



CEE COUNTRIES AND THE USA

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Preface

This book is providing a comprehensive overview on the new developments and dynamics of the current relations between the US and CEE countries. Authors have analysed the bilateral relations from various perspectives and covered latest developments in their relations, which is very helpful to have a further understanding of US-CEE relations and their interests. The book is a collection of 17 reports written by the associate researchers of China-CEE Institute. The reports are originally published as the February external relations issue of the 2021 Weekly Briefings. Weekly Briefing is a core product of China-CEE Institute. The views in the book are represented by the individual authors instead of China-CEE Institute.

China-CEE Institute, registered as a non-profit limited company in Budapest, Hungary, was established by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in April 2017. China-CEE Institute builds ties and strengthens partnerships with academic institutions and think tanks in Hungary, Central and Eastern European countries, as well as other parts of Europe. China-CEE Institute aims to encourage scholars and researchers to carry out joint research and field studies, to organize seminars and lecture series, to hold some training programs for younger students, and to publish academic results, etc.

I hope this book will be helpful to enrich the knowledge of history, latest developments, dynamics and even the future development of the US-CEE relations.

Prof. Dr. CHEN Xin

Executive President and Managing Director, China-CEE Institute

Deputy Director General, Institute of European Studies, CASS

A summary of US–Albania relations

Marsela Musabelliu

In 2016, former United States (US) Ambassador to Tirana Donald Lu would state: “*Albanians are the most pro-American people in the world.*” His words were not only a sign of diplomatic courtesy towards the host country, a Gallup survey of some years prior would find that more 80% of Albanians approve the US global leadership and have positive sentiments towards the US. Not only the people but also the political establishment of the right and the left, be in opposition or in power, have as fundamental part of their agenda a very vivid pro-American alignment.

Some historical background

Albanian immigrants first arrived in the US in the mid-19th century and it was in Boston, where the first Albanian weekly newspaper, Kombi (The Nation) started publication in 1906. The Albanian-American Pan-Albanian Federation of America-Vatra was started in 1912 by Fan S. Noli and was politically active in World War I. Following the war, the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920) was held and the International community debated the partition of Albania. US President Woodrow Wilson intervened, vetoed the plans and supported Albanian territorial integrity by stating on May 6, 1919 that “*Albania ought to be independent*”. The US supported Albania's current borders, and in December 1920 Albania became a full member of the League of Nations.¹ Diplomatic relations were established with Albania in 1922, following its 1912 independence from the Ottoman Empire. US-Albanian diplomatic relations were ended in 1939 due to Albania's occupation by Italy (1939-43) and Germany (1943-44)

¹ Nadine Akhund (2012). The Two Carnegie Reports: From the Balkan Expedition of 1913 to the Albanian Trip of 1921. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/2365>

during World War II. With the 1991 regime change, the Albanian Government sought closer ties with the West in order to improve economic conditions and introduced basic reforms.¹ Diplomatic relations were reestablished on 15 March 1991, after an interruption of 52 years. When Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Albania in 1999, she was treated like a rock star. The same treatment was given to Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2003 when he went to Tirana to witness the signing of the Adriatic Charter, a document that led Albania into the NATO membership.²

President George W. Bush visited Albania on June 2007 as part of his tour of Europe, making him the first US President to do so. He was received with great fanfare by thousands citizens.³ A Street in the capital was renamed after Bush and one of the main central squares of Tirana is named after Wilson.

Current state of affairs

According to the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania: “*Relations with the U.S. are of primary and strategic importance*”. The strategic partnership with the US represents one of the cornerstones of the foreign policy of the country. United States has supported Albania in the democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Albania and U.S. are partners in terms of democratic developments, preservation of stability, peace and prosperity in the region

¹ U.S. Department of State. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-albania/>

² Peter Lucas, the New York Times (2007). Why Albanians love America. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/14/opinion/14iht-edlucas.1.6137324.html>

³ Voice of America VOA. 10 Qershor 2007 Presidenti i 43-të i SHBA George W. Bush viziton Shqipërinë. Retrieved from: <https://www.voal.ch/10-qershor-2017-presidenti-bush-viziton-shqiperine-100-te-vecantat-e-vizites-se-presidentit-bush-ne-shqiperi/>

and beyond, the consolidation of the market economy, the fight against terrorism, protection of human rights – the page concludes. ¹

