to US\$ 10 billion. This reversal of the previous declining trend in such spending observed across Europe was not without significance. Its importance was not diminished by the fact that, in 2016 alone, the United States appropriated US\$ 664 billion or 3.6% of GDP, to defense. In 2017, US expenditures rose by US\$ 54 billion or 9% as a result of President Trump's decision²⁵.

Burden sharing continued to return to the agenda every time Trump met with European leaders, although very few European officials visited the White House in the first six months of his presidency. These included Stoltenberg. Speaking at a joint press conference with NATO Secretary General, President Trump argued: "If other countries pay their fair share instead of relying on the United States to make up the difference, we will be much more secure and our partnership will be made that much stronger"²⁶.

The issue of defense spending returned to the agenda during Angela Merkel's stay in Washington in mid-March 2017. Among many other aspects of German Chancellor's visit to the White House, this topic was undoubtedly dominant. In a brief statement read out during a joint press conference, the US President underlined that while NATO would remain a crucial ally of the United States, it was imperative that its member states increase their financial contributions. Turning to his guest, he claimed that Germany owed vast sums to the Americans on that account, which noticeably annoyed Angela Merkel²⁷.

²⁴ Cited in: H. Cooper, *Defense Secretary Mattis Tells NATO Allies to Spend More, or Else*, "The New York Times" February 15, 2017.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_143135.htm

²⁷ Cited in: D. M. Herzehorn, *NATO's top mission: Preparing for Trump*, www.politico.eu/article/secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg-nato-top-mission-preparing-for-us-president-donald-trump-defense-counter-terrorism/

Especially that the problem could not be viewed in terms of the indebtedness of the allies to Washington and could only be presented as the remaining member states contributing substantially less than the US.

c) Stance towards the European Union

All things considered, the impression from the meeting between Angela Merkel and President Trump was that, at least at this stage of the developments, the new President had little appreciation for the German leader's rank or for the role and significance of good US-German relations for the stability of both the Transatlantic Alliance and the world. That impression was not changed even by the president's tweet describing the event as a "great meeting". Trump repeated the phrase a dozen plus days later in an interview for *The Financial Times*.

Contrary to President Obama, who considered Angela Merkel to be his best ally and almost the bond that held the Transatlantic Alliance together and who even spoke of a US-German partnership, President Trump was far from any such admissions. It was doubtful whether Trump could appreciate Germany's standing as Europe's informal leader and as a country with a huge economic and political potential. It could also be that this very factor, i.e. Germany's leading role in the European Union, was what took aback and irritated the White House leader.

All this notwithstanding, the Merkel-Trump meeting showed just how different their styles of politics and their views on the international situation really were. When she decided to visit the United States despite prior stinging remarks addressed to her by the new US President, Chancellor Germany showed that, acting on behalf of the European community, as it were, she was prepared to do a great deal to maintain strong transatlantic bonds, which were vital not only for European security but also for the standing of the United States. Therefore, in the presence of Trump, she presented a global view of the international situation underlining the importance of US-European cooperation for resolving problems. This stood in sharp contrast to intellectually weak Trump, whose substance-lacking speech focused on minor issues. Among other things, Trump spoke of Germany's trading policy, which he viewed as being harmful to the United States.

It was difficult to foresee whether the talks between the United States and Angela Merkel as well as the representatives of Germany's top corporations (including BMW, Siemens, Schaeffler), who accompanied her during the visit, would change President Trump's mind on Germany's trade practices and

whether German manufacturers would be blacklisted as “unfair trading partners”. Would German goods, including BMW automobiles, become subject to prohibitive 35% customs duties, as Trump had previously proclaimed, should BMW open a factory in Mexico rather than in the United States? All this was also Angela Merkel’s concern and a reason for her visit to the United States.

One could speak of another paradox as the head of the German government arrived in the White House to convince the US President that Germany was a friend and not an enemy of the United States and that even in the realms of economy and trade, one should look at common goals rather than focusing on divisions and rivalries. Finally, there was no viable alternative to US-German/European collaboration. The big question was whether Angela Merkel succeeded in achieving these goals. Did she persuade the US President to change his stance on Germany and the European Union? For the time being, all that the leaders had to show for their encounter was Merkel’s conclusion from her meeting with Trump that “it is better to talk with than of each other”.

A positive answer to the fundamental question of the true position of President Trump on the European Union was all the more difficult in view of the earlier, January 23, 2017 Washington visit of British Prime Minister Theresa May. Notably, May became the first foreign guest to appear in the White House after Trump’s inauguration. The new president was very cordial towards the head of the UK government, who was just launching Brexit. He even committed to conclude a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, as if to convince the British that they had made the right choice by deciding to leave the European Union and encourage other member states to follow suit. This could suggest he was upholding his disparaging remarks on the EU and its bleak future made on the campaign trail and later repeated publically. And that by treating the EU not as much as a strategic partner but a trade competitor, he would pursue a policy of singular treatment of individual EU member states. His strategic advisor Bannon said unequivocally that the United States could negotiate better terms for itself by concluding bilateral trade agreements with each individual state.

Even the presidency of G. W. Bush, who shared responsibility for the collapse of US-European relations, never had such explicit anti-EU rhetoric emanate from Washington. Note that each previous US administration approached European integration as a security booster, a driver of Europe’s economic development, and a guarantee of peace on the once divided continent.

Given Trump’s initially unclear and certainly guarded position on the European project, any statements and gestures by the high-ranking officials

of his administration were followed closely. As in the case of NATO, such officials sought to convince their European partners that the United States was interested in Europe and willing to support its integration. Assurances of this kind came on February 20, 2017 during the Brussels visit by Vice-President Pence in the wake of the Munich Security Conference, which he attended. In meetings with high EU officials, Pence assured that the Trump administration wanted to “deepen our relationship”²⁸. This gave rise again to the question of whether Trump’s approach to the European Union would be influenced by Bannon, a man clearly averse to the European project, or by more EU-favoring staff members with shared views with Pence.

All in all, President Trump himself declared in an interview for *The Financial Times* in April 2017 that he changed his stance on the European Union for reasons that are worth noting. On the one hand, Trump’s statements revealed his true intentions, while on the other it became praise of sorts for the Europeans. Trump was convinced that Brexit would prompt further countries to leave the EU, eventually resulting in its disintegration. As nothing of the kind happened, he modified his views on the enduring power of the European project. He admitted that EU leaders “have done a very good job in bringing it back together”²⁹.

d) The Russian issue

What is surprising in attempts to assess the first months of the Trump presidency is his relatively tough political stance on Russia. The impression left by his electoral campaign, filled with pronouncement of restoring relations with that country, which were among Trump’s key declarations, never forebode such harsh treatment. On the contrary, one could fear that Trump and Putin would get closer together in exchange for concessions on the Ukrainian issue or even on the security of the eastern flank of NATO. No one could be sure that the new Secretary of State Tillerson, previously engaged in doing business with Russia, could properly assess such intangible values as democracy, human rights and freedom, and refrain from using them as bargaining chips in diplomatic negotiations. However, after Trump’s initial time in the White House, suggestions were made that US-Russian relations approximated those seen during the Cold War. While such views may have been highly exaggerated, the anticipated warming of relations was certainly replaced with a detectable chilling.

²⁸ www.cnn.com/2017/02/20/pence-in-brussels-seeking-deeper-ties-with-eu.html

²⁹ L. Barber, D. Sevastopulo, G. Tett, *Donald Trump in his own words*, “Financial Times” April 2, 2017, www.ft.com/content/9ac777ea-17ac-11e7-a53d-df09f373be87

To a certain extent, this was the result of a greater caution, which the new administration took in its approach to Russia, especially at a time when ever more grievous accusations were made regarding Moscow's meddling in the US election and the suspicious dealings between Trump associates and Russia (see Flynn). Russia's treatment of top representatives of the administration, i.e. Secretary of Defense Gen. Mattis and National Security Advisor Gen. McMaster, both of whom were a counterbalance of sorts for any pro-Moscow sentiments in the White House, was undoubtedly significant.

A blow to a quick Washington rapprochement with Moscow came with the bombing, to Trump's order, of a Syrian air-base on the night of April 6, 2017 in response to Bashar al-Assad's regime's use of chemical weapons in the rebel town of Khan Shaykhun, which left many civilians, including children, among the casualties. For the Kremlin, which staunchly supported Assad and believed it had sufficiently strengthened its influence in Syria, the American attack came as a complete shock prompting it to accuse the US of violating international law (sic!). It was also a reason for tougher talk regarding the Trump administration. Without a doubt, Moscow's hopes of the new administration resetting mutual relations and perhaps helping it divide influences in the world and perhaps also in Europe in a new way, lay in ruin, at least for the moment.

Several days after the US airstrike on the Syrian base, Moscow received the United States American Secretary of State arriving on a previously scheduled visit, nothing suggested "a reset" in the mutual relationship. Instead, all that was seen was the two nuclear powers reasserting their willingness to maintain political relations, as they sought to ascertain each other's positions on key issues. Tillerson ended up in a tight spot as his visit was closely watched in America. The big question across the Atlantic was whether Tillerson's priorities with Russian industry would gain upper hand and whether the outcome of the talks would be influenced by his diplomatic inexperience. The fact that during his meeting with G7 heads of diplomacy on the second week of April 2017, which preceded the Moscow visit, Tillerson asked why U.S. taxpayers should be interested in Ukraine, was highly ominous. Although the Secretary of State's press spokesman explained that this was a rhetorical question, the uncertainty remained as to whether interests would not prevail over principles³⁰.

It is thus fair to say that in his clash between Tillerson and the head of Russian diplomacy, the experienced and competent Sergey Lavrov, the American Secretary of State stood his ground. There certainly was no breakthrough in

³⁰ Cited in: S. P i f e r, *Why should the United States be interested in Ukraine?* www.brookings.edu/author/steven-pifer/?type=mentions-and-appearances

the mutual relations of the magnitude previously expected by Moscow and proclaimed in Washington. And even though much of what was said during the talks remains unknown, it is clear that Russians failed to achieve concessions on either the Ukrainian or the Syrian issue. All that was done was to ascertain the mutual positions and touch upon the key problems, consequently easing the tension caused by the US attack on Syria. Even the meeting between Tillerson and Putin, which remained uncertain until the last minute, changed nothing.

It appears that at this stage of relations between the Kremlin and the new US administration, a substantial factor at play was Trump's decision to use a Tomahawk missile against the Syrian base. Although one cannot exclude a scenario in which the move by the White House leader was dictated by internal considerations and specifically his declining approval ratings, or could be chalked up to his unpredictability and impulsiveness, for which he provided ample evidence in his initial time in office, and especially in his tweets, certain positive outcomes of these developments should also be noted. President Trump turned out to be more decisive and, at least in the short term, more effective than his predecessor. The best case in point here is Syria where Obama never had the courage to follow through with his 2013 commitment to respond with military force should Assad cross a red line, i.e. use chemical weapons³¹. With this respect, Trump certainly displayed more decisiveness. And although the air base strike was not followed up by any further political or military actions that would bring the world closer to resolving the Syrian conflict, such a show of readiness to act must have impressed Moscow. In this aspect, Trump's unpredictability and emotional approach to challenges turned out to be useful, as it left Putin baffled.

Meanwhile, however, Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Lavrov found it very easy to meet President Trump during his stay in Washington on May 10, 2017. An official release suggested that their White House meeting concerned US-Russian relations, the Syrian war and what was described as international affairs. As for the timing of the meeting and specifically the investigation into suspicious contacts between Trump's associates and Russians, which was just gaining momentum, it is difficult not to get the impression that despite the danger of deals with Putin being concluded at the expense of Central and Eastern Europe, President Trump still seriously considered taking a softer stance on Moscow. Even under such circumstances, Trump received in the Oval Office

³¹ For more, see: J. K i w e r s k a, *Światowe przywództwo Ameryki w XXI wieku*, Poznań 2015, pp. 169-175.

not only the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister but also Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, showing little regard for the accusations of secret contacts with Kislyak made against successive members of the Trump team.

e) Trump in Europe

Europe's anxiety over the directions in which American foreign policy and transatlantic relations were headed, were still very much justified, especially in view of the questionable responsibility and predictability of the new president. Therefore, expectations were associated with President Trump's first visit to Europe, which raised hopes of lifting the ambiguity and obliqueness. However, the meeting with European leaders in the final days of May 2017 was only a single stage of the first foreign trip taken by the new president. Trump subsequently traveled to Saudi Arabia and Israel (and met with Pope Francis in the Vatican). This could be interpreted to mean that Europe no longer topped the list of America's allies. Note also that while the Brussels visit lasted only 24 hours, those to Saudi Arabia and Israel took two days each. Particularly solemn for Trump was his visit to Riyadh, where the US President was given a truly royal reception, which must have tickled his ego. What counted under the circumstances was not that Saudi Arabia was one of the countries that violated every human right and shared few values with the USA (while it was values that appeared to cement the Transatlantic Alliance).

Europe's doubts regarding President Trump's intentions and positions were certainly not dispelled by the meeting of May 25, 2017 with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission. An official statement by Donald Tusk showed that the biggest differences of opinion concerned the free trade zone and the Paris climate agreement. Both of these were the topics of which Trump was particularly critical during his electoral campaign. Clearly, he did not budge on either of them on becoming president. Considering that climate change was one of the key concerns of both the European Union's and the majority of Western countries, Trump's skepticism regarding the greenhouse effect could prove very harmful to the cause of combating climate change. It would definitely affect the relations between Washington and Brussels. The President of the European Council suggested also, in diplomatic language, that substantial discrepancies existed on Russia and its policies. There was a major divergence on this fairly basic issue viewed as important especially by Europe. Equally significant was the fact that President Trump made no public references to the European project, its role and significance, nor did he ever express

support for the European integration process. This marked a clear departure from the positions of his predecessors expressed during their visits to Brussels.

