

Clinton, Bush administrations and transatlantic relations

The end of the Cold War as a form of competition and confrontation between East and West, precisely between the United States and the Soviet Union, has not made the world either more stable or safer. Many analysts even think, that the end of The Cold War brought greater instability, created more threats for the international safety and more sources of international conflicts. We have to admit, that it gave extraordinary chances for solving many problems as well. The dominant feeling during the Cold War – “fear and hope” was replaced with the feeling of “hope and fear”

To the present time the world orders have been set up as the result of wars. For instance the system of Vienna was established after the Napoleon’s wars, the system of Versailles after I World War, and the international order of Yalta and Potsdam was the result of II World War. The present world order, which is being built in front of our eyes and will continue to develop in the nearest future will be the result of evolutionary changes. On the other hand today’s world order is the succession of the end of the war described as “The Cold War”.

The disappearance of the ideological and military adversary was welcomed with great satisfaction in Washington. The euphoria of victory did not last long. The Americans as a pragmatic nation noticed quickly, that the world after the collapse of bipolar model is not a safer world or more stable at all, and it even initiates serious international tensions and conflicts. Therefore there is the need for creating problem solving mechanisms in the new situation, and for driving the world towards establishing the desirable new world order.

When Francis Fukuyama described the falling apart world as “the end of history” this statement was approved at first. But it turned out, that instead of “the end of history” in the post Cold War world we deal with return to the history, which means we observe the revival of traditional and historical sources of international tensions and conflicts. This tendency is ironically called “back to the future”.

In the new post Cold War world the transatlantic links have not lost their importance but on contrary they even need to be adapted in order to face new challenges and threats.

The process of adjusting the transatlantic relations to the new situation in the world does not run smoothly, and even it evokes new friction and tension between Europe, European Union and the United States as we observed at beginning of George W. Bush administration.

These are a few remarks concerning potential tensions in transatlantic relations. But this is the list of sources rather than their analysis.

1. European Defence Identity. Washington demanded from its European partners a bigger contribution to building new defence potential of the Atlantic community and Defence Capability Increase (DCI). On the other hand when the European Union took an initiative (European Headline Goal) of creating 60-thousand Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, an anxiety grew in Washington, that it can result in weakening cohesion of NATO and diminishing the American positions in Europe. However the arising belief in Europe is, that the United States would not like to be involved in conflicts that may appear in Europe in the future. Hence Europe should be able to cope with such conflicts by itself.
2. National Missile Defence. Europeans are afraid, that alongside with establishing NMD the United States, feeling safe, will lose their wish to protect Europe ("decoupling"). Moreover they think that ABM agreement is the basis of strategic stabilisation and that its cancellation can originate a new world nuclear race.
3. Economic disagreements of many kinds appear repeatedly in the relations between the EU and the USA. Comparing to the Cold War time, ideological, military and political issues were replaced with economic and commercial composition and contradictions.
4. Between Europe and the USA there are also many differences in political approach to current international problems. In my opinion, the Euroatlantic community does not have a coherent policy towards Russia, UN or UN peace operations. For the United States imposing sanctions on various countries plays a big role in the policy while Europe doubt the efficiency of sanctions as foreign policy mechanisms.

I have shortly mentioned only some of potential sources of international tensions between the European Union and the United States. In fact the number of the sources grows and we should expect many new ones in future. However it is in the interests of Euroatlantic community to maintain unity. Since threats are common for Europe and the USA, together we can cope with them more efficiently. The USA and Europe constitute the largest economy all over the world. After the United States, Europe owns the biggest military potential. The USA and Europe have much to gain on their alliance and partnership and much to lose on mutual conflict and destructive rivalry.

Sometimes I hear European politicians and commentators describing Poland as the Americans' Trojan horse in the European Union. But Americans actually do not need a Trojan horse; what's more they do not need Poland to be in Europe. The USA is present politically in Europe through North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and through common system of values. It is present militarily in form of 100,000-army and NATO structures. It is present economically by means of direct investments and trade. At last they are present culturally as the result of overflowing Europe with American culture, American films, TV programs, music, literature etc.