In Albania, there exist a particular kind of pro-Americanism. The roots of this behavior are historic as well as recent (from the role of Woodrow Wilson in 1920 in supporting Albania's current borders, to the American support for Kosovo in 1999) and all Albanian political forces of the present regard the US as the highest strategic partner of the country. From NATO membership to EU accession talks, the US are an intrinsic part of every decision-making process of Albania. In many cases, the conditionality of either/or is a knowledge of public domain. From conditionality to explicit warnings, the US presence in Albania is felt, heard and seen.²

According to United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance from the US to the rest of the world “*Albania is a small but strategically important country where U.S. influence is exceptionally strong.*”

In light of budget constraints and in the context of legacy planning, USAID/Albania has designed a strategy that will concentrate on leveraging U.S. influence at the policy reform level. The program focus is working with the Government of Albania and the private sector on results-oriented transformational reforms and changes in the regulatory environment that will lead to strengthened democratic institutions and sustainable economic growth. This will better position Albania to achieve its European integration aspirations while, at the same time, advancing U.S. objectives related to Albania's role in helping to move forward US foreign policy priorities via Two Development Objectives (DOs) to support this goal.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania. Retrieved from: <https://punetejashme.gov.al/en/marredheniet-dypaleshe/marredheniet-me-shtetet-e-bashkuara-te-amerikes/>

² Musabelliu, M. (2020). Belt and Road Initiative, “17+ 1” and Albania's narrative of China: Shaping Perception in Political Terms. China-CEE Working Paper no. 20/2020. Available at: https://china-cee.eu/working_papers/belt-and-road-initiative-171-and-albanias-narrative-of-china-shaping-perception-in-political-terms/

Objective no.1 - strengthened rule of law and improved governance: This DO has been selected given the current state of nascent democratic institutions in the country and a pervasive culture of corruption that undermines economic growth and citizen confidence, and conflicts dramatically with EU standards of transparency, accountability, and decentralization of authorities. Objective no.2 - conditions created for broad-based, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth: This DO will focus on putting in place those reforms and regulations that will lead to a better business environment. ¹

The American presence in the past five years in Albania has been dominated by the Justice Reform, meaning objective number one as per the above document. From 2000 to 2015, USAID invested \$60 million in Albania's justice sector. The same funded a project aiming at Judicial Strengthening, designed to update the judges' current knowledge in Albanian commercial law. Approximately \$15 Million have been spent for the assistance in the areas of intervention. Another 5-year USAID project (2016-2021) Justice for All (total estimation of\$9 Million), assisted the judiciary heads in improving the court performance in Albania, introducing, transparency, access and accountability. ²

In July 2016, experts all 140 lawmakers in Albania's parliament voted in favor of the constitutional package on the Justice Reform. The vote came after 18 months of contentious negotiations between the two parties mediated by EU and US,³ but mainly the US Ambassador at the time, Donald Lu. The “New Generation” of Albanian investigators will be trained by the American FBI, the new judges should pass the vetting process, all are being strictly observed by a multitude of American

¹ USAID, Albania Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Retrieved from: <https://www.usaid.gov/albania/cdes>

² Perparim Kalo (2017). The Cost of Albanian Judicial Reform. <https://www.mondaq.com/constitutional-administrative-law/550462/the-cost-of-albanian-judicial-reform>

³ Deutsche Welle (2016). Albania passes key judicial reform for EU membership. Retrieved from: <https://www.dw.com/en/albania-passes-key-judicial-reform-for-eu-membership/a-19420808>

commissions and groups. Since the US is paying for these reforms, it comes as a consequence that they observe and impose their judgment. This trend is generally accepted by the population in Albania. Recent surveys show that a high percentage of Albanians have faith in the implementation of this particular reform if the Americans are involved.