There were also a number of other problems that dominated the informal NATO summit held in the Belgian capital on the same day, i.e. on May 25, 2017, prepared especially to accommodate a meeting of NATO member states with the new US President. Although Trump's statement did include a sentence on the Alliance described as "promoting security and peace throughout the world", it was focused again on the allied states' defense spending. Meant as an admonishment of the unruly audience, the reminder that the allies "owe huge sums for past years" and "must finally contribute their fair share and meet their financial obligations") did not make a good impression. Neither did it do anything to meet the expectations of the Europeans.

Not only have such rebukes been heard many times before, but they also showed an arrogance and misunderstanding of the many external factors that affected the individual member states of the Alliance. The statements also ignored the significance of Europe's growing defense spending and the fact that the date for all member states to achieve the target of 2% of GDP in military spending was 2024 (three states were to reach that level in 2018 while the manner in which all others would achieve it would only be defined in 2017).

One could get the impression that the US President either failed to appreciate or took for granted the fact that NATO, as an organization, joined the coalition set against the so-called Islamic State (some of the member states had already been a part of that coalition individually). The declaration, previously negotiated with all NATO member states by Secretary General Stoltenberg, was a special gesture towards President Trump, who had blamed the Alliance for not engaging sufficiently in the fight against terrorism. Although NATO never agreed to become involved in armed operations, its main focus being placed on training and intelligence gathering (for instance, a special plenipotentiary was to be appointed to coordinate the counter-terrorism effort), its engagement did constitute a display of allied solidarity. Note that President Obama gave up the use of NATO in the war on ISIS concerned with its long decision-making process. This time, the member states already presented a decision that has been voted in.

From Europe's viewpoint, the Brussels meeting was to manifest the unity and significance of the Alliance, both of which were necessary, especially in view of Trump's prior statements and behaviors. The expectation was never met. Even worse, at no time did the US emphasize its commitment to provide unconditional assistance in the event of aggression against any individual

member state, stressing that the need to come to the rescue was stronger than any other incidental factors. Trump's speech contained no reference to art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. Under other circumstances, one could consider this an irrelevant oversight, because such commitments were obvious and the rule of "one for all and all for one" had to remain in force. However, since Trump previously contested the mandatory nature of art. 5, the expectation he would now reassert, on behalf of the United States, the obligation to provide mutual defense, was fully understandable. Previously, such declarations were made by each US President, including, in no uncertain terms, by President Obama in 2014, speaking after Russia's aggression on Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. And, quite importantly, Obama referred in particular to America's obligations under art. 5 with respect to the states located on NATO's eastern flank.

In all fairness, one should admit that declarations of being bound by art. 5 had in the past been made by Vice-President M. Pence and Secretary of Defense Gen. J. Mattis. And yet, no such statements were heard from President Trump, which would settle the matter. Both of these high representatives of the administration made their statements as early as February 2017, during the Munich Security Conference. On the occasion, the head of the Pentagon called art. 5 a "bedrock commitment"³². The Vice-President, in his turn, referred to art. 5 as "one of two core principles that are central to NATO's mission". As the second most important clause in the Washington Treaty – and probably for a good reason – Pence named art. 3, in which the member states commit to maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attacks³³. By quoting this article, he directly alluded to defense burden sharing.

One could assume that Trump's failure to acknowledge the significance of art. 5 in his speech (even though, according to unofficial sources, a passage to that effect was included in the text of the speech prepared for the President and approved by his Security Advisor H. McMaster), was not an oversight but rather a deliberate act by the bookkeeper president, who either removed the important sentence before delivering his speech or chose to omit it during his presentation³⁴. It is difficult to rule out an attempt at blackmailing the European allies to pay more if they wish to be protected by the United States and if

³² J. Mattis speech in Munich, February 17, 2017, www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/1087838/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-the-munich-security-conference-in-munich-germany/

³³ Cited in: B. Jones, *Team Trump meets Europe...*

³⁴ According to unofficial information, the decision was influenced by White House Chief Strategist S. Bannon and Political Advisor S. Miller: S. B. G l a s e r, *Trump national security team blindsided by NATO speech*, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/05/trump-nato-speech-national-security-team-215227

the mutual defense principle is to remain in force. The US President was not bothered by the symbolism of delivering his speech at the new NATO Headquarters in Brussels while standing next to a monument commemorating the 9/11 terrorist attack on America, which prompted the first ever application of art. 5 of the Washington Treaty in the name of allied solidarity with America.

The US President's failure to mention art. 5 on this occasion, leaving his European allies in great uncertainty, undoubtedly did not serve the transatlantic community well. It literally undermined allied credibility and it did so at a time of huge challenges and uncertainty, disrupted international order, and threats from Russia and ISIS. In other words, the principle of allied solidarity, which for nearly seven decades had remained a given in US-European relations, could no longer be relied on. On that very topic, American experts commented: "Trump's failure to endorse Article 5 may come to be one of the greatest diplomatic blunders made by an American president since World War II"³⁵.

Other commentators across the Atlantic shared this opinion. Strobe Talbott, formerly engaged in NATO enlargement and its preparation for the challenges of the post-Cold-War era in the Clinton administration, had no doubts that "the failure to say something [regarding art. 5] has had a very dangerous and damaging effect on the most successful military alliance in history". Even today, after Trump's speech in Brussels, "the Atlantic community was less safe, and less together", argued Talbott³⁶.

Another issue raised in the debate, and for very good reasons, was that of Russia. The questioning of art. 5 by the US President, even by a mere failure to refer to it during the NATO summit, sent a significant message to Russia and could have dire consequences. In the worst-case scenario, given a weakening of western solidarity and the shadow of a doubt cast over the United States' leading role in the western world, Putin was being presented with a much freer rein to pursue his imperial ambitions. A slightly better scenario would involve acknowledging the Kremlin's claim that we were living in a post-western world in which western values and principles were no longer dominant and no longer guided development and change. In either case, both Europe and transatlantic relations would end up significantly worse off³⁷.

³⁵ Th. Wright, *Trump remains a NATO skeptic*, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/06/01/trump-remains-a-nato-skeptic/

³⁶ S. B. Glasser, *Strobe Talbott: The Full Transcript*, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/05/strobe-talbott-brookings-foreign-policy-interview-politico-215226

³⁷ See C. Stelzenmüller, *Trump's abandonment of NATO in Brussels*, www.brookings.edu/experts/constanze-stelzenmuller/; see also: S. B. Glasser, *Strobe Talbott: The Full Transcript...*

None of this impact could be reversed by Washington's subsequent attempts to downplay Trump's omission by persuading the outer world that the United States had no intention to question art. 5. This precise effort was again made by Vice-President Pence. During a celebration in the Atlantic Council on June 5, 2017, Vice-President assured: "Make no mistake, our commitment is unwavering. We will meet our obligations to our people to provide for the collective defense of all of our allies (...) an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us"³⁸. Note that Pence spoke these words in the presence of Stoltenberg, who had just been distinguished with an award from this reputable American think tank. Nevertheless, the fears persisted. They could not even be dispelled by Trump's statement during the visit in Washington by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis. At a joint press conference on June 9, 2017, the US President reaffirmed the United States' commitments under art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. The fact that Trump spoke to a relatively low-profile meeting made it difficult to bill the statement as highly significant.

The fact that Europe and in particular the leaders of Europe's strongest states found it difficult to communicate with President Trump, became evident during the G7 summit and from its conclusions. Taormina, Sicily, where the heads of state and government of the world's major industrialized countries and the heads of the European Union's member states met on May 26-27, 2017 was another stage on Trump's tour of Europe. During their talks, the participants sought Trump's admission that global warming was a real problem and that the 2015 Paris climate agreement needed to be implemented. There were hopes he would abandon his campaign pledges (while on the campaign trail, he argued there was no global warming and that the climate agreement was an assault on the economic interests of the United States) and that the United States would after all respect the Paris agreement.

The effort by the concerned nations nevertheless failed. On June 1, 2017, within days after the conclusion of talks in Taormina, Trump announced the United States would pull out of the climate agreement. On this particular issue, the President ignored the advise of his close ones, i.e. his daughter Ivanka and her husband, as well as Secretary of State Tillerson. He was not even convinced by Pope Francis, who previously, during an audience in the Vatican, handed him his environmental encyclical *Laudator si*. Instead, the President's decision followed the opinion of the conservative advisor Bannon and the position

³⁸ A. H a n n a, *Mike Pence insists US is committed to Article 5 in speech honoring NATO leader*, www.politico.eu/article/mike-pence-insists-us-is-committed-to-article-5-in-speech-honoring-nato-leader/

of Scott Pruitt, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (sic!). Trump explained he was delivering on his campaign pledge and protecting the interests of American workers, whom he prevented from losing their jobs. It was “America First” after all. President Trump’s position was not even swayed during the G20 Summit in Hamburg on July 7-8, 2017. In their concluding statement to the summit, leaders of the world’s wealthiest states and the European Union acknowledged that the United States distanced itself from the Paris agreement.

On a global scale and for transatlantic relations, America’s withdrawal from the climate accord may have tangible implications. Other than the impact on climate itself, as the United States is the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, the US may see its international standing further diminished. By putting its own interests ahead of those of the world, the Trump administration deliberately abdicated from the position of the world’s leader in the fight against global warming. Its abandonment of prior commitments undermined its credibility. Especially in the eyes of European countries, whose vast majority got strongly engaged in combatting climate change, and saw the Paris Agreement as a milestone in that fight. There had previously been a precious symbiosis on climate change with the Obama administration, which not only signed the Paris agreement but also adopted ambitious internal regulations in the US to protect the environment. As it turned out, the new administration had very different ideas and would pursue narrowly defined vital US interests rather than the principles and values associated with the liberal order of the western world. Someone put it well by saying: “America First means America First, and not just in America, but everywhere on the globe”³⁹.

In keeping with this thought, one could conclude that the policies of the new administration, whose nature and style, as shaped by Trump, were highly unusual in the first six months of the Presidency (see Trump’s tweets), were bent on protecting America’s vital interests, which it defined very narrowly. Despite the fact that some of Trump’s team members were reasonable, experienced and competent politicians, the President’s foreign exploits were mostly chaotic and unpredictable. This was the result of power being in the hands of the present White House host and the influence of other controversial advisors on his team.

The impacts proved to be particularly strong in relations with Europe. One could in fact speak of a definite deterioration of atmosphere in transatlantic

³⁹ C. Stelzenmüller, *At last: The Trump Doctrine revealed. And it's terrifying for Europeans*, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/06/05/at-last-the-trump-doctrine-revealed/

relations. President Trump spoke in no uncertain terms of his intention to adopt a transactional approach to America's obligations to Europe, which did not help strengthen the transatlantic partnership. And while the new administration never reneged on the commitments assumed during the NATO summits in Newport and Warsaw, President Trump's other moves, such as his neglect to state his position on art. 5, his withdrawal from the climate agreement and his treatment of the European Union, have all strained the Atlantic Alliance. One could in fact get the impression that the two worlds, seemingly based on the same values and shared principles, were drifting farther and farther apart. All it took was for Trump to remain in office for six months.

There is no wonder, therefore, that Trump's visit to Poland of a dozen plus hours, and particularly his speech in Warsaw on July 6, 2017, was observed with such interest. The very fact that the US President chose to come to Poland before the G20 Summit in Hamburg to – as was announced by the White House – deliver a speech of vital importance for the international community (this was Trump's first public speech in Europe), gave a boost to the Polish government. And while the main reason for Trump's choice of Poland as a host country was its guarantee of an enthusiastic reception (a Pew Research Center survey showed that Poles remained the most pro-American nation), the symbolic significance of the visit for Poland was indisputable. In these terms, Trump lived up to expectations, appealing largely to the Polish national pride and Poles' attachment to conservative values. To a lesser extent, he fulfilled the hopes of deploying US troops in Poland for an indefinite duration and concluding trade transactions that would benefit that country.

As for acknowledging the importance of the Transatlantic Alliance, the really significant gesture was the US President's declaration of allied commitment to art. 5, which he worded as follows: "The United States has demonstrated not merely with words but with its actions that we stand firmly behind Article 5, the mutual defense commitment". For the first time ever, President Trump endorsed the "one for all and all for one" principle so unequivocally and to such a broad audience, his message transmitted throughout the world. And although this was merely a declaration and one accompanied with the usual reference to Europe's unsatisfactory contributions to allied defense, it restored faith in NATO's effectiveness in the event of an armed aggression. In this sense, it helped cement transatlantic bonds as did the relatively harsh words directed at Russia and its role in destabilizing Ukraine and Syria. Nevertheless, the rebukes were not so severe as to prevent Trump from making deals with Putin at a later date.

However, despite pessimistic scenarios, Trump did not use his visit to Poland and his Warsaw address to further deteriorate transatlantic relations or divide the European Union. His speech was in no way anti-European. And although Trump avoided references to the European Union and instead chose to speak generally of Europe, he did invoke the commonality of values in our world calling it the western civilization. Trump emphasized conservative values, such as family, traditions and national identity and recognized their significance as a bond that brought nations together. Never before had Trump referred to the western world as a community of shared principles and standards. Regrettably, the US President did not find it in himself to express his appreciation for the accomplishments of the European Union, a structure which not only united European nations but also ensured development and stability on the continent. The question that remained was whether Trump's visit to Poland, whose lofty rhetoric never contradicted the principles of European and transatlantic solidarity, marked a departure from his previously skeptical and denigrating approach to Europe.

JACEK KUBERA, TOMASZ MOROZOWSKI

European Assessment of Trump Presidency

1. Record of Obama's presidency from the European perspective

Barack Obama's presidency brought a great deal of changes to US foreign policy. While even in its preliminary premises of the new administration, the United States was to continue playing a leading role in strengthening the world order, the assumption was that it would mainly rely on diplomatic efforts rather than military interventions and that it would minimize the cost. By "leading from behind", following through with the previously announced "reset" in Russian relations and pivoting towards Asia and the Pacific Rim in foreign policy, the United States sent a message that understandably upset its European allies. Without a doubt, the new approach would impact the Transatlantic Alliance. There was a necessity for Europe to become more active internationally and more responsible for its own security.