American presence in Europe is multidimensional and multi-level. All these things make the USA a European country in fact.

Poland, having good relations with the United States and Europe, would be able to contribute to mediating potential tensions between the USA and Europe in future. It is a chance for Polish diplomacy, which should not be lost.

Referring to guards change in the White House as the result of the election of the new president George W. Bush on 7 November I would like to share some thoughts about legacy in foreign policy of 8-year Clinton's presidency and speculate about the future policy of George Bush's administration.

Every American president wants to go down in the history of the United States. Clinton is no exception to that rule. At the end of his term he clearly wished to leave in fame and glory, not in a shade of the incident that by a hair would cost him his position. That was the reason for the numerous initiatives he took to establish peace in the Middle East. If he had succeeded in this matter he would have been remembered as the one who put an end

to something what many politicians and world organisations have struggled with in vain for over 50 years. Unfortunately it turned out that the hostility and anger in the Middle East were stronger even than the best intentions of the president of the superpower.

As far as the internal policy is concerned Bill Clinton will go down in history as a man who lead the country in times of unseen in the history of US 8 years long prosperity, and as the second president in the US history who was impeached. Recently, a survey was run amongst several hundred American historians. They were asked to classify Bill Clinton among other American presidents. In terms of the presidency quality he was rated at high 22nd place whereas in moral attitude category he had 38th position.

In terms of foreign policy Bill Clinton surely has established foundation for US expansion to world markets and helped American corporations to benefit from globalisation. His administration made NAFTA work effectively and set up WTO. Thanks to Clinton's initiatives Mexico overcome a severe financial depression in 1994 and well as Asian countries in 1997.

During the first years of his presidency Clinton avoided to engage deeply in conflict solving in Rwanda or in Balkans. He made mistakes in Somali and in Haiti. Over a time his actions become more determined, which showed especially over in Balkans.

The characteristic of the second phase of his presidency was his personal engagement in negotiations between the main players in international conflicts. The example of that were his meetings with Rabin, Arafat and king Hussein. The president sent his delegates to Northern Ireland, India, Pakistan, Northern Korea to mediate between the parties. He also took part in negotiations personally.

Clinton's opponents accused him of lack of consistent and effective policy against Russia and China. He replied: "Do you have a better alternative for Russia than Yeltsin followed by Putin?" Will China not face instability after a sudden change of government? Clinton only used to remind tactfully Chinese authority about human rights whereas he forced signing billion dollars contracts for American industry.

In terms of transatlantic relations European politicians perceive Clinton as an advocate of multilateral diplomacy and consultation in major but not all matters with European allies. His

administration supported ideas of building so called “European defence identity”, but when this idea started to come true, in form of merging West European Union with European Union by means of 60 thousand Allied Rapid Reaction Corps as well as in form of establishing in EU military structures, Clinton administration started to raise objections that it may weaken NATO consistency and jeopardise military presence of US in Europe. Clinton’s government initiated consultation with European parties of NATO too late in the area of building a limited anti-missile system in US.

For the Poles Clinton presidency will be remembered, because of his visit to Poland, good personal relations with president Aleksander Kwaśniewski and, what is even more important, Clinton’s determination in matters of EU extension and inviting Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO in a first row. Without Clinton’s personal engagement the process of joining NATO would not be so easy.

Concluding we should favourably assess Clinton’s activity as far as foreign policy is concerned. He had his highs and lows. Personally I was disappointed with the fact, that Washington during 8 years of Clinton’s presidency did not take any serious initiative of establishing a new world order.

Now a couple of speculations about foreign policy of the new republican administration of George W. Bush.

Foreign policy was not brought forward in time of the election campaign. The new president paying attention mostly to internal affairs will gain support from his nation. Bush believes that foreign policy must have a clear objective, which should be a support for vital national interests of America and defeating threat of neoisolationism. However he did not give any specific priorities. He was very careful with making statements about engagement of US forces in UN peace operations especially where national interests are not at risk (Haiti, Samoa). Among priorities he declared Middle East, Europe, Far East and both Americas.

