

BIZTPOL AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER 2020 – JANUARY 2021

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 1

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BIZTPOL AFFAIRS

Vol. 7. No. 1.

NOVEMBER 2020 – JANUARY 2021

BUDAPEST

Corvinus Society for Foreign Affairs and Culture

2020/2021

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ISSN 2064-3152

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Cover Design: © Zoltán RADA

Published by: Corvinus Society for Foreign Affairs and Culture,
1223 Budapest, Húr u. 9/A.

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ESSAY

PESPECTIVES ON NEW NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT AND V4 POSITION

Marek Madej

ABSTRACT

In the last few month the issue of new strategic concept of NATO started to be mentioned more frequently than before in the internal debates in the Alliance, especially in speeches of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg¹. It seems to be understandable, taking into account that the current document of this kind was adopted ten years ago, in 2010, what makes him quite old and to some degree outdated. Moreover, at least in the post-Cold War period the timespan between adoptions of NATO strategic concepts was exactly a decade. Discussion on new strategic concept could be also seen as a logical consequence of the inauguration of the so called “reflection process” in December 2019, currently transformed into much wider forecast-type initiative NATO 2030. The article will focus on these debates on strategic diraction from the perspective of the V4 Group.

Keywords: NATO 2030, V4 Group, reflection process

¹ Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Global Security 2020 (GLOBSEC) Bratislava Forum, 7.10.2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_178605.htm?selectedLocale=ru

In the last few month the issue of new strategic concept of NATO started to be mentioned more frequently than before in the internal debates in the Alliance, especially in speeches of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg¹. It seems to be understandable, taking into account that the current document of this kind was adopted ten years ago, in 2010, what makes him quite old and to some degree outdated. Moreover, at least in the post-Cold War period the timespan between adoptions of NATO strategic concepts was – roughly speaking – exactly a decade (with the first post-Cold War strategy accepted in Rome in 1991, the second in Washington in 1999 and the third in Lisbon in 2010). Discussion on new strategic concept could be also seen as a logical consequence of the inauguration – in response to the growing tensions between allies around political consultation within the organization – of the so called “reflection process” in December 2019, currently transformed into much wider forecast-type initiative NATO 2030. Initially “reflection process” was established to enhance consultative mechanisms within the Alliance, but in current form is designed rather to help in developing of NATO capability to adapt to new threats and challenges caused by the evolution of international security environment in the next ten years or more. So, since the scope of the reflection has been expanded, why not to think about more ambitious results – i.e. new strategic concept? The need of updating NATO strategy is even explicitly stated in the recently publicized on December 1 (earlier than initially planned, since it was scheduled on 2021) report of the Expert Group established to conduct this “reflection process”²

On the other hand, however, it was not pure coincidence that the new strategic concept was not – until recently – on the NATO agenda and even now it is discussed rather between experts and within the Alliance’s bureaucracy, rather than by leaders of member states. So the question if NATO is really ready to start the debate remains open. But it should not stop us from thinking

² NATO 2030: *United for the New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf.

what position in such debate of V4 countries, Hungary and Poland in particular, could be.

STATE OF PLAY

In the hierarchy of NATO documents, the Strategic Concept sits one step below the North Atlantic Treaty. Such documents offer clear (at least to some extent), comprehensive vision of the fundamental NATO tasks, as well as methods and tools of their implementation, showing also how the allies perceive their security environment, including the sources of the key threats and challenges. For the NATO structures, however, both civilian bureaucracy and military bodies, Strategic Concept, although being a significant high-level guidance, is useful but not essential to carry out the day-to-day business of the Alliance. If not on daily basis, then relatively frequently NATO adopts also many other decisions that regulates its functioning, as well as setting the directions of its future direction in different dimensions. Moreover, some form of the surrogate to the Strategic Concept could be found in Summit communiqués and declarations, signed regularly on every meeting of that kind. Nevertheless, elaboration and adoption of Strategic Concept, apart from organizing NATO practices, defining the scope of its attention and setting the course for further development, manifests – above all – Alliance's unity and cohesion. Therefore the longer postponement of the initiation of works on such document is, especially when deep and abrupt geostrategic happen (what undoubtedly is the case of the last decade), the bigger fears about actual level of NATO cohesion could grow. Moreover, it could also mean that the allies are afraid that starting the debate on Strategic Concept could not only expose differences between them, but even deepen the intra-alliance divisions. That could be an ominous sign both for NATO societies, as well as for the rest of the world, NATO partners and possible rivals and competitors likewise.

However, it is not the first time when NATO is delaying its strategic debates. Similar problems NATO had with the start of works on its current Strategic Concept, adopted ultimately at Lisbon summit in 2010. Interestingly, in this case the dramatic change of geostrategic reality as a consequence of 9/11

terrorist attacks, something that happened just two years after adoption of the previous NATO Strategic Concept (on Washington in 1999, on the occasion of the Alliance 50th anniversary), had not resulted in quick initiation of works on the new document, although NATO tasks and activities had been significantly redefined and the actual priority of fight against terrorism and “global presence” was set. At that time both NATO bureaucracy and the governments were declaring the need of focus on “strategic action”, not “doctrinal debates”. But when the issue of such debates ultimately started to emerge after couple of years, members realized, that their visions of threats to NATO, the missions of the Alliance and its modes of operations vary substantially. As a result, initial plan of the then Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to complete the works on the new Strategic Concept before the special NATO Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl on the occasion of 60th anniversary of Washington Treaty did not materialized. So – to cause a breakthrough in the actually stalled process – NATO used a special “negotiation trick” and established High Level Expert Group to elaborate the draft of the document, instead of going with traditional model of intergovernmental talks. Ultimately the panel of eminencies chaired by Madeleine Albright did not produce a draft of Strategic Concept, offering only a special report NATO 2020 (although it has to be admitted that the report was really comprehensive, “meaty” and served as a food for thought for further works), but it succeeded as a catalyst of Allies’ efforts to elaborate the final draft of the document by NATO officials, adopted ultimately in Lisbon in November 2010³.

This model, however, despite its obvious similarities with current situation, won’t be equally helpful today (although to some degree it is already emulated by the abovementioned “reflection process”). Simply put, currently the reasons for delaying the strategic debate within the Alliance are much more serious and disturbing than before 2010. Geostrategic changes that took place in the last decade, starting from long-term impact of economic crisis of 2008 and gradual shift in global power to the East (China in particular), to dynamic

³ NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement, Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17.05.2010, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_63654.htm.

technological changes (including expansion of cyberspace and explosive growth of social media), to climate change and ecological crisis, and finally to the most obvious change in NATO geostrategic environment – Russian “hybrid” aggression in the Ukraine – all that clearly reduced appropriateness of Lisbon Strategic Concept to current reality. Quite surprisingly, the Alliance relatively quickly and effectively started to adapt its activities and resources to new conditions, giving back a priority to tasks linked with collective defense in Europe (although in less traditional form, including building resilience to various types of non-traditional, asymmetric or hybrid pressure). Nevertheless, efforts to match these moves with doctrinal reforms and adoption of the new strategic concept were not undertaken. Initially it was definitely caused by the need to focus on immediate response to geostrategic changes in Europe after 2014, later, however, especially after Donald Trump was elected as the 45th US President, the key problem was rather his aversion to multilateralism in general, and skepticism (to put it mildly) in assessment of NATO’s utility from Washington’s perspective in particular. Openly disrespectful and highly transactional approach of Trump’s America to cooperation with NATO allies resulted in frequent ignoring by president Trump their opinion and interests while making key strategic decisions (i.e. withdrawal from Syria or announcement of US troops relocation from Germany) and focusing in intra-alliance debates on the problem of “just” burden-sharing, reduced often to somewhat embarrassing quarrels over finances. In such circumstances (irrespective of actually high importance and urgent need of improving defense spending by many allies), initiating of any serious discussion on strategic issues within NATO was simply too risky for Alliance’s unity and effective functioning.

Reducing, however, all NATO problems to president Trump would be clearly oversimplification. Sources of divergences within the Alliance are obviously much more numerous. At least since 2014 one of the most important “division line” in NATO is between the so called Eastern Flank (mainly Poland and Baltic States, preoccupied primarily with relatively traditionally defined collective defense and countering Russian direct and indirect pressure) and

“NATO South”, much more concerned by instability of its Middle Eastern and North African neighborhood as well as that volatility’s by-products like new waves of terrorism or mass migrations. Some ease to these East-South tensions should be brought by the introduction in 2016 of the so called NATO 360o concept, by which the allies wanted to show equal importance of threats and challenges irrespectively of the geographic locations of their sources. However, with the lack of hierarchy of threats and priorities ingrained in that concept, it could not serve its role well, remaining rather a peculiar diplomatic formula to camouflage existing differences than strategic guidance.

Second important fact is the illiberal wave in internal politics of some members. The gravest concerns are caused in this respect by Turkey, which for long time has a status of enfant terrible in the alliance, but now even more frequently than in the past virtually ignores in its foreign policy decisions positions and interests of other allies, not hesitating from exacerbating the relations with some of them for its particular gains (most obvious and “usual case is Greece, but recently it happened also to such influential allies as Germany, France or the US). Nevertheless, evolution of the political situation in Poland and Hungary is also something that did not facilitate cooperation with other allies, especially from Western Europe. Last but not least, France’s intensions and feelings toward NATO are also not fully clear, especially when French leaders are talking about European strategic autonomy.