America's restrained foreign security policy affected the immediate neighborhood of the EU, and especially Syria. Washington's failure to deliver on its pledge to use military force after the Bashar al-Assad regime used chemical weapons against a civilian population in August 2013, and the Obama administration's generally noncommittal response to the civil war in Syria led to what the Europeans perceived as a prolonged unresolved conflict in Syria, greater Russian influence in the region and the strengthening of its imperial ambitions. The Syrian conflict triggered a massive migration into Europe, which proved to become one of the biggest challenges ever faced by the European community, while Russia caused a rising threat in the east in the form of its aggressive and provocative policy testing NATO's patience and solidarity. Thus, Obama's policy became a hotbed for new security threats in Europe and new challenges brought to bear on the European Union.

America's pivot back towards Europe and action on the part of its European allies resulted directly from Russia's aggressive policies in Ukraine, which it had pursued since 2014. In a strictly political sense, the United States' reaction to Moscow's inroads in Ukraine was both swift and decisive. Political and economic restrictions were imposed on Russia. Meanwhile, the response

of the European Union was considerably less resolute and slower. Initially, in March 2014, the world saw the adoption of the first political sanctions, targeted against the Russian and Ukrainian officials responsible for the encroachment on Ukraine's territorial integrity. The number of individuals subject to the restrictions was gradually increased. The imposition of economic sanctions took some dealings among the member states to agree on cost sharing and how long the sanctions would remain in effect. Sanctions on trade with Russia in specific sectors of the economy were adopted in July 16, 2014, and stated in the conclusions of the European Council. They came as a response to the downing of Air Malaysia shot down by Russian-backed separatists.

The ability of European countries to formulate a common and decisive (although somewhat delayed) reaction to Russia's expansive policies and the engagement of France and Germany in the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, without US involvement, could be seen as a rare example of strong international activity on the part of the EU and even – in the case of the Normandy format talks – of steps in the field of security taken independently of the United States.

The annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine became turning points and an impulse for the USA to reengage in European security, and for the states of Europe to assume greater responsibility for their defense. Particularly active in this respect were the countries of Eastern Europe, which played a crucial role in the process of NATO's adjustment to the new international situation, culminated with the Newport summit decisions of September 2014, which included the adoption of the Readiness Action Plan and the formation, within the NATO Response Force (NRF), of a several-thousand-troop-strong rotational contingent maintained in permanent operational readiness (Immediate Alliance Assurance Force, IAAF). The decision led to the creation of the so-called NATO spearhead, i.e. a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), slated to achieve combat readiness in 2016. The goal was to make the Alliance more dynamic and strengthen NATO's eastern flank by establishing forces capable of immediate deployment in any state found to be under threat.

As a consequence, Europe developed a compromise between the Baltic states, which awaited the deployment of NATO forces in their territories, anxious about Russia's aggression, and some other countries (such as Germany), which supported a restrained allied response to Vladimir Putin's policies against Ukraine. The plan to strengthen the eastern flank of NATO, with a significant involvement of US forces, was reasserted during the Warsaw NATO summit in July 8-9, 2016. At the time, President Obama declared the "unwavering

commitment of the United States to the security and defense of Europe”⁴⁰. The summit’s results were thus satisfactory for Central and Eastern European states, which in the months leading up to the summit stepped up efforts to ensure that NATO issue an unambiguous declaration of commitment to strengthen its eastern flank.⁴¹

One of the result’s of the Warsaw summit was the signing of cooperation agreements between NATO and the EU, which Europe considered to be essential. The leaders of both organizations, i.e. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of the European Council Donald Tusk and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker noted that the time had come to “give new impetus and new substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership”⁴². As the topmost aim of such cooperation, they pointed to “boosting our ability to counter hybrid threats” (which were already observed in the Ukrainian conflict). The plan also included broadening operational cooperation in the Mediterranean, expanding coordination on cybersecurity, missions and operations, exercises, education and training, facilitating a stronger defense industry and building the defense and security capacity and resilience of EU and NATO partners in the East and South⁴³. All these efforts were designed to secure the states located on the eastern flank of the Alliance and strengthen the transatlantic partnership.

As the United States became more engaged in ensuring European security, Washington admonished its European allies in NATO for not sharing the burden fairly enough, a point which it had in fact raised on multiple occasions. Even during the Newport summit, commitments were made for all allied member states of the Alliance to increase their defense spending to at least 2% of GDP within the following 10 years. NATO member states, also from Europe, agreed at the time on the need for a more fair burden sharing. As stated by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, then NATO Secretary General, after the summit: “We agree to

⁴⁰ *Press Conference by President Obama after NATO Summit*, The White House Office of Press Secretary, June 9, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/09/press-conference-president-obama-after-nato-summit>

⁴¹ Support for the Polish position on strengthening the eastern flank of the Alliance was included in the common declarations of the defense ministers (Libice, May 25, 2016) and the prime ministers (Prague, June 8, 2016) of the Visegrad Group countries and in the joint declaration on “Allied Solidarity and Shared Responsibility”, issued after an informal summit in Bukarest, attended by the Visegrad Group countries, the Baltic states, Bulgaria and Romania. The sections of the document that regarded Central and Eastern Europe were prepared with the involvement of Radosław Grodzki.

⁴² *NATO and the EU commit to tighten cooperation in Warsaw*, Pap.pl, www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,557293,nato-i-uc-oglosily-w-warszawie-deklaracje-o-wzmocnieniu-wspolpracy.html.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

reverse the trend of declining defense budgets". He stressed that the decision to assume these obligations was made "in a completely new security environment" and that it would strengthen transatlantic bonds⁴⁴.

Another factor expected to hold the transatlantic partnership together in new geopolitical realities was trade. Initially, trade was to be used to offset the United States' diminishing military commitment to Europe. Subsequently, it was to help restore a strong US presence and ultimately bolster European security. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), initially referred to as an "economic NATO", which the US sought to finalize, was to bring European countries closer to the US, make them independent of Russia and offset the influence of China. The lack of a resolute response from Europe (as controversies and social resistance grew over the TTIP) prevented the conclusion of the deal before the end of Obama's presidency. The thousands of protesters who took to the streets, mainly in the cities of Germany, but also in those of Austria and Sweden, expressed the fears of the citizens that the TTIP would be too beneficial for multinational corporations at the expense of consumers. People were also anxious about the lowering of environmental standards and food quality. The leaders of the EU's major member states were divided in their opinions. Opposition against the closing of TTIP deals came from the then French Prime Minister Manuel Valls. However, TTIP was supported by German Chancellor Angela Merkel⁴⁵.

The Obama presidency saw also the emergence of other differences in the economic interests pursued through relations with the European Union. These prompted the United States to e.g. express its reservations on German policies on the eurozone crisis, the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and the Russian business lobby in Germany. Meanwhile, the Europeans were upset over the excessively strong position of the US digital giants (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon) and their online data management policies.

A good example of a successful partnership between the Obama administration and EU leaders was the bringing of the climate agreement to its conclusion in Paris on December 12, 2015. The deal was signed by 194 states, including the two largest greenhouse gas emitters, i.e. China and the US, followed by the European Union, whose 28 states came third in the ranking. Note that

⁴⁴ *NATO sends a signal: Russia threatens the world. Time to get armed*, PolskieRadio.pl, www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1226204,NATO-sle-sygnal-Rosja-zagraza-swiatu-Trzeba-sie-zbroic.

⁴⁵ M. Niebauer, *Tens of thousands protest in Europe against Atlantic free trade deals*, Reuters, www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-usa-ttip-idUSKCN11N0H6; *TTIP protesters take to streets across Germany*, "The Guardian" September 17, 2016, www.theguardian.com/business/2016/sep/17/ttip-protests-see-crowds-take-to-streets-of-seven-german-cities

the EU was highly involved in negotiating the agreement and that, on March 2015, it was the first economy of its size to present its implementation roadmap (similar plans were later presented by other states). Together with the world's other developed economies, the EU committed to finance efforts in developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate the adverse implications of climate change⁴⁶.

The agreement envisioned stopping global warming at a level “considerably below 2°C” compared with the pre-industrial era. The signatory states committed to seek an even better outcome, which was to keep the warming under 1.5°C⁴⁷. The global significance of the agreement lied in the fact that the observed climate changes had serious implications for human lives across the globe (affecting security, access to food, drinking water, etc.). The significance of the agreement lied in the involvement of the United States, China and the European Union. All of these powers aligned their positions encouraging other states across the world to strive to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Europe on Trump

a) The European Union's relations with the new administration

Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election left the European allies of the United States in uncertainty as to how and to what extent the campaign trail rhetoric contesting the usefulness of the Transatlantic Alliance would influence US foreign policy. After the election outcome was announced, the majority of politicians, experts and journalists across Europe spoke critically of the development. Their comments also reflected the predominant moods of the European public.

In Brussels and other European capitals, people remembered that during his electoral campaign, Trump considered Brexit as “a great thing” and expected that the United Kingdom would be followed by other states. This injected a great deal of uncertainty over the future relations between the US and the European Union. French President François Hollande predicted that the decision made by the Americans would begin a period of uncertainty and that it was time to face such challenges. The Swedish Prime Minister called 2016 the year of two disasters referring to Brexit and the election of Trump. Equally vocal about his

⁴⁶ *Paris climate agreement*, The General Secretariat of the Council, November 9, 2017, www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/policies/climate-change/timeline/

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

fears was Gérard Araud, the French Ambassador to the United States, who tweeted that after Brexit and Trump's electoral victory, anything was possible and that the world was crumbling before our eyes⁴⁸. Other politicians, such as the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and the head of the Italian government Matteo Renzi, who strongly endorsed Hillary Clinton during the election campaign, stressed the significance of cooperation among their countries, the European Union and the United States⁴⁹.

On the other hand, there was unconcealed satisfaction among those European leaders who endorsed Trump's views on migration, which was one of the top issues on political agendas in Europe in 2015 and 2016 causing tensions throughout the European community. The Czech President Miloš Zeman, who opposed accepting refugees, announced he was "very happy" with the outcome of the US election. The Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, who was similarly skeptical about the relocation of refugees and who reflected populist sentiments, considered Trump's win to be "fantastic news" showing that "democracy was still alive"⁵⁰.

Despite their utter confusion, EU leaders made an effort to follow western community etiquette. An official letter of congratulations on behalf of the European Union was sent by the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission. In the letter, Tusk and Juncker stressed the strategic partnership of the EU and the US based on shared values as well as cooperation between the two sides in many areas, including security, climate change and trade. They expressed hopes that such cooperation would be continued and strengthened⁵¹.

Also in Germany, Trump's victory, which came as a big surprise, was received with big apprehension. Fears were caused by the rhetoric of the Republican candidate used in the electoral campaign, in which he not only undermined NATO's significance but also condemned Germany's policies while supporting decentralization trends in the EU. Berlin's attention was drawn by Trump's campaign trail criticism of Merkel's migration policy. Trump also suggested

⁴⁸ *Europe Reacts to Trump – "The World Is Crumbling in Front of Our Eyes"*, SpiegelOnline, November 9, 2016, www.spiegel.de/international/europe/european-leaders-and-politicians-react-to-trump-victory-a-1120478.html

⁴⁹ *World leaders react to Donald Trump's US election victory*, "The Guardian" November 9, 2016, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/09/world-leaders-react-to-donald-trumps-us-election-victory

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Letter from Presidents Tusk and Juncker to congratulate Donald Trump on his election as the next President of the United States*, Council General Secretariat, November 9, 2016, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/11/09-tusk-joint-congratulations-us-president/

that Germany was building a strong position in Europe at the expense of other states and using unfair trade practices, which – among other things – enabled it to achieve a surplus in its trade with the United States.

Angela Merkel limited her response to Trump's election victory to the usual congratulations, in which she inserted a reminder on the fundamental values on which German-US relations had been built. Merkel then took an approach, which commentators described as "wait and see". She refrained from hasty reactions until the new US administration would crystalize and define its foreign policy objectives. Generally, the response of Christian Democratic politicians to the outcome of the US election was balanced but not without anxiety about its consequences for Europe and Germany. In contrast, statements by the politicians of the remaining Bundestag parties, i.e. the SPD, Die Linke and Alliance 90/the Greens were emotional, impulsive and clearly critical of the president elect.

Against this background, one was surprised by the reactions of non-parliamentary opposition: the populist Alternative for Germany, which expressed satisfaction with Trump's victory. For Alternative for Germany politicians, Trump's victory showed that populist movements were "in vogue" and that the party could hope for a good outcome in the upcoming Bundestag election. AfD supporters' websites even posted the slogan "Make Germany great again", which clearly alluded to one of the main election slogans used by Trump: "Make America great again"⁵².

In view of Trump's dismissive and aversive statements on the European Union, his victory meant that the United States would not only no longer support European integration but also become an extra factor politically destabilizing the European continent. Not only would the US no longer help fight challenges but would become a challenge itself.

This was a rough time for the European Union. A scenario considered highly unlikely even a year earlier, which involved the gradual disintegration of the EU and perhaps even its complete breakup, was increasingly becoming a real threat. The community's member states were unable to agree on how to respond to internal and external crises which undermined the status quo and contributed to uncertainty about the future⁵³. Such external challenges were mainly the war in Syria, the influx of refugees causing rifts within the EU,

⁵² See T. M o r o z o w s k i, *Reakcje Niemiec na wynik wyborów prezydenckich w USA*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego" issue 278/2016, www.iz.poznan.pl

⁵³ K. M a l i n o w s k i in cooperation with M. N o w o s i e l s k i, M. T u j d o w s k i, J. K u b e r a, *Przemiany Unii Europejskiej. Rola Niemiec and implikacje dla stosunków polsko-niemieckich. Trzy scenariusze*, "IZ Policy Papers" issue 18/2016.