Nominating Collin Powell to the State Secretary raises the expectation that Bush shares his opinion about engaging US forces only in case American vital interests were at risk and the war can be won. Thus US army should not be involved in the police type operations or in rebuilding any internal state structures.

Bush's speeches during the campaign were more often related to defence matters. Talking about the need of strengthening US army morale he declared he would increase funds for national security and ensure America security by installation of national anti-missile defence system. Some believe that NMD can invalidate ABM treaty from 1972 and set China and Russia on armament race as well as put in jeopardy the treaty from 1967 which block space militarization.

In May 2000 Bush put forth a one-sided proposal of reduction by USA the number of the nuclear war heads assuming that the efficiency of American nuclear weapon is not based on the number of nuclear war heads. He backed a more sophisticated anti-missile system than was proposed by Clinton's administration. He also said that USA would be ready to share this system with allies and in the future even with Russia and China. He pointed out the need of changing American nuclear strategy based on keeping millions of people as hostages for a strategy built on the advanced antimissile system.

Without mentioning any details he stood up for further extension of NATO. Bush' administration raised objections against concept of European Defence Identity, such as it could weaken NATO. Bush declares very close consultations with European allies, which has already been warmly welcomed by European capitals. He emphasised that Russia should never have the right to block NATO extension and criticised Clinton's administration for approving substantial loans, which in the corrupt Russia are defrauded instead of helping ordinary people. Prof. Condoleezza Rice is an advocate of the strict policy against Russia. She said that there was a need of introducing new policy – realistic not romantic. The role of American government is to support transformation in Russia by helping independent Russian organisations and specific companies not to the government.

The regulation of internal situation in Russia would be the condition of receiving help. Russia needs to help itself to create conditions for economic development if the growth of economic liberalisation and democracy is to set in. Another crucial element of American programme is that the USA regards highly the independence of Russia neighbours, countries that used to be a part of Russia. During Bush's presidency some tensions between the US and Russia may appear. Bush is reluctant to the ratification of treaty concerning comprehensive test ban treaty and he is an

advocate of implementation of anti-missile system. He admitted, that it would be extremely hard to persuade Russians to update ABM treaty. In his opinion the conflict in Chechnya proves that the help for Russia must be reconsidered. But the US should give some financial help for reducing Russian nuclear arsenal. Bush has criticised Clinton severely for calling China a US strategic partner. Bush considers China to be the strategic competitor of the US. Since he appreciates the value of Chinese market, he stands up for the membership of China in WTO on condition the country opens its market to import. He promises Taiwan to be protected saying at the same time he recognizes one China. Bush assures he will treat China without prejudice and without illusion. He claims that China will be inevitably a great power. Declaring the continuation of the One China policy at the same time he criticises China for espionage against USA, compulsory abortion and lack of religious freedom.

During the election campaign there was a fear that Bush may turn out to be the supporter of so-called unilateral diplomacy as opposed to multilateral style in diplomacy, which was represented by Clinton. The situation in this matter is unclear. Up to now American interests have got the upper hand—, however reaching common consent with the other countries was always American policy. Perhaps it will show up in relations between NATO members, where consensus was always a must. The important issue is the US Senate opinion about Roman Statute of International Criminal Court signed by Bill Clinton. We can exclude isolationism as a new policy, because the USA has their interests all over the world. Furthermore, globalisation will force US to be patient against partners. Bush declared support for UN Organisation and announced that US will pay membership dues on condition that “bureaucracy reform will be carried out and the US share in membership dues will be reduced to 22%”.

George Bush as a man without experience in foreign affairs surrounded himself with competent advisors. He proved he could learn fast, listen and delegate competence to trusted people. The opponents of Bush’s team however express their concern that most of Bush’s advisors have gained their experience in the foreign affairs area during the Cold War.