Thirdly, one have to add to these problems the social and financial challenges for allies linked to – on the one hand – ambitions of European part of the Alliance to implement “new green order” and – on the other – to consequences of the pandemic.

NATO responded to some of these challenges by establishing at the last summit in London in December 2019 the already mentioned “reflection process”. However, at least initially the scope and tasks of it was reduced to search for the opportunities for improvement of political consultation mechanisms within the organization. Moreover the pace of the works within the process was at the beginning rather slow – the 10-member expert group, in

majority former government officials form members states (although not as respected as those who took part in similar project in 2010) was appointed on March 31, first meeting they had in April. All that suggested that the whole endeavor was more for easing a tensions between allies and “channeling” their emotions, then to find a real strategic breakthrough. Moreover, in the mid-year it was transformed into an element of much broader process of NATO 2030, which is – however - more a consultative platform with non-governmental and expert circles on future shape of NATO and challenges to security of its members, than typical formula for elaborating strategic documents. The fact that Reflection Group has ultimately speeded up the presentations of its report (initially scheduled for 2021) and handed it to NATO leaders on December 1, 2020, did not change the general picture, since the report, although not limited only to suggestions concerning political consultations, is adding primarily to that an assessment of threats and security environment – useful and necessary for drafting strategic concept, but neither sufficient nor decisive for the preparation of the proper new document of that kind⁴.

PERSPECTIVES

Undoubtedly, exchange on the presidential post in the US could be a proverbial game changer for the talks on the new strategic concept. Probably it was not a necessary condition for the initiation of such discussions, since the time running from the adoption of the last document of that kind together with the risk of further deepening of internal divisions within the Alliance, maybe even to the critical level of “point of no return”, could force the allies to start the talks despite their fears and concerns also when Trump would have won its second term. Nonetheless, replacement of such fervent “NATO-sceptic” person as Trump by rather “NATO-enthusiastic” Joe Biden definitely offer bigger chances both for initiations, as well as successful conclusions of such works. Recasting the bonds with the closest America allies, including NATO, both

⁴ I. Davis, *NATO's reflection process (NATO 2030)*, NATO Watch Briefing Paper No. 77, 16.06.2020; NATO 2030: United for the New Era, Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General, November 25, 2020.

before and after the elections was presented by Biden and his aides as one of the most important priorities in his foreign policy⁵. It is, however, doubtful that the issue of new strategic concept of NATO could be really high on the new president agenda in the early months of his term. Biden – what was confirmed in his first speeches after the victory⁶ - will focus rather on internal issues, particularly on fight with the COVID-19 in the US and economic consequences of the pandemic, as well as on healing (or at least reducing) strong polarization within American society after very tough electoral campaign and the term of his predecessor. However, taking into account the reluctance of Trump and his supporters to accept the results of the voting, as well as probable Republican majority in the Senate, even smaller than previously majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives and recently strengthened conservative fraction in the Supreme Court, it would mean that Biden will have to confront such profound challenges in the conditions of constant political stalemate. Somewhat paradoxically, domestic difficulties could stimulate new president and his team to search for successes in foreign policy (also due to the fact that in this domain US president's powers are less bound by competences of other state bodies, like Congress or Supreme Court). Moreover, improvement in relations with European allies could seem to be – at least in comparison to other main challenges in US foreign policy – a form of low hanging fruit, achievable with relatively low cost and high probability of success. However, it does not mean that the discussion on NATO new strategic concept, most probably long and complex process with many uncertainties and potential traps, will be the best option here, also due to the fact that it cannot be a simple “let's go back to the time before Trump came” operation. The sources of differences in strategic perspectives of Americans and their European allies, for example in context of China, as well as in the preferred model of burden-sharing in the Alliance, are much more profound and were visible long before the Trump presidency (the so called Pacific Pivot was one of the “grand ideas”

⁵ J. Biden, *Why America Must Lead Again*, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2020.

⁶ Joe Biden's victory speech, annotated, 8.11.2020, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/07/annotated-biden-victory-speech/.

of Obama's foreign policy and it was his Defense Secretary Robert Gates who had appealed to European in Brussels to take more responsibility – that means also spending – for NATO). Obviously, Trump took this differences to the extreme, but factors that caused them are still here. Therefore, when looking for a quick path to improvement its relations with Europe, Biden could think about focusing on contacts with the EU or bilateral ties with key European states as the preferable option.

Important is also, for obvious reasons, the scope and difficulty of the task. NATO will have to match, on the one hand, more and more diverging security interests and needs of all thirty allies in the way at least satisfactory for all, and - on the other - to adapt to megatrends that define and shape current and future strategic environment of the Alliance. The relation between buttressing of the collective defense capabilities in Europe (what requires substantial spending and efforts) and maintaining ability to act effectively in other regions (what COVID-pandemic underlined by showing Western dependence for global delivery chains) would have to be once again drawn. That will redefine also NATO cooperation with the partners outside of the organization, as well as reset the criteria for expeditionary engagements. New strategic concept has to reflect seriously on so called emerging disruptive technologies – EDTs – particularly those related to the spread and development of cyberspace and new stage of technological revolution (social media, 5G, Internet of Things, robotics and autonomous machines). Strategy from Lisbon did not even mention problems like hybrid warfare and scarcely discussed question of non-military, hidden pressure or influence as the modes of international rivalry that NATO would have to confront with. Big challenge will be to assess the role of NATO in coping with climate change and global ecological crisis or pandemics while its traditional role of political-military alliance has to stay intact as well. Otherwise, NATO could have a problem with winning the support from the member states' populations. Unfortunately, for almost all (if not virtually all) of these questions (and it is only part of the list) the allies did not formulate clear answers, even if the recently published report of the Reflection group offers some hints and suggestions in this respect.

Not always fully recognized factor that influences possible debate on new strategic concept is internal dynamics within NATO bureaucracy. Stoltenberg, current Secretary General and “natural” candidate for steering the works on the new strategy, would end his – already prolonged – term in 2022. Taking into account rather initial level of intensity of these debates, as well as already mentioned complexity of the task, it cannot be taken for granted that new strategic concept will be ready before Stoltenberg’s stepping down. Change of Secretary General while the process is still not finished could lead to some delays. Thus, some members could be interested in postponing or procrastinating finalization of the process, maybe even to 75th NATO anniversary in 2024.⁷

The most important factor, however, remains to be the development of COVID pandemic. Promising news about the vaccines offers some hope here, but it won’t change a fact that as for today the disease is still widespread and the whole world, and definitely all NATO allies, are still far from containing it. That would obviously lead to focus of governments’ and societies’ attention on the ways to counter the COVID threat, and it is still premature to say how long that situation could last.

Implications for V4 countries – should Poland and Hungary push for new strategy now, soon or wait for better moment?

V4 states, once they all joined NATO, were actually never really unified on their position on the Alliance’s mission and tasks. While Poland was always the most preoccupied among them with the Organization’s capability to perform collective defense tasks properly, particularly in context of threats posed by Russia, other members were less anxious about that and more focused on economic aspects of NATO functioning. Moreover, while for Hungary and – albeit to somewhat lesser extent – Slovakia the stability of Western Balkans was a crucial problem, Poland found it as an important, but rather secondary issue for NATO. So, having such past experience, one should not expect much

⁷ J. H Michaels, *It's that time of the decade again: some considerations for NATO eighth Strategic Concept*, NDC Policy Brief No. 02/2020.

bigger unity within V4 on NATO now. But saying that, we should not underestimate the fact that for all V4 members NATO remains to be the most important security guarantee and the organization which they would like to strive and flourish, or at least stay fit and capable. Moreover, even if V4 countries do not share exactly the same view on NATO, with Poland being the most interested in Organization's focus on collective defense in Europe (particularly in context of Russia aggressive behaviour), they nevertheless have some issues in common, like some kind of reluctance towards extensive expeditionary activities of the Alliance or preoccupation with sustaining US interest in the security of Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, it should be also in the interest of V4 states (even if Poland in particular) to start the works on the new strategic concept rather sooner than later. Postponing it would most probably weaken the NATO cohesion even further, what in light of difficulties in EU functioning (also, unfortunately, due to the Polish and Hungarian approaches) could mean problems for the Alliance – a security instrument you can't find any reasonable alternative. Moreover, one should also take into account that the “window of opportunity” - created with the events of 2014 in the Ukraine and kept open by continuous Russian assertiveness - to promote vision of NATO shared in general by all V4 countries, in which the Alliance would somewhat concentrate primarily on problems of Central and Eastern Europe, won't last forever. As for now priorities of NATO – strengthening the capability to deter and defend treaty area primarily in Europe, deepening resilience to external hybrid activities – are still close – at least in general terms – to those of V4 states and one could expect that in case of quick initiation of official talks on new strategic concept they will definitely find a significant place in the new document too. It is also worthy to be remembered that with the Polish representative in the Expert Group (former minister of foreign affairs Anna Fotyga) V4 could have some additional influence on the course of the discussion on new strategic concept. However, with the passage of time and growing numbers of additional initiatives to strengthen Easter Flank already implemented, like Enhanced Forward Presence, other members could start to think that “we done enough

for them” and now we should start to focus more on other problems and challenges that come from different directions and in different forms. Therefore, V4 countries should present their positions in clever, balanced and elaborated manner, remembering about the priorities and needs of other members, as well as about the fact that NATO’s ability to influence strategic situation in other regions, starting from Middle East and ending on East Asia, in the globalized world of truly universal chains of supplies are also in their own interest. It means that some common ground, not merely acceptable for V4 countries, but which could offer the chance to satisfy all their key security needs, is most probably more achievable currently rather than in future.