Political presence and implications

If we are to analyze the role of the US in Albania one simple indicator can tell all is needed to be known: the role of a/any US Ambassador to Albania. For the sake of the current times this is embodied in the person of Yuri Kim, Ambassador of the USA in Albania since January 2020. Her presence, press releases, meetings with political leaders and civil society, are omnipresent in the Albanian public discourse. Only in the past months, Ambassador Kim has asked Prime Minister Edi Rama not to put some members of his party in the next election list, has visited the Central Election Commission several times, has hosted in her private residence all main political leaders of the country, has vacationed in the villas of the richest entrepreneur in Albania, has warned all political parties to stay clear of criminal figures in their next selection of candidates and many more. Thus, government, opposition, political parties, civil society, elections, judiciary, business and investment, there is no single aspect of Albania's life as nation that the US are not involved in.

From the outside the main question one would ask is why? – The current argument given by all influential voices is that a small country like Albania needs a strong and powerful ally like the US. Second, the undeniable path of Albania towards the West starts and ends with the US support. Albanian diaspora in the US is extremely active in promoting national interests in the host country. Financial (or otherwise) incentives from the US has been presented and noted at the highest ranks of governance. And last but not least, it is well accepted that if any political actor in Albania would criticize something of the US it would be political suicide.

Conclusion

In the Albanian public discourse the most associated words with regards to the US are: Euro-Atlantic orientation of Albania, strategic ally, security issues, ideal of freedom and democracy, support. It doesn't matter whether in the US there are the liberals or the conservatives in power, one thing is static, and their policy towards Albania does not change from one administration to the other, the narrative might but the policy does not.

For almost half a century Albanians were told to be aware of the American Imperialists and the great danger they could bring to the country, and in the past three decades they were told that American model is the only path forward. If asked, the average Albanian would answer that the US is what they aspire to. But, after three decades of transition and heavy reliance on the American model it can be argued that a mere copy-paste of that ideal into the Albanian state is not working. Local conditions, social background, political animosity and corruption are deforming the 'ideal' into stagnation.

The Relations between BiH and the United States

Zvonimir Stopić

In this briefing we will provide an overall outlook of Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with the United States, a country which has been one of the main guardians of Bosnia and Herzegovina's unity, peace and stability ever since the end of the war. After a short but important historical introduction, this briefing will mention some of the more significant moments in recent developments in the relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United States, most important of which is the election of the new United States president Joseph R. Biden, a man who during the war developed a special relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The official beginning of relations between the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina occurred at the moment the United States recognized the newly proclaimed and independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina on April 7th, 1992. However, the hostilities which exponentially erupted between the Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats at that time, colored the nature of their relations completely. Although the United States was a part of many negotiations between the warring sides of the conflict since the very beginning, the crucial moment through which the United States became more involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina affairs occurred on February 6th, 1994, one day after the Bosnian Serbs launched an attack on civilians gathered in Sarajevo Markale Market, during which 68 people lost their lives and 144 were wounded. On that day, following the United Nations General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali's request, the NATO, led by the United States, entered the war and through an ultimatum issued to Bosnian Serbs managed to stop the attacks on Sarajevo. Following the military involvement, the Clinton administration took it upon itself to organize the Washington Agreements, signed in March 1994, which stopped the hostilities between the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia and Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and helped to create a new

working political system, the loose federation of autonomous cantons - the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another significant moment which changed the dynamics of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the United States November 1994 decision to abolish the arms sales embargo which existed at that time against the Government of Bosnia. After the Washington Agreement, the United States and NATO, together with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (United Nations Protection Force - UNPROFOR), continued to be involved in military skirmishes revolving firstly around protection of relief convoys, United Nations safe zones and no-flight zones, which were then gradually expanded to direct attacks of various military targets. This military involvement intensified and further expanded during the 1995, which also included strikes on Pale (May), the Republika Srpska's headquarters during the war. Following the Operation Storm and several other military operations, which ended the Republic of Serbian Krajina and severely weakened the Serbian forces in west Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the new attack on civilians gathered in the Sarajevo Markala Market in August, NATO launched the Operation Deliberate Force - a series of airstrikes, breaking the siege of Sarajevo and forcing Bosnian Serbs into negotiation process, which was by the end of the year concluded as the Dayton Agreement.