Russia's efforts to weaken the European community, the impact of ISIS and the related terrorist threat in European countries.

The European Union additionally faced a number of internal challenges such as the rise in popularity of parties contesting the present shape of European integration and even the very sense and significance of the European project (in Germany, this was Alternative for Germany, in France: the National Front, in the Netherlands: Party for Freedom, and in Italy: Five Star Movement). There was also big unknowns associated with the British decision to leave the union and uncertainties over the outcomes of Brexit negotiations. Many European capitals anxiously awaited the parliamentary election in the Netherlands and the presidential and parliamentary elections in France, where Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders vowed to pull their countries out of the EU.

At such a time, deterioration in the relationship between the European Union and the new administration would definitely not help preserve the European project. However, statements by the US president-elect on the EU did nothing to dispel the fears of the Europeans regarding the future shape of transatlantic relations. Even in January 15, 2017, several days before being sworn in, in an interview for *The Times*, *Washington Post* and *Bild*, Trump described the EU as an instrument that Germany used to achieve its policy goals: "You look at the European Union and it's Germany. Basically a vehicle for Germany. That's why I thought the UK was so smart in getting out". At the time, Trump predicted that other states would follow Britain and also choose an exit: "I believe others will leave. I do think keeping it [all EU member states] together is not going to be as easy as a lot of people think". The newly elected US president said that his trust in Angela Merkel may not last long. He put Merkel right next to Putin as a potentially problematically state⁵⁴.

Opinions of this kind coming from no longer merely a candidate for the top job in the US but a person who had already become the White House host, further fuelled the fears of the majority of European politicians on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. The cases where such opinions were welcome involved mainly the politicians who, similarly to Trump, undermined the advisability of national states continuing to participate in European integration on the present terms.

At a meeting in Koblenz on January 21, 2017, the leaders of EU-skeptical parties looked with hope to Washington where at almost the exact time, the

⁵⁴ M. G o v e, *Donald Trump interview: Brexit will be a great thing*, "The Times", January 15, 2017, www.thetimes.co.uk/article/donald-trump-interview-brexit-britain-trade-deal-europe-queen-5m0bc2tns

new US President was being inaugurated. Le Pen from the French National Front, Wilders from the Dutch Party for Freedom, and Frauke Petry of German Alternative for Germany saw Trump's win as a signal heralding their own victory and the coming of a "patriotic spring" that would sweep across Europe⁵⁵.

Meanwhile pro-European leaders, who saw Trump's victory as yet another challenge for the unity of the European Union, launched a counter-offensive. "In the shadow" of Trump, prompted by a sense of urgency to build a more united and autonomous EU, they held an informal summit on Malta on March 3, 2017. In a pre-summit message to EU leaders, the President of the European Council repeatedly referred to political changes in Washington, arguing that only solidarity among the member states would enable them – jointly and severally – to remain independent of such global superpowers as the United States, Russia and China.

In his message, Tusk argued further that the EU should stand up to the rhetoric that "countries will cope better on their own rather than together"⁵⁶. Such rhetoric, in his view, was being presented by the new US administration which undermined not only the principles underpinning the functioning of the EU but also the value of strong transatlantic bonds: "For the first time in our history, in an increasingly multipolar external world, so many are becoming openly anti-European, or Eurosceptic at best. Particularly the change of guard in Washington puts the European Union in a tight spot; with the new administration seeming to put into question the last 70 years of American foreign policy. (...) We cannot surrender to those who want to weaken or invalidate the Transatlantic bond, without which global order or peace cannot survive. We should remind our American friends of their own motto: "United we stand, divided we fall"⁵⁷.

Three weeks after the informal Malta summit, President Trump offered this surprising response to a question from the Reuters News Agency regarding his support for the EU as an organization that plays a decisive role on the European continent: "When it comes to the EU, I am totally in favor of it. (...) If they [Europeans] are happy, I am in favor of it". In Trump's favorable statements on the EU, commentators saw the influence of Vice-President Michael Pence.

⁵⁵ G. Chazan, *Europe's top rightwing politicians gather in Koblenz*, "Financial Times" January 21, 2017, www.ft.com/content/d712b906-dff2-11e6-8405-9e5580d6e5fb

⁵⁶ "United we stand, divided we fall", letter by President Donald Tusk to the 27 heads of state or government on the future of the EU before the Malta summit, Secretariat General of the Council, January 31, 2017, www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/press/press-releases/2017/01/31-tusk-letter-future-europe/

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

A few days before the interview was published, i.e. on February 20, 2017, during his visit to Brussels, the Vice-President assured Tusk and Juncker that the United States wished to continue cooperation and partnership with the EU. He also reaffirmed Washington's support for the idea of a united Europe⁵⁸. Pence was sufficiently convincing to prompt the President of the European Council to paraphrase the American author Mark Twain and say that rumors about the death of the West have been greatly exaggerated.

Another signal which, although not devoid of ambivalence, offered hope of the White House host abandoning his Eurosceptic rhetoric came in commentaries that followed his Washington meeting with Angela Merkel on March 17-18, 2017.⁵⁹ Although it was difficult to see the meeting as an attempt to combine US interests with the strengthening of the EU's unity and global significance, it nevertheless helped dismiss the hypothesis that the US fostered Europe's disintegration. Many European commentators claimed that thanks to advisors such as Pence, President Trump realized what role the EU was playing on the European continent and its significance as a close partner and ally of the United States.

On the other hand, they noticed that despite Trump's superficial commitments to preserve transatlantic ties offered during Merkel's visit to the US, it was difficult not to see the fundamental differences on key issues between the two politicians. Many European commentators stressed that the US President had never publically mentioned the EU in the presence of the German Chancellor. His disparaging treatment of this institution constructed over dozens of years and currently associating 28 states of the Old World was interpreted as portending the US plan to transition to bilateral relations with individual European states at the expense of their unity⁶⁰.

Of course, things "could have been a lot worse", wrote *Bild* (March 17, 2017), as Trump, who was still learning how to be president, clearly sought to revert the bad impression he left with his campaign after he spoke unfavorably of Merkel, Germany and the EU. However, he did this so equivocally that Sakle Tempel, editor in chief of the German periodical *Internationale Politik*, commenting on Trump's efforts, compared him to characters from a novel by Robert L. Stevenson: "He was Mr. Jekyll while reading his statement, saying nice things

⁵⁸ R. R a m p t o n, A. M a c d o n a l d, *EU welcomes Pence assurance of Trump's support*, Reuters, February 20, 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-pence-idUSKBN15Z0S7

⁵⁹ See L. B a r b e r, D. S e v a s t o p u l o, G. T e t t, *Donald Trump in his own words*, "Financial Times" April 2, 2017, www.ft.com/content/9ae777ea-17ac-11e7-a53d-df09f373be87

⁶⁰ M. K n i g g e, *Donald Trump and Angela Merkel make nice – sort of*, "Deutsche Welle", March 17, 2017, www.dw.com/en/donald-trump-and-angela-merkel-make-nice-sort-of/a-38004004

about economic ties, his commitment to Ukraine, common friendship; all the niceties. Then, in a question-and-answer session, he's his old self: disparaging the media, criticizing the British"⁶¹.

Further reasons behind the change in Trump's perception of the European Union during the successive months of his presidency were provided by reports from Europe. The US President's first visit to Brussels on May 25, 2017 took place at a time when the EU, as an organization, appeared to be stronger than when he first took office. With the defeat of Geert Wilders' party in the Dutch parliamentary elections in mid-March 2017, it was forces that favored Europe's integration that emerged stronger.

Similarly, the French presidential election on May 7, 2017 was not won by Marine Le Pen but rather by the staunchly pro-European candidate Emmanuel Macron. Polls on the Bundestag election were also optimistic. They heralded a victory of Merkel's party and a good outcome for the Social Democrats led by Martin Schulz, the former President of the European Parliament.

Much as the Malta summit, the meeting of EU heads of state and government in Rome on March 25, 2017, on the 60th anniversary of signing the treaties of Rome, clearly recognized the challenges and the urgent need to find pragmatic solutions. The Rome summit adopted a declaration that stressed the significance of the European project: "European unity started as the dream of a few, it became the hope of the many. Then Europe became one again. Today, we are united and stronger: hundreds of millions of people across Europe benefit from living in an enlarged Europe that has overcome the old divides"⁶². The EU member states and institutions also demonstrated their unity regarding the Brexit negotiation guidelines showing the negotiating position of the United Kingdom was much weaker than it seemed only a few months earlier⁶³.

As for President Trump's May 25, 2017 visit in Brussels, he met with Tusk and Juncker, representing the European Union, at a time when moods on the future of the European project were considerably more optimistic. The talks did not provide an answer to the questions that the Europeans care most about: security (strategic cooperation between the EU and NATO), trade (TTIP) and

⁶¹ After: M. E d d y, *Germany Reacts to Merkel-Trump Visit: "Could Have Been a Lot Worse"*, "The New York Times" March 18, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/03/18/world/europe/angela-merkel-trump-germany.html?_r=0

⁶² 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, Secretariat General of the Council, March 25, 2017, www.consilium.europa.eu/pl/meetings/european-council/2017/03/25-informal-meeting/

⁶³ C. G i l e s, *The UK's negotiating position on Brexit is a fantasy*, "Financial Times" April 13, 2017, www.ft.com/content/170ba108-1ee1-11e7-a454-ab04428977f9

climate change (the Paris agreement). Three months earlier, both President Tusk and Vice-President Pence underlined the fundamental importance of western values: freedom, human rights, human dignity and transatlantic bonds. "Values and principles first – this is what we, Europe and America, should be saying", announced President of the European Council alluding to Trump's campaign trail slogan "America First"⁶⁴. Both sides agreed on the need to combat terrorism together while keeping climate change and trade issues open. The same went for the Ukrainian conflict whereas, said Tusk, there a full agreement on Russia still remained to be reached⁶⁵.

Furthermore, in the residence of the US ambassador, President Trump received the new French President despite previously predicting the electoral success of his competitor Le Pen. He nevertheless congratulated Macron on his "tremendous victory". The situation must have been quite inconvenient for the US President.

By meeting with European Union representatives in Brussels, Trump effectively acknowledged its significance. It was difficult for European politicians and commentators to tell whether the US President changed his mind or put on an act to regain trust. At any rate, Europe realized that not all of the new President's advisors shared Pence's views. Trump was also influenced by, among others, White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon who, as early as February 2017, told the German Ambassador to Washington that the United States preferred negotiating positions with individual states rather than the EU as a whole. This could be seen as an indication of further attempt to undermine Europe's solidarity and integrity. In his response, Martin Schäfer proclaimed that Berlin would not engage in direct trade talks with Washington noting that, legally speaking, such negotiations were the responsibility of the European Commission⁶⁶.

The differences of opinion among President Trump's advisors and contradictions in his own statements during the first six months after his inauguration did not make it any easier to gain clarity on where transatlantic relations were headed. Commentators in Germany believed that the failure to show

⁶⁴ *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after meeting with President Donald Trump*, Secretariat General of the Council, May 25, 2017, www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/05/25-tusk-trump-remarks/?utm_source=POLITICO.EU&utm_campaign=06f235a25e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_05_26&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_10959edeb5-06f235a25e-190027973

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ H. von der Burchard, *Forget direct trade talks with Germany, Berlin tells Trump*, "Politico" February 24, 2017, www.politico.eu/article/forget-direct-trade-talks-with-germany-berlin-tells-trump/ (accessed May 20, 2017).

clear support for the European Union would nevertheless work to its detriment undermining the credibility of the European project⁶⁷. In a speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2017, Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German Ambassador to Washington, asked if the United States would continue its half-a-century-long tradition of support for European integration. He added that to encourage the member states to leave the EU would put the United States and Europe at loggerheads and amount to a kind of “nonmilitary declaration of war”⁶⁸.

All in all, relations between the United States and the European Union during the first six months of the Trump presidency were characterized by the glaring absence of agreements on issues of critical importance for the Europeans. Although both the United States and the European community had little doubt about the importance of transatlantic relations, each pointed to a different foundation on which such a relationship should rest. While the Europeans stressed the need for upholding common values, the Trump administration increasingly emphasized the material aspect. Europe interpreted this as transactionalism eroding the alliance of western nations. What is more, during the G7 summit in Taormina, Sicily on May 26-27, 2017, in talks of key importance for the EU, such as climate change, its representatives presented a very different viewpoint from that of the US. Meanwhile, strong support for Europe came from Canada and Japan.

As the first months of Trump’s presidency went by, the EU gradually regained confidence in European integration and its own world standing. Confronted with the challenges associated with the new president, many European politicians saw the need for building greater autonomy in relations with the United States. After his meeting with Trump, President Macron admitted in an interview for *Journal du Dimanche* (May 28, 2017) that, as the French leader, he would not agree to even token concessions or let Trump, Erdogan and Putin intimidate him with their logic of the trial of strength.

Thus, the choice of Trump for US President and his governing style became an impulse for modifying the European project and especially increasing the role of the EU, although the effects of such efforts were still difficult to predict.

⁶⁷ D. Schwarzer, after: S. Erlanger, *A Worried Europe Finds Scant Reassurance on Trump’s Plans*, “The New York Times” February 19, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/a-worried-europe-finds-scant-reassurance-on-trumps-plans.html?_r=0

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

b) Security issues

From the point of view of Europe and its security interests, the most upsetting statements that Trump made during his electoral campaign were the ones which concerned NATO. These were in particular that the Atlantic Alliance was “obsolete” and that delivery on allied commitments by the United States was contingent on greater payments of dues by European allies. The problem was that the cajoling to share burdens, which US politicians have long been using, has now been replaced with blunt and plain-spoken demands. The Europeans were shocked by such rhetoric from the Republican presidential candidate who put into question the security guarantees which had been considered a given since the end of World War II and which no US administration had ever contested. Such guarantees existed in the form of an effective NATO and the American “nuclear umbrella”.