The real question, however, is an actual ability of V4 countries, Poland and Hungary in particular, to build coalitions within NATO that support solutions preferable for them. Replacing Trump – rather sympathetic to Polish and Hungarian positions and their leaders – by the far more critical Joe Biden means that about US support for Polish or Hungarian proposals (what would be still crucial in any strategic debates within the Alliance) only strategic and military factors will decide, not ideological closeness or personal sympathies. Disputes with the EU that led to the threat of vetoing the new budget of the Union (what would effectively block also the plan of economic revival after COVID) could limit chances of finding allies not only in the Western Europe (which actually is growing in importance recently in NATO), but even in the region and neighbourhood. The risk of becoming “toxic” partner cannot be neglected. The key to effective response to that challenge, however, is primarily an issue of domestic rather than foreign policy of Poland and Hungary.

ESSAY

THE TRANSATLANTIC WORLD IN 2020

Peter Rada, PhD¹

ABSTRACT

2020 was beyond question an unconventional year. The “Googleized”, “Twitterized”, or “Facebookized” international politics meant myriad of interconnected processes, the global political awakening of (everyday) people, and the emergence of new power centers (eg. tech companies and the Silicon Valley). The power of the media, the social networks have given new opportunities for politicians but also have emerged as a very heavy burden. The Western World is trapped in a situation when the fig leaf of political correctness overwrites logical decisions; thus it is not surprising that 2020 became a “chicken bone” that stuck in the throat of international political analysts who could not swallow, or spit out it, consequently no reliable answers were provided regarding the challenges of 2020.

Keywords: geopolitics, foreign policy of Poland, Central Europe

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2020 was beyond question an unconventional year: the “Googleized”, “Twitterized”, or “Facebookized” international politics meant myriad of interconnected processes, the global political awakening of (everyday) people, and the emergence of new power centers (eg. tech companies and the Silicon Valley). The power of the media, the social networks have given new opportunities for politicians but also have emerged as a very heavy burden. The Western World is trapped in a situation when the fig leaf of political correctness overwrites logical decisions; thus it is not surprising that 2020 became a “chicken bone” that stuck in the throat of international political analysts who could not swallow, or spit out it, consequently no reliable answers were provided regarding the challenges of 2020.

When political scientists and international relations experts try to analyze certain foreign policy events, the certain decisions of states or any developments in international relations they tend to use the conventional tools of IR. These tools are represented by the frameworks provided by international relations theories, lessons learned from decades of practice and previous experiences. That is, international relations have been analyzed by reflecting on the past. However, in years like 2020 we cannot, or could not rely on general wisdom. Giving predictions in international relations is always a difficult enterprise but 2020 overwrote all we believed and we tried to look for as a “mental crutch” in trying to understand our world better.

In 2020 we witnessed many challenges, which most probably will prove to be a turning point or a cornerstone in the development in international relations, and similarly in the Transatlantic

relations. These challenges – only to name a few – were those that are widely analyzed this year in the international political literature but convincing arguments and answers for the challenges are not presented yet. Of course the Covid-19 global pandemic; the further problems with Russia and China; not decreasing number of terrorist attacks in the Western hemisphere; further environmental problems; not solved identity crisis in the EU – including the not properly managed Brexit, and the debates on the MFF; unpredictable presidential elections in the United States.

However, before we go into more details about 2020 we should look at where we started at the beginning of the year, and also we should a little bit reflect on the past. This is valid despite the fact that we argued against conventional knowledge we gathered because it may be misleading when analyzing 2020. We need to be aware what we expected due to the lessons we learned in the last decades to know what is different in 2020. As it was argued above, 2020 is/will be a turning point in international relations, but there were other very important cornerstones that changed the course of our modern history, the environment in which political decisions were made, or in general our thinking about international relations, politics, or security policy.

During the last three decades there were real changes and we could witness events which were not or should have not been a surprise but the common characteristics were that these events changed how we understand security challenges. Of course, the most significant were the series of system changes in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Later, 2001 and the

simultaneous terrorist attacks in the United States woke up the world's military superpower from its strategic slumber and the global war on terror emerged as the most important priority of the Western alliance. In 2008-2009 Transatlantic allies ran out of money and the United States realized that it could not bear the burdens alone. Washington decided to pull back, to moderate the American presence in Europe. 2014 is the next turning point because the Russian invasion of Ukraine called the attention to the original goal of the NATO and that territorial defense is still valid. Simultaneously in 2015 the ongoing identity crisis of the EU manifested in the counterproductive political statements and dangerous steps trying to manage the illegal migration crisis.

As argued these above mentioned events are cornerstones but it needs to be clear that the development of the Transatlantic relations is a dynamic process rather than static series of steps. The Transatlantic community has faced parallel challenges and threats since the end of the Cold War; new security threats simultaneously with traditional ones such as the Russian aggression, the growing appetite and presence of China in the world, the failed Iran nuclear deal, or North Korea. It was already clear before 2020 that our existing institutions were not able effectively control these events. This leads to serious criticism towards the (Western) security architecture and the questioning of its relevance. Consequently, the international players have been forced to find alternative solution² even if it sometimes drew serious criticism from the allies

² Stepper Péter: The Visegrad Group and the EU Agenda on Migration: A Coalition of the Unwilling? *Corvinus Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.1. No.1. (2016).

(see the Hungarian policies to stop illegal migration³ as an example).

It is not surprising that we could not predict the events in 2020 considering that we had similar problems in less unconventional years in the last decades. We have been talked about the consequences of globalization for a few decades now, however, we still cannot elaborate a single model or description which would help decision makers identify clear patterns for policy decisions regarding international politics and 2020 made the picture even more blurry. We cannot pick a single phenomenon as the ultimate threat, because the myriad of interconnected issues influence each other, sometimes counteract or on the other hand strengthen seemingly independent processes.

The last three decades we had comprehensive debates about the new world order and consequently the challenges stemming from the new realities. Having said that, 2019 was a special year (we were more optimistic yet about 2020) to think back as it commemorated many anniversaries. The symbolic numerology of the „30-20-15” reflected the cornerstones and of course the many headaches in Central Europe. For us Central Europeans the real question related to the new world order was and has been since the extent of our ability of adaptation to these new realities.

As mentioned above 2019 was a symbolic historic benchmark when our region's countries celebrated and commemorated leaving the Soviet sphere of influence 30 years before; the 20th anniversary

³ Stepper Péter: The Challenges for Common European Asylum Policy: The Practice of Detention in Hungary, *Biztopol Affairs*, Vol.2. No. 2. (2014).

of the NATO membership for Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic; the 15th anniversary of the EU membership and for many the NATO membership; and not least the 70th anniversary of the Washington Treaty. During the long transition process, the Central European countries had and caused many headaches during the parallel political, economic, and societal changes which ended in the full Trans/Euroatlantic integration. It was a long and exhausting road but today Central Europeans are more pro-NATO and have better views on the United States than most of the citizens of older allies despite some up and downs in the alliance and some inconsistent American policies towards the region. It has been often mentioned in the last years that Atlanticism is waning in Europe but actual opinion polls from Central Europe cannot back these fears.⁴ This is partly the consequence of the successful Euroatlantic integration. Even though 2019 was a symbolic year but we also know that the new world order have brought new threats and new challenges. The Euroatlantic integration's importance lied in the very characteristic of the international system and politics that they changed many times and very quickly.

At the end of the first decade of the new century many publications tried to analyze the changes in international relations and they tried to predict the possible ways how our world would develop. This is even more valid question in 2020 and it is very important because in case we understand our world better we can adapt to it easier. It does not need further explanation if we think

⁴ "NATO- és USA-pártiak a közép-európaiak, de többet várnak Trumptól," Nézőpont Intézet, 2019, <http://nezopontintezet.hu/analysis/trump/>.

about how volatile the events can be even in a year. The 2010s began very pessimistically and continued even worse. We could witness significant changes, which made us rethink what the new world order really is, the conclusions from 10 years before became outdated and the impetus of new analysis became stronger. We need add unfortunately that the 2020s' start is not better either.