Through its military and diplomatic involvement, the United States was arguably the most significant single outside factor of ending the hostilities within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Further more, the Washington and Dayton Agreements, both signed under the protection of the United States, created the political framework necessary for Bosnia and Herzegovina to function as a state. Even after the ending of the war, the United States continued to be actively involved in the preservation of peace, unity and stability of the country. Until 2004, the United States troops made up the bulk of the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while, according to the analyst B. Picula, between 1993 and 2013, the United States invested more than \$ 2 billion to that war-devastated county. However, after George W. Bush took over the presidency, the focus of the United States slowly began

shifting away from Bosnia and Herzegovina, gradually nudging Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the hands of the European Union. This change in United States policy, in a broad sense still largely active today, was announced in May 2009, during the visit of the United States Vice President Joseph R. Biden to Bosnia and Herzegovina. At that time, Biden stressed Bosnia and Herzegovina's necessity to focus on fixing the issues regarding the functioning of a central government, existing issues regarding the uncooperativeness between entities, enhancement of the social conditions and moving toward the Euro-Atlantic integrations. This change in United States' policy toward Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, did not mean that the United States opted to abandon Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future, but only that it recognized that Bosnia and Herzegovina's issues should be solved within Europe, with the Euro-Atlantic integrations as the only available rational and sustainable long-term peaceful solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina's problems. In that regards, the United States continued to act as the "protector" of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, firmly and actively supporting achievements of the Dayton Agreement, protecting the stability of the country and acting against relativization of war narratives which condone war crimes, acts of ethnic cleansing and all other suffering of the civilians. As a result of such attitudes, on July 13th, 2020, the United States House of Representatives passed the "H.Res. 310" resolution, proposed by the Congresswomen Eddie Bernice Johnson, which directly and without any reservations condemned genocide and other crimes against Bosniaks committed by Serb forces in Srebrenica in July 1995.

The recent change of presidency in the United States somewhat brought Bosnia and Herzegovina back into the focus. Already on December 14th, 2020, the United States' new President Biden did not miss the opportunity, opened by the 25th anniversary of the Dayton Agreement signing, to comment Bosnia and Herzegovina's affairs. In his statement, Biden stressed that this anniversary should be an "opportunity for all to consider the possibility of a brighter future and decide again on the difficult but necessary steps to build a fully functional Bosnia and Herzegovina for all

its citizens.” This Biden’s statement is an important one, not only because it came out from the mouth of a United States President, but also because unlike the three previous United States Presidents, Biden do have a close connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s issues. As it was already mentioned in this briefing, he visited the country as a Vice President in 2009, when he announced certain changes in the United States policies toward Bosnia and Herzegovina. Biden’s choice to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2009, however, was not a random occurrence, but a deliberate show of commitment Biden personally developed over Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war years. After all, it was Biden who, acting as a United States Senator, was instrumental in putting pressure on the United Nations to beef up the safe areas in the country, it was Biden who played a key role in pushing forward the United States’ decision to abolish the arms sales embargo over Government of Bosnia, and it was Biden who among others pressured the United States and NATO to intervene and take firmer stance during the war. Further more, Biden belonged to a group of United States politicians who openly spoke about the Serbian responsibility for expanding the conflicts which followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, as well as about the concentration camps, rape, torture and mass killings of civilians, occupations of cities, etc. During war time and after, Biden visited Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighboring countries on multiple occasions, during which he met with many key political figures of the time, including Alija Izetbegović and Slobodan Milošević.

Conclusion

Ever since Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized by the United States, these two countries began developing a unique relations. The United States played a crucial role not only in ending the hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in creating the political framework under which this state exists today. Although the United States has been placing the responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina more into the hands of the European Union for more than a decade, due to the involvement of various other international actors, it still

keeps a significant part of that responsibility to itself. Just how far the extent of this responsibility will stretch in the future, might already be shown by the new United States President, Joseph R. Biden, who himself developed a significant portion of his political life to ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and struggling against precisely those issues which still hold the country back.