Trump’s talk on closer US-Russian relations upset Europe as a possible approval of Kremlin’s aggressive policies and a way to undermine the sanctions on Russia jointly applied by the European Union member states and the US.

Early in their presidencies, Trump and Obama admittedly made a number of common pledges on foreign policy, among them to have the US withdraw from global affairs and improve relations with Russia. This time around, however, Europe responded more anxiously, not only because of Trump’s rhetoric but mainly due to his unpredictability and absolute inexperience in international affairs or in holding state posts.

During the first months of the Trump presidency, Europe’s apprehension was eased in the wake of declarations by Vice-President Pence and other high-ranking officials of the new administration such as Secretary of Defense James Mattis. Their speeches at the Munich Security Conference on February 17-18, 2017 on the fundamental importance of NATO and the enduring quality of American commitments to its allies had a calming effect on the Europeans. They hoped that the presence of strong and more experienced personalities on Trump’s team and especially their more balanced and responsible approach to the transatlantic partnership would influence the decisions made by the new US administration. As noted by Sven Mikser, Estonian foreign affairs minister: “But I believe there are enough people in the new administration that have knowledge and experience about the needs and peculiarities of European security”. This provides certain guarantees despite dissatisfaction with the “rhetorical statements that could raise doubts about the commitment of Americans to meet their allied duties”⁶⁹.

⁶⁹D. Simenas, *One NATO member thinks Trump is right*, Bloomberg.com, www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-02-06/trump-is-right-says-baltic-nato-member-shattering-spending-goal

Europeans have been wondering about, to paraphrase Henry Kissinger's famous remark, "who in Washington to call to speak to the United States"⁷⁰. In this way, Europe was signaling its uncertainty about who was really calling the shots in Washington and to what extent President Trump was influenced by his various advisors.

While Trump softened the tone of his statements on NATO, he nevertheless did not go as far as to reaffirm the allied commitments enshrined in art. 5 of the Washington Treaty, which Europe so anxiously awaited. Although in the first months of Trump's presidency, the impact of the US power change on the functioning of NATO was minimal, and the conclusions of the Newport and Warsaw summits were implemented as planned, Europe remained apprehensive about the US commitment to the Alliance. Alluding to the fact that Trump equated Angela Merkel and President Putin, German Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen made a case for differentiating trusted allies from "those who put NATO values into question"⁷¹. The head of the German government also consistently stressed the importance of the values that underpin the transatlantic partnership arguing that "it paid to fight for structures such as NATO and the UN" and appealing for "improving the world together"⁷².

In its policy on Russia, the new US administration did not act as Europe feared it would based on election rhetoric. Trump's airstrike on a Syrian airbase in the early April 2017, which delivered a blow at Moscow-backed Bashar al-Assad, seemed to dispel doubts about his having a soft spot for Putin. Without a doubt, President Trump demonstrated a greater resolve and courage in taking action than his predecessor, which Europe welcomed. Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister Sigmar Gabriel described his actions as "understandable" while the Spokesman of the UK Prime Minister called it "a proper response to the barbaric chemical attack". The head of French diplomacy Jean-Marc Ayrault, in his turn, said that this warning sent to the "criminal regime" begins to reveal the United States' true position on Syria⁷³. The Polish authorities too expressed their full support for US military operations in Syria. President Andrzej Duda

⁷⁰ M. Karnitsching, *European jitters in Trumpville*, Politico.eu, www.politico.eu/article/europe-in-the-age-of-donald-trump-anxiety-trade-nato-russia-climate-change/

⁷¹ *Von der Leyen warnt US-Regierung vor Alleingängen*, Zeit Online, www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-02/muenchner-sicherheitskonferenz-ursula-von-der-leyen-eroeffnung

⁷² *Trump steht zur NATO, sagt Pence*, Zeit Online, www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-02/merkel-pence-usa-sicherheitskonferenz

⁷³ *So lief der Angriff auf Assad*, Bild.de, www.bild.de/politik/ausland/syrien-krise/angriff-auf-assad-51190392.bild.html

underlined that “the civilized world cannot turn a blind eye on an act of such incomprehensible barbarism”⁷⁴.

A key step towards building a future transatlantic partnership was to be made during Trump’s first visit to Europe and his meetings with the heads of NATO’s member states held in Brussels in late May 2017. Europe hoped that Trump’s visit would confirm the significance of the Alliance and dispel all doubts about the unconditional application of art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. Therefore, special preparations were made, including a detailed meeting agenda with matters important for the new administration, such as fight against terrorism.

As part of the preparation process, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg came to Washington on April 12 2017. The importance of his visit lied in part in its coinciding with President Trump’s about-face on NATO being “obsolete”. Stoltenberg’s reaction was to declare that, in response to appeals from the new administration, European members of the Alliance would present their individual plans for achieving the Newport-agreed defense spending target of 2% of GDP by 2024⁷⁵. As noted by Stoltenberg, the effects of Trump’s pressure on that issue could already be seen. He spoke of fair burden sharing as “his top priority since he took office”. “We know that we all need to contribute our fair share because we need to keep our nations safe in a more dangerous world”, assured Stoltenberg⁷⁶. Notably, as early as 2016, European states invested US\$ 10 billion more into defense than they did in the preceding year, which provides a response of sorts to US expectations⁷⁷.

Note also that while, referring to Trump’s demands, European politicians confirmed their willingness to deliver on Newport commitments, they included certain provisos in their declarations. They noted, for instance, how such funds would be spent and that spending would have to be more efficient to ensure greater benefits than a mere increase in spending to a prescribed level. According to European leaders, one should factor in their contributions to UN

⁷⁴ *Government spokesman: Poland supports measures aimed at stabilizing the Syrian situation*, PolskieRadio.pl, www.polskieradio.pl/5/3Artykul/1749838,Rzecznik-rzadu-Polska-popiera-dzialania-zmierzajace-do-ustabilizowania-sytuacji-w-Syrii

⁷⁵ D. M. H e r s z e n h o r n, T. P a l m e r i, *NATO, no longer obsolete, braces for Hurricane Trump*, Politico.eu, www.politico.eu/article/nato-no-longer-obsolete-braces-for-hurricane-donald-trump-brussels-summit/

⁷⁶ *Joint Press Conference of President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg*, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/12/joint-press-conference-president-trump-and-nato-secretary-general

⁷⁷ *Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Russia, Trump, NATO and populism*, Politico.eu, www.politico.eu/blogs/playbook-plus/2017/05/anders-fogh-rasmussen-on-russia-trump-nato-nordstream-and-populism/

stabilization missions which, after all, help maintain peace and security in the world. Such contributions, they noted, are not accounted for in the calculations regarding the Newport spending targets.

With respect to such spending, two EU countries, i.e. Poland and Estonia, stand out by having already met their 2% of GDP defense spending target (other countries that have done so are the United Kingdom and Greece). Very close to the required limit are Lithuania, Latvia and Romania. These states are open to Trump's requirements, declaring a willingness to continue to strengthen their defense capabilities and presenting ambitious plans to spend more on security. This may place Central and Eastern Europe in a better negotiating position vis-à-vis the new US administration. President Trump's visit to Warsaw on July 5-6, 2017 and his involvement in the Three Seas Initiative summit provide an opportunity to reaffirm the allied obligations of the United States to that part of Europe and initiate new areas of cooperation between the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the United States.

Germany, the country most lambasted by Trump, was itself critical of Trump's tweet after his meeting with Merkel regarding the "huge sums of money" that Germany allegedly owed to NATO. In her response, von der Leyen recalled that "there is no debt account at NATO"⁷⁸. While both the Defense Minister and Angela Merkel committed to gradually increase spending to the agreed level, the 2% of GDP target was criticized by other German politicians and especially by the coalition party SPD. Head of diplomacy Gabriel noted that NATO member states should not view the new US administration as a "blessing to engage in a cycle of arms upgrading" and stressed that "fighting social ills like poverty was more likely to have a lasting effect on world peace than building bigger, better armies"⁷⁹.

Despite hopes, the informal NATO summit held in Brussels on May 25, 2017, which was attended by the US President, did not dispel Europe's misgivings. In his address, President Trump only repeated his critique of the European allies over their insufficient contributions to NATO's budget. What he failed to add was that the United States felt obliged to respect art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. Europe responded with disappointment and interpreted the omission as yet another way of questioning allied support by America. German observers of Trump's visit to Brussels concluded that "one cannot rely on this

⁷⁸ *Germany rejects Trump's claim it owes NATO and U.S. "vast sums" for defense*, www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-germany-defence-idUSKBN16Q0D8

⁷⁹ *Merkel stresses NATO also crucial for US*, www.dw.com/en/merkel-stresses-nato-also-crucial-for-us/a-37609965

US President”⁸⁰. There was even a comment that after the visit, “the Atlantic remains upsettingly wide”⁸¹.

Trump’s July 6, 2017 speech in Warsaw concerning US commitments to respect art. 5 of the Washington Treaty lessened Europe’s fears regarding America’s credibility as the key ally and its security guarantees. President of the European Council Donald Tusk admitted that Europe had long waited to hear such pledges from Trump. Tusk argued further that the question that remains to be answered is whether the pledge is empty talk or an expression of a new approach towards NATO. The French radio station RFI noted that the US President has made a complete U-turn from his campaign trail opinions, and is now calling for the unity of the West and pointing out threats from Russia. Other French media stressed the effort of the US leader to appease European allies, describing his speech as the most pro-European since his taking of office. Germany noted that although Trump never withdrew on his demand for Europe to increase its military budgets, he tried to revert the bad impression left by his last visit to Brussels. Notice was also taken of Trump’s criticism of Russia’s destabilizing measures during a joint press conference with President Andrzej Duda.

Nevertheless, there was also a positive outcome of the uncertainty over the United States’ security guarantees. Two factors, in fact, i.e. the UK’s decision to leave the European Union and the impact of Trump’s presidency, provided an impulse for a Europe-wide debate on the EU’s international role. Its main focus was on the need for the European community to assume greater responsibility for international affairs. This would help strengthen Europe’s capabilities and significance, which would be essential in any of its negotiations with the United States. The resolution of the EU’s key internal problems such as the eurozone crisis, the migrant crisis, Brexit and the rise in Euroskepticism was considered to be the first step in this process.

A debate on ensuring complete autonomy of the EU in the field of security by strengthening the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) was inspired by the documents released first by the French and German heads of diplomacy on June 28, 2016 and subsequently by the defense ministers of both countries on September 12, 2016. One of the documents presented the prospects of developing the European project as a union for security until the EU assumes

⁸⁰ T. G u t s c h k e r, *Trump, der Fremde*, FAZ, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/trumps-praesidentschaft/kommentar-trump-der-fremde-15035247.html

⁸¹ K. K ü s t n e r, *Mister Unberechenbar wütet weiter*, Tagesschau.de, www.tagesschau.de/kommentar/trump-1153.html

the role of a global actor influencing not only its immediate neighborhood but also the world at large. The other document contained specific proposals for the future strengthening of the CSDP, including an accelerated implementation of the European Council's 2013 and 2015 decisions, increasing the operational effectiveness of the CSDP, developing joint military capacities and stepping up research and development within the European military sector⁸².

Further stages of the debate were reflected in, among others, the conclusions of the joint session of the EU's foreign and defense ministers held on November 14-15, 2016. The next step was the European Defense Action Plan (EDAP), published by the European Commission on November 30, 2016, and finally the conclusions of the European Council of December 15, 2016. A key action was the EU's proposition, presented in June 2017, to create a multi-million-euro Defense Fund as a component of the EDAP. As stage one of an effort to ensure closer integration and military cooperation within the European Union, the fund would finance the development of defense technologies (electronics, software, robotics) and sophisticated military equipment such as drones and helicopters⁸³.

Debates on strengthening the CSDP and giving it a new dynamic were also driven by fears of the United States reducing its engagement in European security and the resulting weakening of NATO. One of the main focal points of the debate was the stimulation of the structural cooperation mechanism enabling broader military cooperation among the interested states without the need to ensure the consent of the remaining members. Thus, Trump's ominous rhetoric and behavior motivated the EU to reflect on building up their own defense capabilities. "The times in which we could completely depend on others are, to a certain extent, over (...). We, Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands", appealed Angela Merkel at an election rally in Munich in late May 2017, immediately after the G7 Taormina summit. This appeared to be the best conclusion that Europe could draw with respect to security six months into Trump's presidency⁸⁴.

⁸² K. Szubart, *Unia Europejska „dwóch prędkości”? Niemcy and WPBiO po Brexicie*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego" issue 281/2016, www.iz.poznan.pl

⁸³ J. Barigazzi, D. M. Herszenhorn, H. Cooper, *After years of talk, EU plans defense spending spree*, www.politico.eu/article/after-years-of-talk-eu-plans-defense-spending-spreec.

⁸⁴ *Merkel nach Gipfel mit Trump „Die Zeiten, in denen wir uns auf andere völlig verlassen konnten, sind ein Stück vorbei"*, SpiegelOnline, May 28, 2017, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/angela-merkel-zeigt-sich-nach-g7-gipfel-enttauscht-von-donald-trump-a-1149588.html

c) Trade relations

Trump's campaign trail pledges and his first steps as US president forebode a major overhaul of the US trade policy and a departure from the policies upheld during the Obama presidency. Early on, the new administration revealed its transactional approach to economic relations, which signified the pursuit of narrow US interests in keeping with the campaign slogan "America First". Such an approach put into question the liberal world trade system based on WTO rules, which underpinned the world order as seen by the member states of the European Union.