As mentioned above 2019 was a special year for commemoration. The “new” members became full and equal members of the Transatlantic alliance and the Western value community despite the fact that unsubstantiated criticism and double standards are still common towards them. The “new” ones still feel often that it is still worth bearing criticism because the membership gave back opportunities and possibilities, which were lost after the Second World War and during the Soviet “alliance”. Our region regained the momentum to be able to develop along those values and more importantly interests which we share with our Western partners. The Euroatlantic integration has had no alternative. Nevertheless, there will be conflicts, frictions and debates. However, a healthy dialogue rather strengthens the alliance than questions its effectiveness, especially if the “new” ones are equal not only on paper. Considering this argument, this is not surprising that Central European have felt some kind of alienation within the club and they also have had the valid feeling that despite the full membership the “new” members are rather second class ones. The feeling of being neglected has come back time-to-time and it is still tangible in many decision processes today, therefore sticking together for instance in the frames of the Visegrad Cooperation is very important. In the 1990s the most

important foreign policy priority of the Central European states was alinement to the NATO and the EU which resulted in the acceptance of the rules without much criticism and also the adaptation of the Western institutions according to the Western interests. This resulted in on one hand that the Western allies are not used to a strong Central European voice and on the other hand that events and processes in our region have been less important in Brussels and we could not react in time, either. The last 15 and 20 years also proved that the alliance and the common institutions can only function effectively if the members are able to present their interests, make their voice heard and equally participate in finding solutions to the challenges. Honest dialogue is also in the “old” members’ interest. This is not only true in the EU and NATO but in the bilateral relations with the United States. Due to the serious effects of the global financial crisis the United States decided to turn away from our region and since the beginning of the 2010s it became more and more common that Washington openly criticized the allies’ domestic policies and also openly tried to influence them. From the American point of view we could even justify this change but it is beyond question that the new tone in the American foreign policy could not help deepen the cooperation within the alliance.

As mentioned above the actors of international relations have had to face a qualitatively new context after the end of Cold War. The events of the last 30 years revealed the fact that the liberal security architecture together probably with the liberal international order – which is characterized by the institutions that were built up according to the political realities of the Cold

War – is out-of-date. Simultaneously, the state-centered Westphalian system lost most of its credit, since new non-state actors emerged on the scene of international relations. Thus, we could ask provocatively whether the international system is in crisis or only the Western style liberal statehood. Due to the ideological antagonism, the Cold War hindered deeper understanding this dilemma and the causes and consequences of changes in international politics, such as the emergence of non-state actors, the melting border between domestic and foreign policy and the failure of states in performing a sufficient role in international or domestic politics. The interconnectedness of the processes and dimensions of international politics means that all the players and states have to be aware the patterns of globalization. If we would like to characterize globalization briefly, we can use the apt description by Zbigniew Brzezinski. According to the former National Security Advisor, globalization has helped the global political awakening of the people, showed that the global centre of power is getting to shift from the Atlantic to the West coast of the Pacific, and the emergence of truly global problems need joint solutions from all players.⁵ After the Cold War the post-modern realist position of the United States or the European Union was the manifestation of the feeling, that the globalized world is too complex, and what we cannot change should not be a priority issue in our foreign policy. The turning points, or as it is named in this study the cornerstones call the attention to the fact that this attitude is failed.

⁵ Ignatius, David, “America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy”. (Washington, DC: Basic Books, 2008)

That is there are many emerging (sometime new) threats which the Transatlantic community must respond flexibly, in cooperation with other partners when it is needed. The future seems to witness a changed position of China, as well as an increasingly assertive Russian, which may affects states' security in negative direction, whether in the military-political dimension or in the economic dimension at the same time. Terrorism and disintegration tendencies are equally important concepts that will need to be better addressed, and at the same time preventive plans and activities of states will be needed to maintain security.

In 2020 it became even more obvious and tangible that those liberal political and economic institutions which were created after the Second World War and intended to help avoid a new great war are not able to handle the new problems and provide effective and sustainable solutions. Thus the ideological debate about the existing institutions is not a simple European problem, but it is also present in international politics. On the other hand, the debate is rather a Western “extravagancy” because many regional powers and international players already abandoned the dysfunctional international frames and suggested new forms of cooperation, think about Russia, or China. The gravest Western dilemma is how long the liberal world order is still able to manage the challenges and despite the problems to maintain the credibility of the institutions. The liberal label gained negative connotation whilst the debate should focus on the reform of the international institutions and not about the Transatlantic community's member states' domestic politics. Without all the members the reform of these institutions is not possible. Without the development of the

reformed structure it is difficult to imagine that the institutions will survive under the growing pressure. This ability of reform needs political will but the future of our region, the EU and the Western alliance is at stake.

After 1989 the Central Europeans needed to adapt quickly to the changes in international politics and because of the forced openness they were very vulnerable at the same time, especially economically. Nonetheless, the “canaries” were not listened to in the West, the geopolitics stroke back – for instance in Ukraine – and the West could not understand the different needs and interests of or regions countries.⁶ There are many examples only to name a few like the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars in the Balkans happened in the immediate neighbourhood of Central Europe but the conflict resolution was not on the highest level of the Transatlantic agenda for long; or the effects of the unavoidable influence of Russia in the neighbourhood, which is not dependent on how much Central Europe wanted to loosen the ties. The EU and NATO expected and even demanded full and quick integration and adaptation of all the Western institutions (and laws) in exchange of letting in the new members. The serious conditionality left not much room for manoeuvre other than follow the instruction without questioning them. However, the last decade, Europe faced significant changes that hopefully make the Western Europeans realize that a functioning Transatlantic community needs all the members.

⁶ Grygiel, Jakub J. and A. Wess Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)

The Cold War ended without forcing the West and the United States to seriously think about the reform of for instance the NATO. Of course it is true that the NATO looked for new tasks proving that there were still need for the formal defense alliance. In the 1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and more importantly due to the Yugoslav War, the civil wars in Africa it seemed that the West will not face a serious military challenger (in Europe) but the small conflicts created regional security vacuum which was not in the Western interest. The NATO tried to be prepared to go beyond territorial defence and answer the “new security threats”.⁷ The paradox of the 21st century lies in this very process: the outdated institutions tried to find new impetus whilst the 20th century’s traditional military threats never disappeared, think only on Ukraine. It became clear that the institutions are not anymore able to manage the traditional threats, either.

In the meantime, not only Europe changed. Also tectonic domestic (political, economic and cultural) changes happened in the United States. Obama won carrying the promise of hope and change but the parallel challenges proved to be too much to manage. Later many European politicians’ expectation was not met in 2016 and many were surprised by the political changes in the United States and the earlier unbelievable electoral win of Donald Trump. At the same time similar political processes were ongoing

⁷ Rada, Péter “Átalakuló biztonsági kihívások, a biztonság dimenziói,” in *Új világrend? Nemzetközi kapcsolatok a hidegháború utáni világban*, ed. Péter Rada, Grotius Könyvtár, I (Budapest: Corvinus Külügyi és Kulturális Egyesület; Ifjú Közgazdászok Közhasznú Egyesülete, 2007), 53–72; Rada, Péter “Új típusú biztonsági kihívások,” in *Biztonságpolitikai Corvinák: Háttéranyagok korunk legfontosabb biztonságpolitikai problémáinak megértéséhez*, ed. Csaba Rada (Budapest: Corvinus Külügyi és Kulturális Egyesület, 2008), 7–19; Rada, Péter, Bartha, Dániel: *The Role of the Visegrád Countries in the transatlantic future*. BiztPol Affairs. 2014. Vol. 2. No. 1. 14-22

in Europe, too, which could not be seen. The politics and the politicians have got in distance from the electorate and the voters' real everyday problems. The elite politics is not in the interests of the voters who demanded significant changes – such as “drain the swamp” in Washington. These changes were necessary and instead of each other's criticism the EU should have needed reforms that pay attention to the special problems of each citizen and not only on the vague liberal “Europe visions” of the Western political elite.

Considering these developments, we could witness new trends in international politics. The United States intends to decrease the number of all those activities which are costly and have become more and more reluctant to engage in solving new challenges alone. The American foreign policy clearly overstretched in the 2000s and became tired. Especially, after the 2003 invasion of Iraq Washington gained more criticism than approval. It could not be continued and already George W. Bush tried to find a way out; Obama's main goal was to engage the partners and leave the two battlefronts in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Trump has also looked for new solutions for the dilemma: how to remain in a world leadership position and decrease the burdens and costs on the United States at the same time. In this sense Trump did not begin a new politics rather the foreign policy reflects the American public opinion.

Donald Trump is often criticized that his foreign policy is unpredictable but it is not true. We can conclude that Washington is tired to be policeman of the World and is fed up with paying the protection of the Western world alone while maintaining the liberal institutions is rather a burden on the American foreign policy. It is

understandable that Trump is not sure why the United States should bear the costs of fighting international terrorism and defeating the Islamic State alone whilst the European allies are engaged in shoreless debates about the identity and they are not able to come to a common agreement how to stop the immense flow of illegal migrants. Furthermore, it seems that Trump is also less patient asking the allies in vain to significantly increase their defence budget. There are positive developments in this sense but the road is still long.