The Dynamics of the Relations Between Bulgaria And USA

Evgeniy Kandilarov

The usual expression commonly used by high-ranking government officials of the two countries regarding Bulgarian-American relations is that: *“The United States and Bulgaria are allies, friends, and strategic partners, bound together by a shared interest in freedom, democracy, and economic opportunity.”*¹

In the last thirty years, after the end of the Cold War and the beginning of Bulgaria's transition to political democracy and market economy, the country's relations with the United States have become one of the most important foreign policy priorities for all Bulgarian governments. The reason for this has two dimensions. On the one hand the desire of the United States to fill the political vacuum in the South East European region emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the weakening of Russia's position in the Balkans. On the other hand, all Bulgarian governments, without exception, consider United States as Bulgaria's main geopolitical and strategic partner. After Bulgaria's accession to NATO in 2004, the partnership with the USA became also a major military-political pillar of the country's national security.

Bilateral relations between the two nations improved dramatically after the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria in 1989. Since then the United States started to support strongly the development of multi-party democracy and a market economy. In 1989, the U.S. Congress passed the Support for East European Democracies Act (SEED), authorizing financial support to facilitate development of democratic institutions, political pluralism, and free market economies in the Balkan region. The US

¹ <https://bg.usembassy.gov/u-s-bulgarian-relations-the-next-30-years-ambassadors-remarks-at-the-atlantic-club-sofia/>

government grants were managed by enterprise funds, private US organizations that work on the ground in selected countries and fund local initiatives through grants, loans, and other investments. The enterprise funds authorized under the SEED Act were funded through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) but managed by independent, volunteer boards of directors comprised of US business executives and entrepreneurs. In all, ten funds were created in 17 countries across CEE and Central Asia. The Bulgarian-American Enterprise Fund (BAEF) was established, with capital of \$55 million. The Fund began investing in Bulgaria's emerging free-market economy by helping entrepreneurial Bulgarians create small and medium-sized businesses. Bulgaria graduated from the SEED program in 2007 following its EU accession, having received over \$600 million in SEED assistance since 1990.

The U.S. signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in 1994 and gave Bulgaria most-favored-nation trade status in October 1996.

To show its commitment to closer relations with the United States and earnest desire to become a member of NATO Bulgaria contributed a contingent of troops to the US led NATO peace keeping force in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1996. During the Kosovo crisis in 1999, when NATO launched air strikes against Yugoslavia, the center-right government in Bulgaria took the side of NATO, opening Bulgaria's airspace to NATO aircrafts, while the Socialist opposition resisted and organized protest marches. While the Bulgarian government supported NATO, it refused to take large numbers of Kosovo refugees.

In 1999, President Bill Clinton became the first sitting U.S. President to visit Bulgaria, speaking to a huge crowd in Sofia. Pro-NATO sentiment prevailed. The Bulgarian Government also began to process of applying for NATO membership with the support of the United States.

Following the September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001, the Bulgarian government contributed troops to the NATO contingent in Afghanistan which overthrew the Taliban. The Bulgarian Armed Forces

continued to provide a contingent of Soldiers (a reinforced company) to the International Stability Armed Forces (ISAF) under NATO command in Afghanistan through December 2014.

Starting in September 2001 and concluding in November 2005, the United States Department of Defense, in cooperation with the Department of State and US Ambassador, Jim Pardew, began advising the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense in defense reform in order to assist, train, and prepare the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces for full membership in NATO. This Defense Cooperation initiative, the Joint Force Modernization Program, had the support of both countries' governments. In July 2003, after the United States and its allies invaded Iraq, Bulgaria deployed about four hundred soldiers to the 9,200 member multi-national force under Polish command. The Bulgarian battalion provided logistical support and did guard duty in southern Iraq. The Bulgarian contingent suffered thirteen soldiers and six civilians killed, before it was withdrawn by the Socialist-led coalition government in December 2005.

Finally on March 29, 2004 Bulgaria became a member of NATO. Since then Bulgaria and the United States recognize the strategic position that Bulgaria holds in the region and in maintaining security in the Black Sea, and that bilateral and NATO cooperation is vital to ensuring that security.