Unlike on security issues, the new US President largely adhered to his campaign trail promises relating to trade policies. One expression of his critical approach to multilateral trade agreements, which he viewed as unfair and unequal, was to withdraw the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on his first day in office. The negotiations on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) were not resumed since Trump's inauguration and it was highly unlikely for that to happen in the foreseeable future. The long-term prospects for the TTIP were also an unknown. Even though Trump never directly criticized the agreement, public opinion in European countries, which even during Obama's presidency disapproved of the agreement, was hardly more favorable after the change of administration in Washington.

The Brussels meeting between Trump and the EU leaders Tusk and Juncker concerned possible cooperation between the United States and the EU on merely a handful of specific issues having to do with trade policy. Meanwhile, negotiations on a general trade agreement were postponed. Notably, a failure to negotiate the TTIP will have a strong symbolic significance as a fiasco of the biggest transatlantic project in recent years. It may also encourage the states of Europe to enter into bilateral trade agreements with the United States. In fact, this is precisely the kind of solution that President Trump suggested to the UK once it leaves the EU. A similar message was given to the German Ambassador to the United States. A trend of establishing bilateral relations between individual European states and the US would threaten union solidarity and, as such, was criticized by European leaders.

The change in the US trade policy, which began to lean towards protectionism, has greatly upset Europe. President Trump directly complained of unfair trade practices used by the states which ran the biggest surpluses in their trade with the US, i.e. mainly China and Germany. And even though the trend was not new (the Obama administration was also critical of Germany's and China's trade surpluses vis-à-vis the US, and in fact placed the two states on

its “currency monitoring list”), the new administration was more determined to change this by restricting access to the US market. Trump responded to charges of his return to economic isolationism by saying: “They think I’m an ‘isolationist’, but ‘I’m a free trader’”⁸⁵. From the perspective of the European Union, whose exports were designed largely for the US market (more than 20% of total exports in 2016), new trade barriers imposed by the US would definitely be harmful.

Such protectionist leanings were expressed in the official position expressed by the US delegation during the Baden-Baden G20 summit of finance ministers on March 17-18, 2017. Due to a US objection, the traditional reference in the final summit statement to prevent all forms of protectionism was dropped in favor of a more general statement on the need to strengthen the contributions of trade to national economies. The loss of the US as an ally in building global liberal trade in keeping with WTO rules was perceived by the European Union as a threat as well as an opportunity for China, which despite still being communist, unambiguously supported the upholding and developing of such an economic order across the world. Note that China was also among the leaders in tackling on other challenge of key significance for international relations, i.e. global warming.

The EU states formulated a response to Trump’s continuous comments on the need to reduce the US trade deficits with Germany, France, Italy and Ireland. The European Commission stressed its position as the EU’s negotiator and prepared, in May 2017, on behalf of the 28 member states, a letter to the US administration in which it attributed trade surpluses of European countries directly to high demand for European products in the United States rather than unfair barriers imposed by the EU, as suggested by Trump. There was also another document prepared to highlight the key benefits of maintaining the liberal world trade system and the threats of economic protectionism and isolationism.

The states of Central and Eastern Europe saw opportunities in working with the US in the energy sector. The Americans are increasing their share in global shale gas exports and seek to lift any related restrictions. Thanks to liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Poland and Lithuania and a steadily growing network of interconnector gas pipelines linking neighboring countries, the region is an attracting market with a high consumption potential.

⁸⁵ P. D o m m, *Trump: They think I’m an “isolationist”, but “I’m a free trader”*, www.cnn.com/2016/08/11/trump-they-think-im-an-isolationist-but-im-a-free-trader.html

Cooperation of this kind actually began with the first supply of American LNG to Poland in June 2017. Deputy Energy Minister Michał Kurtyka proclaimed the shipment as a breakthrough stressing that “for the first time ever, US gas has become competitive in this part of Europe”⁸⁶. A mid-term supply agreement with the United States as well as other supply diversification endeavors (including efforts to procure supplies from Qatar and plans to construct the Baltic Pipeline connecting Poland and Denmark) would offer a chance to durably diversify Europe’s gas supplies and strengthen its negotiation position against Gazprom, the dominant player in Russia. This point precisely was raised by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during Senate hearings: “Gas exports are not only for profit but also political pressure on Russia and help for NATO allies”.

From the viewpoint of EU countries, including Poland, one of the key factors is the position of the United States on the Nord Stream 2, a project posing potential threats to the exports-related interests of this region of Europe. Therefore, The United States are putting pressure on Nordic countries, which seek to delay the pipeline construction and gain time for competing projects such as the so called Norwegian Corridor⁸⁷.

d) Threat to climate agreement

Trump’s election pledges included the rollbacks of many of the rules, regulations and deals put in place and concluded by President Obama. One of them was the Paris climate agreement (or, to be exact, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) signed on December 12, 2015. The new US President repeatedly questioned the science behind human-caused global climate change. Responding to the proclaimed plans of the Republican candidate, the European Union launched a diplomatic offensive designed to convince the United States to continue honoring the Paris agreement. Particularly active in the field were the diplomats of France, Italy and Germany, i.e. the host countries of the 2015 climate summit, the Sicily G7 summit of May 2017 and the Hamburg G20 summit of July 2017 respectively.

Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union Maros Sefcovic met in Washington in the early March 2017 with Trump administration officials, including Gary Cohn, Director of the National Economic Council, Deputy Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs Kenneth

⁸⁶ *First US LNG supply reaches Poland*, BiznesAlert, <http://biznesalert.pl/pierwsza-dostawa-lng-usa-dotarla-polski/>

⁸⁷ P. Maciążek, J. Pałowski, *Trump w Polsce. Broń i gaz dla Międzymorza*, Defence24, www.defence24.pl/610576,trump-w-polsce-i-gaz-dla-miedzymorza-10-punktow

Juster and Special Assistant to the President for International Energy and Environment George David Banks. To demonstrate the determination of world powers to adhere to the Paris agreement regardless of the US decision, the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy visited Canada and China, while other EU officials remained continuously in touch with African and South American countries as well as members of the Climate Coalition (the High Ambition Coalition).

Sefcovic and other responsible EU officials sought to persuade their American counterparts that withdrawal from the agreement would gravely harm transatlantic relations. It would also weaken the standing of the West as a world leader on this key issue which, in the long term, was inextricably linked to international peace, security and welfare. In talks with the US administration, European diplomats attempted to demonstrate that a withdrawal from the Paris agreement, which was signed by nearly all states of the world (other than Syria and Nicaragua), would be against the best interests of the United States.

Aware of how important the transactional approach to international relations was for the new administration, Europe placed emphasis on business opportunities and new technologies. By withdrawing from the agreement, the United States would risk surrendering ground to the EU, China and India on the economic benefits of pure energy projects⁸⁸. America would thus be missing a world-wide trend, which was no longer a niche as it included nearly all countries of the world (by May 2017, the Paris agreement was ratified by 144 states jointly accounting for 83% of the total greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere)⁸⁹.

The Europeans pinned their hopes on persons immediately surrounding President Trump. These included US Secretary of State Tillerson and Trump's advisors: Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner (who are privately the President's daughter and son-in-law). All of them were in favor of the United States remaining among the countries that implement the Paris agreement. Brussels noted that a change of heart on climate was also observed in the Republican Party itself, which traditionally, contrary to the Democrats, denied human impact on world climate. Former Republic Secretaries of State, including James Baker and George Shultz, as well as former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson favored a carbon tax. Republican politicians, whose party has always cared

⁸⁸ B. D e s e, *Paris Isn't Burning. Why the Climate Agreement Will Survive Trump*, "Foreign Affairs" May 22, 2017, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2017-05-22/paris-isnt-burning

⁸⁹ *Climat: 196 pays discutent de la mise en oeuvre de l'accord de Paris*, "Challenges" May 9, 2017, www.challenges.fr/entreprise/environnement/climat-196-pays-discutent-de-la-mise-en-oeuvre-de-l-accord-de-paris_472070

greatly for all military and defense issues, could not have overlooked the fact that the US armed forces were actually prepared for climate change. The pullout from the Paris agreement was opposed by the management of one of the United States' largest oil companies ExxonMobil, previously ran by Tillerson, which once lobbied against signing such environmental agreements as the Kyoto Protocol by the United States⁹⁰.

European politicians and diplomats were keenly aware that one of the biggest opponents of the Paris agreement was White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon. Some Trump administration officials have consulted the energy industry, including the American Petroleum Institute, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, ConocoPhillips and Peabody Energy. In talks with the Europeans, White House officials said that conservatives and the industrial lobby could only be convinced to back keeping the US among the signatories of the Paris agreement if the United States received technological support for reducing the greenhouse gases produced by burning coal and other fossil fuels⁹¹. However, the other states rejected the option of renegotiating the terms of this agreement, whose forging had taken years of heated debates. This limited the discussions to the implementation of the Paris agreement by its actual signatories.

President Trump dragged his feet on the decision to have the US withdraw from the Paris agreement. He left his European partners hanging during the talks in Brussels and the G7 summit in Taormina, Sicily. The meetings revealed a glaring disconnect between the United States and the European Union, which – during the Bonn conference in the early June 2017, committed to adopt climate change prevention measures going even beyond Paris agreement provisions⁹². Tensions also arose with other US partners. Angela Merkel described the debate on such issues among the G7 states as “very difficult, not to say very unsatisfactory”. In it, six partners (or in fact seven, if the EU as an institution is included) failed to talk one other, i.e. the United States, to commit to ratify the Paris agreement⁹³. French President Macron

⁹⁰ T. R i d o u t, T. W a s s m a n n, *Many Urge Trump to Remain in Paris Agreement, Let's Hope He Listens*, GMF, May 8, 2017, www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/05/08/many-urge-trump-remain-paris-agreement-lets-hope-he-listens

⁹¹ A. R e s t u c c i a, *Trump advisers want concessions for coal if U.S. stays in climate pact*, “Politico” March 17, 2017, www.politico.com/story/2017/03/trump-climate-pact-coal-concessions-236196

⁹² *EU to set out major contribution to more ambitious global climate action at Bonn conference*, European Commission, February 20, 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-629_en.htm

⁹³ *Klimaschutz: Trump gegen Alle*, “Deutsche Welle” May 27, 2017, www.dw.com/de/klimaschutz-trump-gegen-alle/a-39009093

admitted that the heads of the remaining six states failed to persuade the new US President about the significance of the issue generally and specifically for the US economy⁹⁴.

Thus, the US president announced his decision to pull out of the Paris agreement a week after the Brussels meeting, i.e. as early as June 1, 2017. Even though one day later, US Secretary of State Tillerson assured he did not believe the United States would slow down its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, his words could not stop criticism by European politicians. EU authorities rejected Trump's idea to renegotiate the Paris agreement. The heads of European states even proposed cooperation in the deployment of new zero-emissions technologies to the American public, the governors of individual states, and industry⁹⁵. In an English-language statement, the French President said: "(...) don't be mistaken on climate, there is no plan B because there is no plan B". Paraphrasing Trump's election slogan, he pleaded to: "Make our planet great again"⁹⁶. During his joint appearance in Brussels with Prime Minister Chin Li Keqiang, President of the European Council Donald Tusk evaluated Trump's decision to be a big mistake. Meanwhile, the head of the Chinese government reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to the Paris agreement. European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete also assured that the Paris agreement would be implemented by its signatories regardless of White House decisions⁹⁷. The European Union as an organization, as well as Germany and France, have shown their resolve to follow through with the implementation of the climate agreement as early as the G20 summit in Hamburg. The summit's conclusions read that all of the participating states, with the exception of the United States, reaffirmed the irreversibility of their prior climate obligations.

All this did not help clear the air in Europe's relations with the new US administration. Despite the efforts and dedication of the European allies to maintain a strong transatlantic partnership, many signals coming out of Washington suggested that the US President puts the interests of the United

⁹⁴ G7: *Donald Trump a pris conscience des enjeux climatiques selon Emmanuel Macron*, "Challenges" May 27, 2017, www.challenges.fr/monde/g7-donald-trump-a-pris-conscience-des-enjeux-climatiques-selon-emmanuel-macron_476327

⁹⁵ D. B o f f e y, K. C o n n o l l y, A. A s t h a n a, *EU to bypass Trump administration after Paris climate agreement pullout*, "The Guardian" June 2, 2017, www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/02/european-leaders-vow-to-keep-fighting-global-warming-despite-us-withdrawal

⁹⁶ *Climat: Emmanuel macron dénonce 'une faute pour l'avenir de notre planète' après le retrait américain de l'accord de Paris*, Franceinfo, 1.06.2017, www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/usa/presidentielle/donald-trump/direct-accord-de-paris-trump-va-trancher-le-monde-retientson-souffle_22174.html

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

States first and views all of his country's potential partners through that prism. The lack of clear declarations from Trump to have the United States uphold its security commitments and its withdrawal from the Paris agreement made America less credible in the eyes of its European allies. For Europe, this appears to be a starting point for broader reflections on the need to increase European defense capabilities and ensure a greater political role for the European Union in the international arena.

III.