At the time of the publication of this study we do not have official results of the 2020 American Presidential elections but it seems that Joe Biden will form the new administration. What can we expect from him is not crystal clear yet regarding the Transatlantic relations especially considering that during the election campaign only few words dealt with foreign policy. The election was rather about Trump's personality. What we still can predict that the Transatlantic relations will remain very important for the United States, and Washington will not forget that Europe is the most important ally. However, the balance will move towards Western Europe again and Germany's relation with the United States will develop from the all-time low during Donald Trump. The United States' interest will be a united EU and will not tolerate differing voices from Central Europe as it will be regarded weakening the unity of the EU. Also Washington will need stronger economic ties to recover the economic fall due to Covid-19. Biden will not tolerate close ties with Russia, or China whilst he will expect more global level cooperation in the international organizations.

Biden needs to answer the most pressing issue: it has been a decade long question whether the United States is still able and willing to fulfil its role as the protector of the Western world and the values. The role Washington accepted after the end of the Cold War. The “America first” slogan and program did not appear only with Donald Trump. There was already strong need to pull back during Barack Obama’s presidency and demand more activity and share of the burdens from the allies. Few would argue that this is the beginning of a new multipolar world. This is for sure not true on the global scale but valid in different regions locally. China is a clear challenger but not strong enough militarily yet, Russia is on the other hand a real military power but the economy is weak and small, today and the next few years hold the last opportunity for Russia to participate in shaping the World. Thus, the United States is clearly the most important and still the only real superpower even if it is more reluctant and more critical.

As a conclusion, the success of Central and Eastern Europe’s Euroatlantic integration is beyond question even though there are many challenges today.⁸ The NATO regained some momentum after the Russian invasion of Crimea but the Alliance still lacks a clear mission and struggles to provide an unmistakable point of reference. Whilst there was a wide consensus in the Central European political elite that the political, economic and societal transition process needs to be designed according to the Western norms due to the unquestioned goal of the Euroatlantic integration.

⁸ Marton, Péter, István Balogh, and Péter Rada, *Biztonsági tanulmányok: Új fogalmi keretek, és tanulságok a visegrádi országok számára* (Budapest: Antall József Tudásközpont, 2015)

However, even after joining the NATO and the EU Central Europeans still cannot completely trust the Western European allies⁹ due to the different views on fundamental questions for instance within the EU, such as illegal migration, consequences of the Brexit, the future of the Eurozone. Furthermore, the Central Europeans have had some fears on a potential Western-Russian conciliation. In order to avoid to become too vulnerable to the Western interests and to balance the Russian presence Central Europeans wanted to build as close relationship with the United States as it was possible. The Central European fears were not completely unsubstantiated which was proved for example by the North Stream agreement and the North Stream 2 plans, the double standards regarding South Stream, or Nabucco, or when it came to the economic sanctions against Russia after the invasion of the Crimea. The Central Europeans have been more affected by the sanctions which has been mentioned several times for instance by the Hungarian government provoking only Western criticism while Germany, or France maintained close economic ties with Russia even in strategic sectors.

Even though the clear effort of the Central Europeans to remain close to the United States Washington has not always appreciated the “newest” allies and sacrificed them in case other strategic consideration were stronger such as the “reset” with Russia, or the pivot to Asia. Despite the Central European efforts

⁹ Rada, Péter, Péter Stepper “Hungarian perspective on NATO and contribution to the Alliance” (Budapest: AJTK, 2019); Valasek, Thomas, Jires, Jan, Lorenz, Wojciech, Rada, Péter: Missiles and misgivings: the US and Central Europe's security. CEPI Policy Briefs. 2013. URL: <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/missiles-and-misgivings-us-and-central-europes-security>

and participation in most missions by the end of the day the criticism remained common mostly – except Poland – due to the low defence spending. It is on one hand not surprising because burden sharing has been a general debate within the NATO the last decades. The Trump administration was more pragmatic and paid more attention to Central and Eastern Europe. The ideologically dictated foreign policy seemed to disappear but probably only those allies can expect less criticism in the future which indeed make efforts to fulfil the American requests regarding defence spending,

ESSAY

CRACKS IN THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP? THE ROLE OF POLAND AND HEALING THE DIVIDE

Adam Reichardt

ABSTRACT

Since 2016, the state and future of transatlantic relations has never been more debated. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has put serious questions on the durability of the transatlantic partnership and caused serious concerns on how it should be repaired and/or altered to meet the changing environment. Experts remain divided, however, on whether there was serious damage done to the transatlantic partnership as a whole. A survey of experts from the USA and Europe conducted in 2018 by Foreign Affairs found that there was a broad array of opinions as to what damage has been done. One thing is certain however, the relationship needs to be updated to reflect not only the global challenges that this alliance faces, but also the political challenges as well, which are also domestic in nature.

Keywords: Donal Trump, US foreign policy, Poland

Since 2016, the state and future of transatlantic relations has never been more debated. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has put serious questions on the durability of the transatlantic partnership and caused serious concerns on how it should be repaired and/or altered to meet the changing environment. Experts remain divided, however, on whether there was serious damage done to the transatlantic partnership as a whole. A survey of experts from the USA and Europe conducted in 2018 by *Foreign Affairs*¹ found that there was a broad array of opinions as to what damage has been done. One thing is certain however, the relationship needs to be updated to reflect not only the global challenges that this alliance faces, but also the political challenges as well, which are also domestic in nature.

The election of Joe Biden in 2020, who will take over as US president in January 2021, should also not be seen as a quick fix to many of the issues that were revealed in the transatlantic relationship. Instead, it should be seen as an opportunity to have a genuine conversation about the current state of the partnership and find new solutions and ideas for the future if this alliance is to redefine itself to meet new challenges and face threats together.

From the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly from Poland, a lot of questions remain as well. However, the last four years were not as damaging in the eyes of the Poles, as Poland enjoyed special attention from the Trump Administration which included enhancing Polish security and support for one of the main geo-economic projects led by Poland, the Three Seas Initiative. However, some disagreements between Poland and other EU members over certain issues, including the

¹ "Has the Transatlantic Alliance Been Irreparably Damaged"? *Foreign Affairs*. October, 16, 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/2018-10-16/has-transatlantic-alliance-been-irreparably-damaged> Accessed Dec 4 2020.

rule of law, has put the current Polish government in Brussel's spotlight. The question that has emerged now with the election of Biden to the White House, is how will transatlantic relations develop further? Will there be more efforts to strengthen cooperation and overcome the differences that have been fracturing the alliance for the last several years? What role can Poland play in this process?

This article aims to outline the current state of transatlantic relations and try to understand the sources of the recent crises that it has faced. It will then address the perspective from Poland and try to highlight recent developments in the alliance from the Polish perspective. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion on what a Biden Administration might mean for the alliance and Poland's role going forward.

SMALL CRACKS REVEAL GROWING CRISIS IN THE RELATIONSHIP

As we begin a new decade with a new administration in the White House, it is examining the current state of the transatlantic alliance.² The previous four years in particular have revealed many cracks exist in this alliance and many questions were raised whether and how to fill in these cracks. At the same time, many issues still unite both Europe and North America and the fact that the relationship remains a cornerstone in both sides' foreign policies should be assessed positively. Nevertheless, the processes that have been taking place throughout the world, especially in the last decade or two, are indicators that a serious re-examination of transatlantic relations is necessary if, in the very least, to consider

² In this article I use the terms "transatlantic alliance", "transatlantic relations" and "transatlantic relationship" interchangeably. They are meant to refer to the general set of relations between Europe (the European Union) and North America (the United States and Canada). This is not to confuse specific elements of these ties (e.g. NATO).

how to rebuild and reinvent an even stronger alliance to meet the common challenges faced today.

Traditionally, transatlantic relations have been defined first and foremost by common values and a belief in the international liberal order that emerged after the Second World War. Burgoon, Oliver and Trubowitz (2017) look at two foundational pillars of the transatlantic relations: “The first was the presence of a common threat, namely Soviet power. The second was the strength and breadth of citizen benefits from Europe’s and America’s economic openness (free trade, foreign investment, open immigration).”³ Since the end of the Cold War, expansion of NATO and the European Union into Central Europe and the Baltic states demonstrated that support for a broad transatlantic alliance remained strong and found fresh energy in the newer member states. The terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001 in the United States and the subsequent war in Afghanistan with the involvement of NATO illustrated further resolve by both sides of the Atlantic to lead in the world, with an implicit understanding that the United States was at the helm and the Europeans would play an active supporting role in security while economic issues were meant to continue to converge as a result of the intensifying process of globalization.

However, since the early 2000s, many cracks were already beginning to emerge within the alliance. Disagreements over the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 were the first such serious signs. The then administration of George W. Bush was unable to get full European consensus – the United Kingdom and some of the newer NATO members (e.g. Poland, Czech Republic) supported the efforts while France and Germany were adamantly against them.