On April 28, 2006, in Sofia, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivaylo Kalfin and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA), which includes the range, order, and conditions of the shared use of several military facilities on Bulgarian territory. The U.S. has also signed a similar agreement with Romania and the U.S. military units deployed to both Bulgaria and Romania were known as Joint Task Force East. Joint US-Bulgarian military bases established according to the 2006 Defense Cooperation Agreement are four: Bezmer Air Base in Yambol Province; Novo Selo Range in Sliven Province; Aitos Logistics Center in Burgas Province and Graf Ignatievo Air Base in Plovdiv Province. Under the agreement, no more than 2,500 U.S. military personnel should be located at the joint military facilities. The treaty also allows the

US to use the bases *"for missions in third country without a specific authorization from Bulgarian authorities"*. The Bezmer Air Base was expected to become one of the major US strategic airfields overseas, housing American combat aircraft. The DCA accords immunity to US militaries protecting them from any juridical pursuits against them in this country.

According to the US Department of State, *"Bulgaria is a reliable ally in an area of strategic importance to the United States"*.¹ Through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), the United States has since invested more than \$50 million to upgrade Bulgarian military facilities, where U.S. rotational units routinely train with their Bulgarian military counterparts. Since joining NATO in 2004, Bulgaria has demonstrated its commitment to be a reliable ally in the Balkans and Black sea region. Bulgarian soldiers have fought alongside U.S. troops in operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan and have participated in coalition operations in Libya, Kosovo, and Bosnia. United States Government has invested over \$350 million across various security assistance efforts to assist in training and equipping the Bulgarian Armed Forces over the past 30 years. Over 5,000 Bulgarian military officers, enlisted members, as well as civilian officials from the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs have benefited from U.S. training programs. Since 2010 USA have partnered with local communities and donated millions of dollars through approximately 60 projects to build and renovate schools and other facilities across the country in support of Bulgaria's social and economic development strategy.

On January 8, 2020, the Governments of the USA and Bulgaria launched a high-level bilateral Strategic Dialogue, a forum for consultation and cooperation on global, regional, and bilateral issues of mutual interest to both countries. As part of the Strategic Partnership Framework, both countries announced to co-develop a 10-year roadmap to further advance

¹ US Department of State. Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. November 4, 2019 - <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-bulgaria/>

bilateral defense cooperation to counter maritime, cyber, and hybrid threats in the Black Sea region. This plan includes the increase of the number of military exercises incorporating more complex and dynamic scenarios. The United States will also continue to support Bulgaria's modernization efforts through the provision of security assistance and facilitating access to advanced U.S. defense technology.

Aside from the negotiations regarding the acquisition of new military equipment (in 2019 Bulgaria signed an agreement with the United States for the purchase of 8 F 16 aircraft), USA is also exploring the possibility of jointly producing certain defense articles. In this regard Bulgaria has already undertaken initial steps to increase defense spending and modernize its Armed Forces, and the United States is supporting these ongoing efforts to increase interoperability and meet NATO capability targets. Among Bulgarian key priorities are maritime cooperation in the Black Sea, building interoperability and resilience through joint training and exercises, cybersecurity, and strengthening defense institutions. With a renewed focus on security in the Black Sea, USA especially welcome cooperation on maritime domain awareness and notably Bulgaria's efforts to establish a NATO maritime coordination center in Varna.

Beyond the issues of military-political cooperation and strategic security, Bulgaria and United States also have intensive economic cooperation. Bulgaria is an extremely important trading partner for the United States. It exports overseas goods worth over \$ 600 million a year and imports goods from the United States for \$ 350 million. America is the sixth largest investor in Bulgaria, and American companies have invested over BGN 4.5 billion in the country in the last 25 years. The partnership between Bulgaria and the United States is not only related to trade in agricultural products, but also to computers, electronics, chemicals and industrial machinery.

Finally, it should be emphasized that Bulgaria is definitely becoming part of the new geopolitical confrontation between the United States and China. An example of this is Bulgaria's participation in two key initiatives. The first one is related to the latest generation of Chinese telecommunications

technology manufacturers. The second is Bulgaria's participation in the Three Seas Initiative, which is seen as a counterpoint to the Chinese “16 + 1” initiative, which is part of the large scale Belt and Road project.