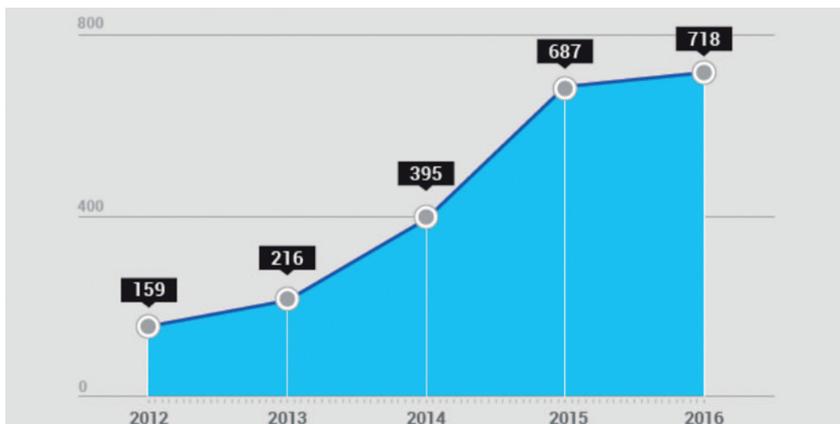
SEBASTIAN WOJCIECHOWSKI

The European Union and the United States vs. Terrorism

The interests of the European Union and its member states and those of the United States are divergent if not mutually exclusive on a range of issues. During the first six months of Donald Trump's presidency, such differences came into sharp relief⁹⁸. Nevertheless, there are still a number of issues in transatlantic relations on which cooperation continues to be good due to shared security priorities⁹⁹. Other than drug and weapons trafficking, an excellent example is the fight against terrorism. Close cooperation in combatting terrorism began after the 9/11 al-Qaeda attack on America. Ties grew even closer after the terrorist attacks on Europe, first in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and then in London on July 7-21, 2005. Another factor was the escalation of threats from ISIS

Chart 1

Rise in the number of arrests for jihadism-motivated terrorist activities in the European Union between 2012 and 2016



Source: TE-SAT European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017, Europol, www.europol.europa.eu (accessed June 16, 2017).

⁹⁸ S. Patric, *Trump and World Order, The Return of Self-Help*, "Foreign Affairs" Vol. 96, No. 2, March/April 2017.

⁹⁹ Another example of good cooperation is combating drug and weapons trafficking.

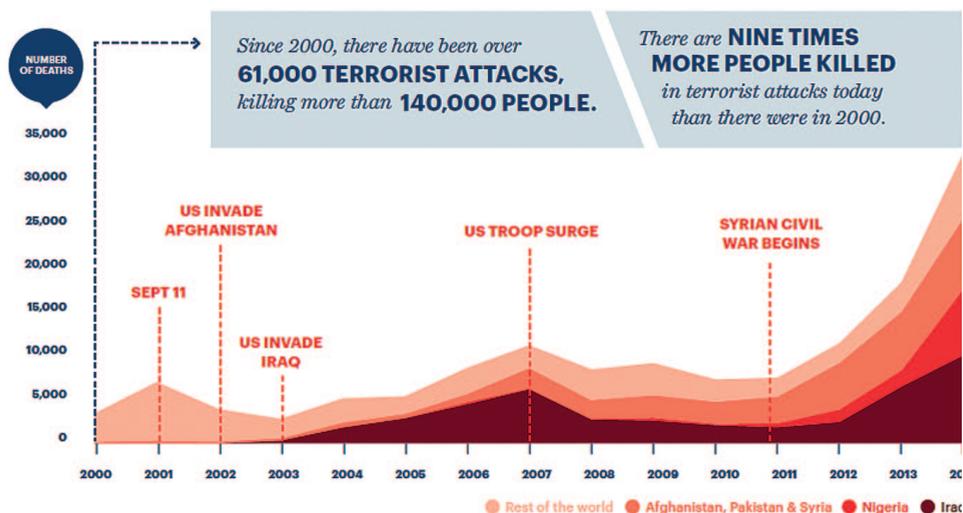
The key terrorism-related factors applicable to the European Union and the United States are:

1. The allied counter-terrorist measures on the part of the European Union and the US, among them against ISIS (in Iraq, Syria and Libya) and against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The need for such efforts was reaffirmed during the NATO summit in Warsaw on July 2016 and during the Brussels meetings of May 2017.

2. The perception by both parties that terrorism is a critical global threat. Terrorist attacks take place in various parts of the world. Every year, they are perpetrated in approximately 100 countries. In 2000-2015 alone, roughly 60,000 attacks were perpetrated globally killing more than 140,000 people.

Chart 2

Number of terrorist attacks and their victims in 2000-2015



Source: *Global Terrorism Index 2015. Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism*, Institute for Economics & Peace, www.economicsandpeace.org (June 15, 2017).

3. Countries particularly exposed to terrorist attacks include the United States¹⁰⁰ and the states of the European Union¹⁰¹, where a growing number of

¹⁰⁰ The U.S. comes 36th in the world terrorist threat ranking of the Global Terrorism Index, *Global Terrorism Index 2016. Measuring and understanding the Impact of Terrorism*, Institute for Economics & Peace, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11> (accessed May 19, 2017).

¹⁰¹ The following selected member states of the EU have the following rankings in Global Terrorism Index: France: 29, the United Kingdom: 34, Bulgaria: 82, Belgium: 88, Spain: 89, Estonia: 92, The Netherlands: 97, *ibid*.

failed, foiled and completed attacks are have been recorded. The EU member states, for instance, saw a total of 152 such attacks in 2013, 201 in 2014, and 211 in 2015. During that period, a substantial increase was recorded in the number of people arrested over alleged terrorist links and affiliations. In 2013, this applied to 535 people, followed by 774 in 2014 and as many as 1077 in 2015. The biggest number of arrests were made in France (424), Spain (187), the United Kingdom (134), Belgium (61), Austria (49), Ireland (41), Italy (40) and Germany (40).

According to the Global Terrorism Database, the United States suffered 1473 terrorist incidents between 1970 and 2015, including 19 in 2013, 26 in 2014 and 38 in 2015¹⁰².

4. The main cause of terrorism across the world today is religious fundamentalism. In the case of the European Union and the United States, as significant as it is, such fundamentalism is not the predominant cause of the problem. Other critical factors affecting the European Union include separatist, extreme left and extreme right wing terrorism. For instance, in 2015, out of the total number of 211 failed, foiled and completed terrorist attacks in that country, only 17 were religion-motivated (Islamist), while 65 were separatist, 13: extreme left and 9: extreme right. Meanwhile, as many as 109 attacks did not fit into any of the above Europol categories (classified as not specified). Separatist attacks were predominant in France (47 cases) and Spain (18 cases). 15 Islamist-motivated attacks took place in France and 2 in Denmark. Of the total number of 199 events recorded in 2014, only two were Islamist. None of the 152 attacks carried out in 2013 were of such nature¹⁰³.

According to the Europol, the trend picked up in 2016 when out of the total number of 142 attacks perpetrated in the European Union, an astounding 99 were separatism- and 13 jihadism-motivated.

¹⁰² *Global Terrorism Database*, www.start.umd.edu/gtd (accessed May 20, 2017).

¹⁰³ *Europol, European Law Enforcement Agency TE-SAT 2015 and 2016, European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2015 and 2016*, www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports (accessed May 22, 2017).

Table 1
Terrorist attacks in the European Union in 2016 and their motives

Member State	Jihadist	Left-wing	Right-wing	Separatist	Single issue	Not specified	Total
Belgium	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
France	5	0	0	18	0	0	23
Germany	4	0	0	0	0	1	5
Greece	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
Italy	0	16	0	0	0	1	17
Netherlands	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Spain	0	5	0	5	0	0	10
UK	0	0	0	76	0	0	76
Total	13	27	1	99	0	2	142

Source: *TE-SAT European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*, Europol, www.europol.Europe.eu (accessed June 19, 2017)

Out of the total number of 1473 incidents committed the United States between 1970 and 2015, 641 were perpetrated by members of the extreme right wing, 305 – by members of the extreme left wing, 305 – were the so-called single-issue terrorism, and 222 involved jihadists. During the period in question, 151 attacks were organized by the Ku Klux Klan, 146 by radical environmentalists (e.g. the Weather Underground, the Earth Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Front), 138 by political/ethnic groups (e.g. the Jewish Defense League, the Aryan Nations, the Black Panther Party), and 93 by Islamist organizations (the so-called core al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab and other al-Qaeda-linked organizations).

5. The biggest threat in the case of Islamic terrorism are not persons who have fought in ISIS and who later, for a variety of reasons and in various ways, returned to either the European Union or the United States. This is because such individuals are relatively easy to track. The same goes for Islamists living in the EU and the US, who are radical and active, frequently appearing on Internet forums and mosques. The most dangerous individuals are those who identify themselves with Islamic fundamentalism and are willing to resort to terrorism but who do not reveal their views to the public.

6. The EU and the United States share also the high and growing risk of Islamists using chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons as well as cyberterrorism. The fact that such threats have reached a high level was raised on multiple occasions by President Barack Obama, who spoke in particular of

the US being exposed to grave danger of a nuclear explosion taking place e.g. in Manhattan. In January 2017, a similar warning was sounded by UK Security Minister Ben Wallace, who revealed a police discovery of a jihadist laboratory in Morocco, which could be used to produce chemical and biological weapons. ISIS possesses a difficult-to-assess arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, which it acquired in Iraq, Syria and Libya. ISIS also has military and civilian experts specializing in this field. Although prior cases of ISIS using chemical weapons in Iraq or Syria had more of a propaganda than military impact (e.g. the use of various chemicals in the Kobani area and the deployment of mustard gas and chlorine in the Makhmur region), the danger is very real, especially with ISIS, pushed into a corner, resorting to the use of such weapons on a larger scale, also in the European Union and the United States¹⁰⁴.

With respect to biological weapons, specialists warn against the threat of the use of plague bacteria by militant Islamists. In the early 2017, the World Health Organization officially pronounced plague bacteria to be the world's most dangerous biological threat. Its assessment results, among other things, from the ease of producing plague bacteria, the rapid spread of the disease, its high death rates (some plague varieties, such as the pneumonic plague, have mortality rates of 90 to 100%), the lack of an efficacious vaccine, the occasional inefficacy of the existing antibiotics, and the ease with which the bacteria may be brought into specific countries.

In addition to the above similarities between the EU and the USA regarding the perception of and the fight against terrorist threats, there are also a number of significant differences. The most critical of them are as follows:

1. A very important additional factor at play in the European Union which may contribute to the rise of terrorism is the mass influx of migrants into Europe, with terrorists and terrorist sympathizers hiding among their ranks. On the one hand, the problem has to do with the activities of Islamic terrorists harbored by or seeking the support of migrants and refugees. On the other hand, proper account needs to be taken of cases of terrorism being used by extremist groups (e.g. rightists, leftists and separatists) which for many different reasons either negate or support the influx of migrants and/or refugees into the EU.

2. The European Union and the United States differ in their approach to security and specifically in their counter-terrorism policies. The brand of counter-terrorism dominant in the EU, defined as defensive, is focused on prevention and identification of terrorist threats, including the protection of

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. *TE-SAT European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*, Europol, www.europol.europa.eu (accessed June 16, 2017).

persons and places particularly at risk of attacks. A key role with this respect is played by special services and forces, the police, the military and specialized security agencies.

As for the United States, the prevailing tactic is to use an offensive combination of political, military, police, legal and other measures aimed at combatting terrorism. Such efforts are combined with prevention and combating various new forms of terrorism.

3. The EU's terrorism combatting measures are focused on the territories of the member states. The initiatives launched outside of this region, e.g. in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Libya, are very limited in terms of both the forces deployed and the funds expended. The efforts are often interdisciplinary, with diplomatic, logistic, training and humanitarian actions clearly prevailing over strictly military engagements. The EU tends to rely on "the force of arguments", unlike the US, which promotes "the argument of force". The United States is engaged in large-scale domestic and international operations aimed at fighting terrorists. Next to political solutions¹⁰⁵, particular emphasis is placed on the use of military instruments¹⁰⁶.

As a result of the existing terrorist threats, including those from the so-called Islamic State, and despite growing differences and controversies, the European Union and the United States¹⁰⁷ are set not only to continue but also to tighten their cooperation in the field. This is due not only to the common enemy syndrome and the urgency of working together but also to the increased threats of terrorism and armed conflicts observed in various parts of the world.

¹⁰⁵ A case in point is the meeting between President Trump and the leaders of 55 Muslim states in Riyadh on May 21, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ An example are US counter-terrorist operations in Afghanistan, including the use of the GBU-43 missile, nicknamed "the mother of all bombs" on April 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ P. F e a v e r, H. B r a n d s, *Trump and Terrorism, U.S. Strategy after ISIS*, "Foreign Affairs" Vol. 96, No. 2, March/April 2017.

Chart 3

Scope and locations of armed conflicts across the world in 2006-2015



Source: *SIPRI Yearbook 2016, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, SIPRI 2016, www.sipriyearbook.org (accessed June 18, 2017)

In the mid-2017, the world (including the European Union and the United States) is likely to see a further escalation of terrorism, in particular driven by Islamism. This results from a variety of factors, including the fact that ISIS, which continues to suffer successive defeats in Syria and Iraq, is going to need spectacular success to mobilize its supporters to continue fighting. Another determinant is ISIS's strategy of "creating new fronts", i.e. conducting attacks in successive cities and on various continents¹⁰⁸.

This was pointed out on repeated occasions by Europol Director Rob Wainwright, who said that the so-called Islamic State resolved to send "fanatics" to both Europe and the United States. The goal is to divert attention from ISIS' failures in Syria and Iraq. According to Wainwright, "the ability to conduct spectacular attacks in Europe is an alternative for maintaining a high morale

¹⁰⁸ One example is the Manchester attack on May 22, 2017.

and demonstrating that ISIS is still strong". He has disclosed that Europe is currently conducting over 50 investigations against terrorist groups. Dozens of such investigations are also under way in the United States.

Valid indications of the state of transatlantic relations, and specifically of counter-terrorism cooperation, was provided by the meeting of heads of NATO states in Brussels on May 25, 2017. Although no significant breakthroughs took place in mutual relations, the summit showed a will and necessity to continue working together. Additionally, as described by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the meeting provided "a signal of partnership" in mutual relations.

This was especially significant after D. Trump repeatedly criticized European allies and NATO itself during his presidential campaign for not being sufficiently engaged in fighting terrorism. He also questioned the fundamental principle of mutual aid in case of a threat. Over time, President Trump's adopted a more moderate position on the issue, as suggested by his April 2017 statement at a joint press conference of the US President and NATO Secretary General during which the American leader declared he thought that "NATO is no longer obsolete". Despite this declaration, the majority of the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization viewed the new US administration with skepticism and awaited the unfolding of the Brussels summit with a certain degree of apprehension.