³ Burgoon, Brian B., Oliver, Tim and Trubowitz, Peter (2017) Globalization, domestic politics, and transatlantic relations. *International Politics*

Economically, the 2008 global financial crisis led some to question the neo-liberal policies of much of the alliance. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 to the White House was seen by many as an opportunity to turn the page, and get back to rebuilding a stronger alliance. However, this hope quickly faded as Obama's key foreign policy, especially in the first term, was focused on engagement with Asia – dubbed the “pivot to Asia – and some disconnect from Europe while at the same time “resetting” relations with Russia. What's more, Anna Dimitrova noted that the “US pivot to Asia was generally seen as a natural, if long overdue, reaction to Europe's inability to act as a security provider without counting on the US security umbrella”.⁴

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 can be seen as a wake-up call for Europeans and Americans alike. The Obama administration came to the realization that the United States could not leave Europe to manage the continent's security on its own while the Europeans realized their over-reliance on American security support was risky. The transatlantic response however was positive in that it came to the conclusion that threats to a common transatlantic security still exist. The response by NATO to enhance the Eastern flank and develop a strong multi-national deterrence policy was one of the most visible signs of transatlantic resolve in Europe since the expansion of NATO in the early 2000s. At the same time there were growing calls for a stronger European security architecture through strengthening its Common Security and Defense Policy. Serious discussions on strategic autonomy and a common European army were being held for the first time since the EU's founding.

⁴ Dimitrova, Anna. "Transatlantic Relations under Obama's Presidency: Between Dream and Reality." In *Europe under Stress*, pp. 127-136. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2016.

The election of Donald Trump and his arrival to the global stage in 2016 demonstrated that the small cracks that had existed previously, suddenly became near-full-blown crises. Trump's approach to foreign policy was somewhat chaotic and transactional, especially when it came to the transatlantic relationship. As John Peterson (2018) noted, Trump believed that "American allies owed vast amounts of money for past and present US security guarantees" ... and that he was on record as opposing every trade deal to which the US had signed since World War II".⁵ The slogan "America First" often meant allies second, or third. In other words, the new administration had shaken the foundations of the transatlantic alliance – global security and economy. What's more, the process of Brexit, which found support in the Trump White House, was another dividing point in the transatlantic relationship.

Now with the Trump era coming to an end, the incoming Biden Administration will be faced with finding a way to repair and renew the transatlantic relationship. How does Poland fit in this equation? As the biggest power on the Eastern flank of NATO and a key ally for the United States, is there a role for Poland to play in this new era? This next section will briefly outline US-Polish relations in the framework of the transatlantic alliance, discuss its experience under the Trump administration and outline the challenges from Warsaw's perspective in the next phase of the alliance.

THE VIEW FROM POLAND

One of the issues in Poland that is relatively non-partisan and non-controversial, and considered a very high priority since 1989, is Polish relations with the United States. The Polish people

⁵ Peterson, John. "Structure, agency and transatlantic relations in the Trump era." *Journal of European Integration* 40, no. 5 (2018): 637-652.

generally have a positive attitude towards the US and towards Americans. There are common connections via the diaspora Polonia community in the United States and a sense of a special bond that the United States and Poland share. We can look at specific stories, for example the story of Tadeusz Kościuszko – a Polish freedom fighter who took part in the American Revolutionary War in 1776 – is rooted in Polish-American historical memory. Much closer to the contemporary times; we can cite some high profile Polish Americans who made a significant impact on history and helped Poland on the road to Euro-Atlantic Integration. Jan Nowak-Jeziorański was the head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and later became a prominent member of the Polish American Congress. He was an advisor to the National Security Agency and advised Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. He was one of the main proponents of Poland's membership in NATO and did significant work in promoting Poland's NATO membership among American policymakers. We can add here Zbigniew Brzezinski, who also played a prominent role in supporting Poland before and after the Cold War and was considered one those key bridges between Washington and Warsaw.

A public opinion poll from 2019 found that 52% of Poles see relations positively (with only 2% assessing them negatively).⁶ How will these relations develop under a Biden administration? That remains to be seen. However, we can start by examining how Poland could play a role in rebuilding transatlantic relations via short examination of current ties with Poland which can be broken down into a few pillars: Security policy; the Three Seas initiative; and Nord Stream 2.

⁶ Jak oceniamy stosunki Polski z USA? Jest najlepiej od 8 lat [SONDAŻ CBOS]. *Forsal.pl* <https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1424128,jak-oceniamy-stosunki-polski-z-usa-jest-najlepiej-od-8-lat-sondaz-cbos.html> accessed 10 December 2020.

SECURITY POLICY

In terms of NATO cooperation under President Donald Trump there was clearly a lot of mixed feelings as noted above. We know that President Trump had been somewhat skeptical of NATO cooperation, which is a cornerstone for Polish security. Trump's open criticism of NATO at times was even reminiscent of Russian propaganda narratives. Yet, Trump's biggest criticism focused on member countries meeting the minimum 2% GDP spending on defense, which Poland does.

There were also concerns about President Trump's apparent positive and openness towards Vladimir Putin and Russia. For Poland Russia is perceived as one of the biggest threats to the regional security, especially since the 2014 war in Ukraine but even well before (and historically rooted). But a lot of that concern has been alleviated thanks in part to strong US support for Polish security policy. The fact that there are US troops present on Polish territory, which came as a result of NATO and American deterrence policy towards Russia after 2014, has helped in this regard. What's more the recent "US-Poland Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement" signed on August 15th 2020 will increase US troop presence in Poland to 5,500 troops;⁷ and Poland has declared that it will invest heavily in its state's infrastructure which could allow for the possibility to host up to 20,000 troops – the so-called Fort Trump; as the Polish President then proposed for its name (certainly a new name will have to be considered).

THREE SEAS INITIATIVE

⁷ For more see: "US-Poland defence deal to enhance deterrence against Russia – Pentagon." *The First News* 03 August 2020: <https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/us-poland-defence-deal-to-enhance-deterrence-against-russia---pentagon-14584>. Accessed 10 December 2020.

Largely seen as a Polish and Croatia-led initiative, the Three Seas Initiative aims to build stronger economic and infrastructural ties among 12 countries of the region of Central and Eastern Europe; focusing on North-South integration of the eastern most members of the European Union.⁸ Interpreted by some in Western Europe as a political project aimed at challenging the West's dominance in the EU, the project proved somewhat attractive to the Trump Administration. Trump's visit to Poland in 2017 during the inaugural Three Seas Summit was seen as a political win locally and regionally and as a sign that the US supported the initiative, also giving it greater legitimacy; and lastly managing to garner some significant American economic investments into certain projects.

NORD STREAM 2

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline which is being built by Russia's Gazprom to provide additional natural gas deliveries to Germany has been strongly criticized by Poland and other Central European states. For many in the region it is seen as a political project which strengthen ties between Germany and Russia and could be a significant step towards normalizing relations between Germany and Vladimir Putin's Russia. As energy expert Wojciech Jakóbiak wrote in *New Eastern Europe*: "At the most basic level, Nord Stream 2 presents a security problem for all of the EU."⁹ The US was very vocal in against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and supported the Polish position. Yet, it was seen as one more point in the ongoing transatlantic divide.

⁸ Members include: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. For more see: <https://vm.ee/en/activities-objectives/three-seas-initiative-3si>

⁹ Jakóbiak, Wojciech. "How to lose friends and alienate people or Germany on Nord Stream 2". *New Eastern Europe*. 04 April 2019. <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/04/04/how-to-lose-friends-and-alienate-people-or-germany-on-nord-stream-2/> Accessed 10 December 2020.

RELATIONS WITH BIDEN ADMINISTRATION?

Since 2016, the current Polish government has seen the Trump Administration's support as a somewhat legitimizing factor for its own domestic policies, especially since there are some obvious convergences in regards to political ideology, which are both more national conservative in nature, more Brussels-skeptic, German cautious and a populist-style of governance. However, with a new administration coming in, it will remain to be seen what role certain ideological divergences may play in relations between the two countries - and ultimately how that may play a role on bridging the transatlantic divide.

The current Polish government knew what to expect under the Trump administration and probably would prefer to deal with Trump administration – this was evidenced by the fact that President Andrzej Duda waited until the final count of the Electoral College before officially congratulating Biden. And there is no doubt that a Biden administration would be much more vocal in its criticism of Polish government domestic policies in certain areas like media consolidation, rule of law and rights of the LGBT+ community.

However, the importance of Poland in the security architecture of the transatlantic community will certainly be emphasized. There most likely will be continued support for maintaining a US presence in NATO's eastern flank. The Biden administration will also look to continue the deterrence policy towards Russia and there is certainly a role for Poland in this regard.

All that said, the challenges ahead for the transatlantic community remain significant. The fact that the Biden Administration seeks to heal this relationship is a good sign, however the cracks that became overtly visible since 2016 will need

not only American leadership, but cooperation and assistance from all parties interested in healing this divide, including Poland.

CONCLUSIONS

As argued above, the cracks in the transatlantic relationship that emerged over the last four years were ones that had already existed long before 2016. It would be too easy of an exercise to blame Donald Trump directly for the deterioration in these relations. His rhetoric and sometimes policy (e.g. Iran) certainly revealed just how easy it was for these relations to fall into a crisis. The election of Joe Biden now poses the question of “What next in Transatlantic relations?” There is no doubt that the Biden Administration will immediately reassure America’s European allies that it has not abandoned the relationship. At the same time, there will be more pressure internally and even from the United States, for Europe to become less dependent on the American security umbrella. This can also be seen as an opportunity. As Alina Polyakova and Benjamin Haddad recently concluded: “Observers should neither lament this state of affairs nor yearn for what used to be. If Europe can choose its own path, the transatlantic relationship will mature into a more balanced alliance.”¹⁰ Indeed, European discourse has shifted to speak more openly about its own “strategic autonomy” and even a European army (not to diverge from transatlantic ties, but to play a more equal role in the relationship).¹¹

Certainly, the damage that has been done can be overcome, but requires political will and a desire to build a stronger and more durable relationship that reflects the world and societies today.

¹⁰ Polyakova, Alina, and Benjamin Haddad. "Europe alone: What comes after the transatlantic alliance." *Foreign Affairs* 98 (2019): 109.

¹¹ For more on this see: Bartels, Han-Peter; Kellner, Anna Maria; Optenhogel, Uwe (Eds.) *Strategic Autonomy and the Defence of Europe. On the road to a European Army?* J.H.W. Dietz Nachf. Bonn: Germany, 2017.

New aims will need to be delineated and new roles for all parties, including newer ones like Poland, will be required. At the same time, there has to be an emphasis on the notion that the transatlantic relationship is built on more than common interests – it is indeed common values, common history and a common future. Poland's place in this process should not be underestimated – both in Washington, but also in Europe. It would be a wasted opportunity to not capitalize on the importance of Warsaw's position in this renewed transatlantic relationship and find ways to redefine with a significant input from Central Europe. Hopefully certain political disputes, be it either domestic or among other allies, will not further deepen the divide.

COMMENTARY

THE US ELECTION AND PROSPECTS FOR A CHANGING US-HUNGARIAN RELATIONSHIP

Scott Cullinane

ABSTRACT

The 2020 US election campaign between Democratic candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden and Republican incumbent Donald Trump has been nearly devoid of any serious foreign policy discussion. Perhaps unsurprisingly, domestic issues such as the economy, healthcare, and the pandemic response have dominated the public discourse. Yet, the contest's outcome holds significant ramifications for the future course of US foreign policy and how the US is viewed on the international stage. While the campaign rhetoric has largely left foreign policy to vague slogans and speculation, much can be gleaned about the future direction of the US, especially vis-a-vis Hungary.

Keywords: US foreign policy, Central Eastern Europe

Since President Trump's inauguration in 2017, few leaders have enjoyed as close a relationship with the White House as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Both leaders share a world outlook that is generally opposed to immigration, skeptical of the European Union, and more open to cooperation with Vladimir Putin's Russian than mainstream experts in either Budapest or Washington would advise. Orbán took the highly unusual step of endorsing Donald Trump as a candidate and did so again this year during his reelection bid. Subsequently, Orbán has enjoyed a formal visit to Washington, including an Oval Office meeting in May 2019, where Trump praised him for his "tremendous job."¹

Beyond the two leaders' complimentary rhetoric, President Trump dispatched a fellow New Yorker, David Cornstein, to be Ambassador in Budapest. At a time when pressure from civil society activists and leaders in the European Parliament was mounting to impose some cost on the Hungarian government for a wide range of activities broadly seen as damaging to the rule of law, Ambassador Cornstein and other political appointees in the US State Department downplayed such concerns. During an event hosted by the US Embassy in Budapest, Ambassador Cornstein famously arranged for American singer Paul Anka to serenade the Prime Minister.

While Orbán dramatically improved his political standing in the American capital during the Trump administration, especially compared to the sometimes frosty relations with the Barack Obama administration, there have been limits to what the Hungarian government has achieved. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the US committed to allocating resources to reinvest in Europe's collective defense – including in Hungary.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-orban-hungary-bilateral-meeting/>

Unfortunately, the funding which had been earmarked was redirected by President Trump for the expansion of a wall along the US-Mexico border.² Additionally, the close Trump-Orbán relationship also did not alter the plans of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* to recreate its Hungarian language service, which was reconstituted in the face of wide spread media consolidation at the hands of those loyal to the Prime Minister.³

If there is a change in the US government following this year's election, a Biden administration would again dramatically change Orbán's relationship with Washington. A newly minted President Biden would be faced with a large number of urgent and competing demands. Under other circumstances, the US-Hungarian relationship would not warrant excess attention. However, Orbán has so associated himself with Trump and an illiberal policy agenda; he has lost the broader bipartisan support he would otherwise enjoy as the elected leader of a NATO ally.

In an issue of *Foreign Affairs* published earlier this year, Biden outlined a vision for his foreign policy which would emphasize shoring up democracy at home and abroad.⁴ In fact, that article especially calls out the need for the US to address backsliding democracies, a category which includes Hungary according to the rankings compiled by the US NGO Freedom House.

As a Biden administration settles into its new role, it's likely that the US-Hungarian bilateral relationship might receive even more attention than under President Trump, but of a very different variety. As Biden seeks to restore faith in alliances and rebuilds American credibility with European leaders in Brussels, it is

² <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2019-09-13/trumps-wall-fund-diversion-risks-military-facilities-security-report-suggests>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/29/world/europe/hungary-orban-media.html>

⁴ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

possible Hungary may be a point of transatlantic convergence. The US could increase support for civil society and local media outlets, step up diplomatic support for academic institutions such as CEU, and engage in more public-facing investigations into public corruption, which creates an uneven playing field for US companies seeking to do business in Europe.

While the US-Hungarian relationship is poised for dramatic changes, some of the broad themes of US policy in the region may remain consistent. While the Trump Administration has sometimes failed to align its words and actions, it's an overall shift to limit, contain, and counter Russian and Chinese influence in Central Europe is more likely to be enhanced rather than dismantled by a new Democratic administration.

For the Hungarian government, productive, meaningful, and mutually beneficial cooperation isn't precluded by a Biden victory, but it will necessitate change. For the past four years, the Prime Minister has drawn credibility from his relationship with the White House, which has provided him political leverage both within Hungary and at a European level. As Washington shifts away from a Trumpian outlook, leaders in the Executive Branch and a legislative branch, potentially controlled by Democrats, will see the political and economic consolidation around Orbán and his clique as a problem demanding US attention. Not only as a problem for the rule of law and European solidarity but as dangerous to NATO and the underlying alliance.

ESSAY

AFTER OBAMA, BEYOND TRUMP: IS A TURN IN US FOREIGN POLICY EXPECTED?

Simon Szilvási

ABSTRACT

The Presidential elections in 2020 have created a new perspective for the United States. Is the novel democrat President going to alter the course of foreign policy? This year was indeed exceptional in the U.S. due to not only the coronavirus pandemic but also the presidential elections. According to the statistics, the United States is the most affected country globally, based on the number of coronavirus cases. After this year's turbulent elections this essay focuses on the events before the inauguration and the new President's first hurdles.

Keywords: US elections, coronavirus, Joe Biden

The Presidential elections in 2020 have created a new perspective for the United States.¹ Is the novel democrat President going to alter the course of foreign policy? After this year's turbulent elections this essay focuses on the events before the inauguration and the new President's first hurdles.

This year was indeed exceptional in the U.S. due to not only the coronavirus pandemic but also the presidential elections. According to the statistics, the United States is the most affected country globally, based on the number of coronavirus cases; currently, there are more than 21,000,000 infections, and it is rising.²

In 2020, mail-in voting had an extended role, as states allowed their residents to vote by mail due to the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a so-called toss-up situation in Texas, Florida, Ohio, Iowa, North Carolina, and Georgia. The numbers changed hour by hour, and the final results came weeks after Election Day.

Mail-in voting originated from the American Civil War, helping soldiers on the battlefield, who could, thus, vote absent from their hometown. According to a new survey from Stanford University, if we look closer at these ballots, considering the electoral votes, there is no significant difference between the two parties in the electoral voting outcomes.³ The American Science reaffirmed this claim by their own research.⁴

¹ Antall József Knowledge Centre published this paper's original version in December 2020. <https://ajtk.hu/en/research/research-blog/after-obama-beyond-trump-is-a-turn-in-us-foreign-policy-expected>

² "CDC COVID Data Tracker," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), accessed December 18, 2020, <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>.

³ Wong, May. "New Research on Voting by Mail Shows Neutral Partisan Effects." SIEPR, April 16, 2020. <https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/new-research-voting-mail-shows-neutral-partisan-effects>.

⁴ Cornwall, Warren. "Do Republicans or Democrats Benefit from Mail-in Voting? It Turns out, Neither." Science. American Association for the Advancement of Science, August 26,

The Electoral College cast its vote on December 14 2020;⁵ Joe Biden as a Democrat president-elect gathered 306 votes, the exact number that President Trump, who this time got only 232, had gained four years ago. The electors voted as pledged, since none of them disregarded the popular vote as it had happened in 2016.

It is important to note that more than 74 million votes were cast for the Republican Party and President Trump, which equals roughly the number of the United Kingdom's population. And the more than 81 million votes for Joe Biden⁶ almost amounts to the population of Germany. These vast numbers added up to the highest number of participation and cast votes in U.S. election history.