The few topics which dominated the Brussels consultations included fight against terrorism, defense spending by the member states, cooperation between the European Union and NATO and the situation in Afghanistan. A key role in combating terrorism was played by NATO's decision to join the coalition fighting ISIS and set up a special counter-terrorist unit. Hitherto, the so-called counter-terrorist coalition comprised 68 states which relied on a wide range of measures to tackle Islamist threats. Some of them took part in air raids against jihadist positions, others supported forces fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq, participated in special operations and provided humanitarian aid.

The official announcement on NATO's joining of the international coalition fighting ISIS came from NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg made the important reservation that the joining of the international coalition did not constitute NATO's preparedness to take part in military operations and become directly involved in fighting ISIS. The main goal would be to continue the ongoing training of Iraqi forces, by e.g. disarming improvised explosive devices, strengthening intelligence cooperation, expanding information exchange, providing continued support by means of the so-called electronic reconnaissance aircraft and air-to-air refueling of coalition aircraft.

Another concern of critical importance for the success of the fight against terrorism that was addressed in Brussels was the situation in Afghanistan. In view of substantial success of the Taliban who, according to some sources, controlled 20 to 25% of Afghan territory in mid-2017, and in response to a request from the Afghan authorities, NATO heads resolved to extend information exchange and boost allied military presence in Afghanistan. One part of the plan was to step up the training of Afghan police officers and military personnel. In mid 2017, the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan incorporated approximately 13,000 military and civilian personnel from the member states of the Atlantic Alliance.

Table 2
Engagement in NATO Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan by country as of May 2017

	Albania	83		Germany	980		Portugal	10
	Armenia	121		Greece	4		Romania	587
	Australia	270		Hungary	90		Slovakia	38
	Austria	10		Iceland	2		Slovenia	7
	Azerbaijan	94		Italy	1,037		Spain	8
	Belgium	62		Latvia	22		Sweden	25
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	55		Lithuania	21		the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹	39
	Bulgaria	92		Luxembourg	1		Turkey	659
	Croatia	95		Mongolia	120		Ukraine	10
	Czech Republic	223		Montenegro	18		United Kingdom	500
	Denmark	97		Netherlands	100		United States	6,941
	Estonia	4		New Zealand	10			
	Finland	29		Norway	42			
	Georgia	872		Poland	198			
						Total		13,576

Source: *Resolute Support Mission: Key Facts and Figures*, www.nato.int/nato_static (accessed May 20, 2017).

The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan became increasingly upsetting for the international community and especially for the United States and European Union. The lack of progress in stabilizing Afghanistan resulted not as much from the Taliban taking control over successive Afghan provinces but also from their success in organizing spectacular large-scale terrorist attacks. One of the most tragic examples was their May 31, 2017 attack in Kabul's best protected district, the site of embassies and key government buildings. The explosion, which killed ca. 150 people and injured more than 460, was the bloodiest terrorist attack in Afghanistan since the toppling of the Taliban in 2001.

Another grave problem that stood in the way of Afghanistan's stabilization was the rise in significance and influence in the region of ISIS. Many experts predicted that the eradication of the self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq would result in attempts to set it up in Afghanistan.

The topic of terrorism was raised in talks between US President and the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission. Donald Tusk's experience showed that contrary to such issues as Russia, trade and climate change, on which the parties differed in their positions, they were perfectly aligned on the fight against terrorism. One should therefore conclude that despite many discrepancies in transatlantic relations, there were a number of issues on which cooperation was good due mainly to the convergence of security priorities. The war on terrorism is clearly one area of such cooperation.

IV.

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Prospects for Transatlantic Relations

Prior experience with Donald Trump's Presidency reveals a likely ongoing shift away from the decades-old paradigm of close relations between the United States and Europe. Such relations extend not only to politics, defense and the economy but also to culture and social issues. Forged after World War II and bolstered with the experience and effectiveness of the Transatlantic Alliance, the relationship became highly uncertain through the steps of the new administration and European reactions. Its dismantling is not a done deal. It is still conceivable that, after a period of turbulence and chaos observed in the wake of the White House changeover, the transatlantic community may regain strength.

Nevertheless, predicting the future of US-European relations is a highly uncertain business. One of the reasons for this is the unpredictability of Donald Trump, his general style and demeanor and the way he makes his decisions. It is difficult to pinpoint the institutions, forces and individuals that effectively influence the choices made by the new president and help shape American foreign policy, also towards Europe. Especially that the Trump team comprises people having a range of views, some of which are dangerous perspectives on US obligations, interests and priorities (as in the case of White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon). On the other hand, a number of officials (such as was Secretary of Defense Gen. James Mattis and National Security Council Chief of Staff Herbert McMaster) bring unquestionable experience and competence.

All this makes the Trump administration's foreign policy predominantly chaotic, ridden with sudden "about-faces" and contradictions from the president himself forcing high-ranking officials in his administration to clarify and complement his statements. While the style of the new President (including his "tweeting tactic") has become well recognized, a number of doubts remain on the shape and directions of the policies and strategies of the current US administration. Hardly anything is certain in its behavior. The only thing one can fully rely on is that Trump's approach appears to be more anti-European than that of any other president in recent times. This makes

the United States a fairly undependable ally for Europe during hard times. Especially in view of a growing mountain of evidence showing that the US is adhering to its slogan of “America First”, which defined its international priorities as being mainly about its own vital interests. Such interests were viewed very narrowly, almost in keeping with the 19th-century or early 20th-century brand of isolationism.

One can therefore expect that new disparities and conflicts of interest will arise in US-European relations. They will not be mitigated, as in the past, by America’s strong “missionary” sense of responsibility for the western world and its shared values and principles, nor by the common historical experience. Trumps transactionalism in relations with allies and partners is bound to eliminate or considerably erode the sense of commonality of values. It is also difficult to assume that the tensions arising in transatlantic relations will be assuaged by close personal relations between Trump and European leaders. Those whom the new president favored in their strife for power have failed (as for instance Marine Le Pen in France). Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, with whose Prime Minister Theresa May the US President appears to have established good rapport, will soon end up outside of the mainstream of events associated with the European Union.

Uncertainty over the Transatlantic Alliance is largely the result of Trump’s stance on NATO, the community’s mainstay. At stake are the fundamental issues of Europe’s security and stability. One positive signal is the delivery on the agreements reached during the NATO summits in Newport and Warsaw regarding security on the eastern flank of NATO. Credit for this accomplishment is due to both the US/the Trump administration, which made no major “turnarounds” on the matter and carries on with the effort commenced during Barack Obama’s presidency, as it deploys US troops and equipment on the eastern flank of NATO, as well as Europe, whose contributions also deserve appreciation. One should also praise the new administration’s decision to increase defense spending. Especially in the light of the radical cuts ordered by President Obama. All in all, such spending is highly significant for the strength of the entire Atlantic Alliance.

The remaining issue is that of burden sharing, raised quite bluntly by the new administration. What could the consequences of Europe failing to meet its Newport obligation to spend 2% of GDP on defense (by as late as 2024) be for the continent? The question boils down to how the US would respond should Europe fail to satisfy Trump’s demands. The worst-case scenario would be for the new president to seek to demonstrate his resolve and care for the interests

of the US taxpayer by suspending the unconditional obligation of the United States to honor art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. By doing so, Trump would call into question the entire essence of NATO and its very reason for existence. Needless to say, this would radically change Europe's security situation dangerously exposing Europe to external threats from the East. The fact that five countries (which, next to the United States, also include Poland) have already met the 2% of GDP criterion has not been sufficient to convince Trump of Europe's genuine determination to take its security into its own hands.

Another problem is Trump's aversion to the European Union. European integration had previously appeared to be an inherently transatlantic project as it strengthened Europe's stability and ensured its economic growth. It was therefore a pillar of European security, well aligned with the fundamental aims of the transatlantic community, as constructed after World War II. However, Trump's criticism of the EU, which the new administration's officials did not always effectively downplay, showed his view of the European Union as more of a competitor than an ally and asset for the US.

Given such an approach towards the European Union, it is not completely unthinkable that Trump may seek to differentiate and divide its member states and benefit from their disputes, their aspirations and the special status given to America by some of them, and especially the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which consider the US to be a perfect ally.

Even if this scenario never materializes, there will inevitably be hitches on many smaller and bigger issues in relations between Europe and the United States. A collapse of the TTIP negotiations would resound symbolically as a fiasco of a project that is key for strengthening transatlantic relations.

Due to Trump's protectionism, trade relations with Europe, especially those between the US and Germany, have become troubled. The new administration's uncompromising approach to lowering the high trade deficit of the United States may become the main determinant of Washington's policy towards Berlin, which, notably, has thus far been the most loyal and significant ally of the United States and one with which the Obama administration built "a partnership in leadership".

President Trump appears to have no intention of sharing leadership with anyone, no matter what sort of leadership it would be. It could for instance be arrogant, devoid of empathy towards allies and, as such, barely tolerable to Europeans. The Transatlantic Alliance has already experienced a similar type of leadership during the George W. Bush presidency and found that it did not serve either party very well. All it did was weaken the transatlantic community

and undermine the global standing of the United States, making it less effective. Considering the extent and nature of current international threats and challenges, things could get considerably worse this time around.

It is difficult to argue with the states of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, which, based on their experience of having been on the other side of “the iron curtain”, continue to see America and the Trump administration as a key and valued ally. Viewed through this prism, the US President’s visit to Warsaw and his meeting with the states of the region provided a prized assurance of Washington’s continued interest in European affairs. It was also significant that the new administration did not use the visit to divide Europe into a good pro-American part and a bad one that opposes US policies.

What counts for the states of the eastern flank of NATO is also that despite the Trump’s upsetting campaign trail rhetoric and the suspected ties of the new administration with the Kremlin, there has been no major improvement in US-Russian relations. The fear was that the relations would be advanced at the expense of European security and Ukrainian interests and at the price of weakening the eastern flank of NATO. For the time being though, there have been no indications of any such trends. The more than two-hours-long conversation between Trump and Putin during the G20 summit was nevertheless significant, although without breakthroughs.

The basic question therefore is whether the changes in the transatlantic paradigm that result from Trump’s actions will affect the behaviors of European states. Will new momentum and depth be added to the debate on the need for the European Union’s greater security and defense autonomy? Will it be possible to mobilize the states of Europe to become more engaged in their security, not least by spending a larger share of their GDPs on defense? One must admit that Trump’s blunt rhetoric has had the desired effect as proper commitments are already being made within NATO.

Future scenarios for this process depend on the security policies (single-state or community-wide) that European countries will adopt and whether deepened integration in other areas will follow.

Under the policy scenario of every individual state establishing its own defense budget and acquiring its own defense capabilities, America’s European allies would increase their capacity within NATO and ensure what the US would see as more equitable burden sharing. The scenario is likely if Europe fails to come up with a common security policy or if the European community is fragmented into smaller groups of states differing widely in terms of their engagement in the integration process.

The European Union faces a big challenge coordinating the defensive plans and capabilities of the member states. Prior military cooperation has been based on bilateral and regional initiatives. The individual or “bloc-based” perception of security by EU states could create an environment encouraging the seeking of US support on a bilateral-basis.

This applies in particular to the states of the eastern flank of NATO which feel directly threatened by Russia, a country that, unlike such challenges as the refugee crisis and terrorism, Europe finds itself unable to handle without US support. In this field, some countries of the eastern flank have recently concluded individual deals with the United States. However, a mechanism of concluding individual partnerships on a broader scale and in areas other than security, which Trump would most likely accept based on his prior declarations, would be destructive for the EU and could lead to its fragmentation and even disintegration. In a pessimistic version of this scenario, there would be a return to reliance on military force as a central driver of international relations, also among European states.

An alternative scenario is one of the EU member states developing defense and deterrent potential by strengthening and deepening cooperation within the framework of the CSDP. The French-German initiatives in response to Brexit may seek to restore the core that drives the process, which again would be Paris and Berlin. The bolstered permanent structured cooperation mechanism (PESCO) would make it possible to successively include any willing states in the tightening of security integration. The result would be two or more levels of integration within the EU. This optimistic scenario is highly doubtful as it assumes developing a community-wide system engaging all member states in building European defense capabilities.

In a third scenario, the development of the CSDP could be associated with deepening integration in other fields, i.e. economic and political. As previously, European leaders may conclude that the European community’s proper response to crises should be to seek “more Europe”. Assuming that the southern eurozone members, represented by France, and countries of the north, led by Germany, achieve an understanding, which could possibly extend to all other EU member states, such an Economic and Monetary Union could be strengthened in a number of ways.

There has also been talk on the adoption of special investment financing mechanisms (also in the armaments industry) to foster economic reforms and support crisis-ridden countries. Perhaps Europe could embrace the postulate of France, incorporated into the program of France’s new president Emmanuel

Macron, to create a eurozone budget managed by a European minister and overseen by eurozone MEPs.

All this notwithstanding, an effort to consolidate the European Union, ensure its smooth operation, and especially to strengthen its own security, appears to be Europe's best bet in response to signals coming from Washington and growing uncertainties over the Trump administration's strategy. Regardless of whether the worst-case scenario of a post-Atlantic world order does or does not come true, it remains critical for the European Union and Europe to act more responsibly in the international arena and better protect its security.

One should also state unequivocally that in today's world of multiple challenges and problems, both the United States and Europe need the transatlantic partnership. However, to maintain the community, Europe will need to be more active, responsible, and skilled at presenting a shared vision, whereas the United States will need to continue its engagement in European affairs while recognizing a commonality of interests and values, the significance of the European Union and the need to engage in cooperation with the EU. Only through such efforts will it become possible to ensure the survival of the Transatlantic Alliance as a player that effectively influences international affairs.

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ISBN 978-83-61736-69-1