As Barack Obama's vice president, Joe Biden may follow in his Democrat predecessor's footsteps according to experts. However, would it be the case? International relations has had many changes since 2016, not to mention the effects of the coronavirus. There is one thing that has not changed, however, and that is the grand strategy of the United States. According to the president-elect's website, his nominee for the Secretary of State's office would be Anthony John Blinken.⁷ Blinken earlier served as a Deputy National Security Advisor and Deputy Secretary of State. He spent his younger years in France, so a connection to and understanding of Europe would be a massive advantage on his side.

REJOINING THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

2020. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/08/do-republicans-or-democrats-benefit-mail-voting-it-turns-out-neither>.

⁵ Cheney, Kyle, and Zach Montellaro. "Electoral College Affirms Biden's Victory." POLITICO. POLITICO, December 15, 2020.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/12/14/electoral-college-biden-victory-444952>.

⁶ Canipe, Chris. "U.S. 2020 Live Election Results." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, November 3, 2020. <https://graphics.reuters.com/USA-ELECTION/RESULTS-LIVE-US/jbyprxelqpe/>.

⁷ "Antony Blinken, Secretary of State." Official website of President-Elect Joe Biden, November 30, 2020. <https://buildbackbetter.gov/nominees-and-appointees/antony-blinken/>.

As Joe Biden has stated several times, another significant step ahead to re-joining the Paris Agreement of the United States to have a leading role in the green transition, too. His focus is on green energy and the reduction of carbon emissions both in the United States and the outside world. Donald Trump said in 2017 that the Agreement was not suitable for the United States,⁸ as the remaining polluters, such as India and China, were not obliged to reduce their emissions—so why should the United States? Leaving the Agreement was a long and complicated process; however, re-joining would mean further sanctions and repercussions for Washington.

Moreover, the Senate should ratify the new Agreement, officially committing the U.S. to its obligations, unlike last time in 2016, when the Obama administration did not manage to finish the process. His 2 trillion dollar policy which, among many other goals, would reducing the carbon emission by 2035, in the electricity sector, may seem far-fetched.⁹ In one hand creating such long-range plan contains insecurity for the long run. On the other hand, the different sectors' reaction, especially the electric industry and various companies, would place objection to veer their emission quickly to reach those goals in less than 14 years. To marshal his campaign promises, the future Biden's administration could achieve minor milestones in the short term, such as weatherising homes and upgrading them or enhancing the electric-car industry so as a sustainable, modern infrastructure.

MILITARY WITHDRAWALS

⁸ "On the U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement - United States Department of State." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, PRESS STATEMENT MICHAEL R. POMPEO, SECRETARY OF STATE, December 1, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/on-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-paris-agreement/>.

⁹ "The Biden Plan to Build a Modern, Sustainable Infrastructure and an Equitable Clean Energy Future." Joe Biden for President: Official Campaign Website, August 5, 2020. <https://joebiden.com/clean-energy/>.

Before the new President's inauguration, Donald Trump plans to withdraw thousands of military personnel from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Germany. In the German case, the initiative was, temporarily, barred by both parties' joint effort to support the American presence in Germany. According to the plans, 12,000 soldiers would be displaced to Poland and Eastern Europe.¹⁰

It would be challenging to measure the possible consequences for Afghanistan, but Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State could strengthen their positions in those countries.

Implementing the withdrawal for the peace negotiations would be a throwback between Afghanistan and the United States, as the NATO mission needs the United States military's transportation and logistics capabilities. However, according to the National Defense Authorization Act, the military withdrawals could not be executed unless the proposal is accepted.

PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The U.S.–Chinese relations have weakened because of the trade war and the tariffs on China in the last few years, and as President Donald Trump accused China of spreading the coronavirus this year. The Trump administration targeted how Huawei and other Chinese technology companies are working on implementing 5G in the United States and allied European countries.

The foreign minister of the People's Republic of China expressed his best wishes for President-elect Joe Biden and congratulated him on his victory.¹¹ He said China was ready to cooperate with the

¹⁰ Deutsche Welle. "U.S. Defense Bill Challenges Trump's Germany Troop Withdrawal: D.W.: 04.12.2020." DW.COM, December 4, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/us-defense-bill-challenges-trumps-germany-troop-withdrawal/a-55818683>.

¹¹ Hong, LI. "It's Time for Biden's Team to Partner with China to Cope with Virus Crisis, Economy." Global Times, November 22, 2020. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1207628.shtml>.

United States to tackle the coronavirus, to deal with economic difficulties, and to strengthen bilateral relations. We can assume, that the United States' strategic posture will not change towards China, especially in the matter of Hong Kong and Taiwan, as President-elect Biden will stand for supporting democracy worldwide. President Trump addressed China as a threat and a strategic rival.¹² His first national security strategy included Beijing as a threat to the national economy, and, therefore, to the United States' national security.

CHALLENGES AHEAD IN WASHINGTON

Regarding the latest events, Georgian voters expressed their will on January 5, turning the U.S. Senate blue. There were two run-offs in Georgia for two seats both won by the Democrat candidates.¹³ This election showed that Republicans could not regain their majority in the Senate until the midterm elections in 2022. Republicans will do their best to keep supporting their voters' interests, although from a minority position. The Democrats took over the leadership of the three prominent institutions: the White House, the U.S. Senate, and the House of Representatives.

Despite the mayhem caused by pro-Trump extremists by storming the U.S. Capitol, which was an unprecedented event since the British conflagration of Washington in 1814¹⁴ on the following

¹² Sevastopulo, Demetri. "Trump Labels China a Strategic' Competitor'." Subscribe to read | Financial Times. Financial Times, December 18, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/215cf8fa-e3cb-11e7-8b99-0191e45377ec>.

¹³ Peter Andringa, Jason Bernert. "Full Georgia U.S. Senate Runoff Results." The Washington Post. WP Company, January 9, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/election-results/georgia-senate-runoffs-2021/>.

¹⁴ "Burning of Washington, 1814." U.S. Senate: Burning of Washington, 1814, January 12, 2017. https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/August_Burning_Washington.htm.

day, - in January 7, 2021 - a joint session of the Senate counted and certified the electoral votes; and the official winner became Joseph Biden.¹⁵ During the joint session, the representatives were evacuated; unfortunately, four people lost their lives in the struggles until the National Guard and Capitol's Police restored order. That turbulent event shocked the world, though the representatives were able to finish the interrupted session and certified the winner of the 2020's election, which would be unforgivable in many ways.

The incumbent President has put great effort into proving his statement about several election frauds in many states stating he has evidence. After recounting the votes, it seems that those claims were baseless. Before the siege, President Trump held a speech during a peaceful demonstration near the Capitol, reaffirming his previous claims. In this tragic event, it seems that there are immense pressure and frustration in the nation and it is possibly more divided than ever.

Elected President Joe Biden expressed in his campaign many times that he would be a president for all Americans regardless of who they supported. He is planning to unify the divided population amidst the pandemic and economic depression. This attitude is needed the most in such turbulent times that the United States faces.

Moreover, the elected President has to deal with those political extremists who have breached the Capitol gates as well. There is a possibility that those violent attacks may repeatedly happen later until and beyond the Transition posing domestic security policy

¹⁵ Cochrane, Nicholas Fandos and Emily. "Mob Attack, Incited by Trump, Delays Election Certification." The New York Times. The New York Times, January 7, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/01/06/us/electoral-vote#after-a-day-of-chaos-congress-certifies-joe-bidens-election-victory>.

issues. Therefore, the inauguration ceremony's security protocols and measures would be wise to be considered more thoroughly. After the events, both President Trump and Joe Biden condemned the violence and called for unity and peace; Trump reassured a peaceful Transition.

The first hundred days of the Democrat president will be crucial, as there will be an immense amount of media attention monitoring his promises. However, we are yet to see whether Biden follows the former practice, dedicating his first term to domestic issues and the second one to foreign policy. In the recent events' limelight, many nations expressed its concern upon the circumstances.¹⁶ Plausible that restoring the leading global role of the United States would be difficult if such events could occur in Washington.

Still, given that President Biden is the oldest President of the United States, he has to focus on both in his first term, especially as the United States' diplomatic relations should be mended in many ways today.

Hopefully, our attention will focus on President Biden's first official foreign trip, as it is always indicative to see what a president chooses as his first destination—that country or region usually enjoys special attention from the incoming administration.

¹⁶ Haynes, Suyin. "World Reactions: U.S. Capitol Breached by Trump Supporters." *Time*. *Time*, January 7, 2021. <https://time.com/5927060/world-reactions-capitol-breached-trump-supporters/>.

Supporters

The publication has been created in the framework of the project 'Expert Ease: Finding Synergies in the Polish -Hungarian Foreign Policy'. The project was supported on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary about the Non-Governmental Co-operation Programme.



The project is co-financed by the Governments of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia through Visegrad Grants from International Visegrad Fund. The mission of the fund is to advance ideas for sustainable regional cooperation in Central Europe.



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