In 2020, Bulgaria and the United States signed a memorandum of understanding in the field of 5G networks. The agreement is part of the US government's Clean Network international initiative, which aims to ensure the security of next-generation telecommunications. Bulgaria has joined 27 of the 30 NATO member states participating in the Clean Network, as well as the 27 EU countries integrating the 5G Clean Toolbox community program with the Clean Network. Although the official document talks about cooperation in the field of 5G and did not specifically mention Chinese equipment manufacturers such as Huawei and ZTE, its signing will make it difficult for the future use of 5G networks of the two companies by Bulgarian operators.

In 2021 Bulgaria will hold the presidency the “Three seas Initiative”, whose main goal is geopolitical and is related to the containment of Russia (and China in the economic sense). Bulgaria could not remain isolated from such a regional project, taking into account the benefits of developing transport and communication infrastructure in Eastern Europe. At the same time, it is an instrument in the geopolitical confrontation and is leading to escalation of the tensions between the EU from one side and Russia and China from the other.

The change in US policy towards the rest of the world, which is expected under Joe Biden, will have a direct impact on Bulgaria. The country will be affected in several ways - as a member of NATO and the European Union (EU), as the site of one of Russia's major energy projects in Europe - the Turkish Stream gas pipeline, and as a country where the United States sees problems in combating corruption.

A Radical Reorientation or Status Quo: The CEE-USA Relations and Croatia

Valentino Petrović

Summary

This paper deals with the consequences of Joe Biden's election as a new United States President and the efforts he is going to undertake in the relations with the Central and Eastern European countries. In addition, we shall analyze the position of Croatia and its expectations in light of the newly-elected President's background and familiarity with the region of Western Balkans.

Introduction

After Joe Biden took office as a 46th President of the United States, many have argued that a radical reorientation in American foreign policy is about to happen due to his different understanding of global matters and the role that the United States should assume, in comparison to his predecessor, Donald Trump. For the majority of European countries, Biden's election win was warmly welcomed, even though there was only a handful of leaders who publicly supported Biden during the presidential race. Croatian President Zoran Milanović was one of those leaders and he did not miss an opportunity to publicly declare that his affection lies with the newly elected President of the United States. The other head of state who supported Biden's election was Finish President Sauli Niinistö. This makes us wonder what was the reason behind the European leaders' silence on such a paramount, globally-important, event that will surely affect worldwide politics and economy, with special focus on the European Union member states, including the Central and Eastern European countries. Of course, if you pose this question to any of those silent presidents or prime ministers

across Europe, they would probably say that they do not want to interfere in other countries election campaigns, but at the same time, they are the ones who happened to find themselves on intra-party rallies during the 2019 European elections campaign and they are the ones who publicly supported certain political options during the 2020 parliamentary election campaign in Croatia. Regardless of this apparent inconsistency in political behavior, the European leaders definitely do have an opinion on Joe Biden's victory and the upcoming period is about to disclose it.

What to Expect from the New President?

The citizens of Europe, however, showed a little bit more enthusiasm in favor of Joe Biden, according to the poll conducted by the organization YouGov: "The polls were conducted in Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Denmark, and Sweden. Danes showed the strongest support for Joe Biden, with 80% hoping for a Democrat victory, while 6% said they wanted Donald Trump to win a second term. Italy showed the highest level of support for Trump, with 20% hoping for a Republican victory. But more than half of Italians polled – 58% - said they wanted Biden to win."¹ Be that as it may, it is safe to say that leaders of the European Union can finally catch a breath, now when Joe Biden has been inaugurated as a new President, taking into account their high expectations and the long-awaited reorientation of American foreign policy back to its transatlantic roots. And yet, we will have to wait for a while to see to what extent Biden will eventually “turn his attention” to Europe, assuming that the first year of his presidency will be focused more on the internal affairs of the United States to sort out “the mess” that was left to him by the previous administration. Due to his opposition in the legislative chamber, some analysts have already said that we should not expect too much at least at the beginning of his term. George Soroka from the University of Harvard warned: “while we should not expect to see meaningful shifts in Washington's foreign

¹ Ridgwell, Henry. 2020. USA Votes: Many Western Europeans Hope for Biden Victory, Polls Show. *VOA News* <https://www.voanews.com/europe/usa-votes-many-western-europeans-hope-biden-victory-polls-show>

policy positions (...) there will be limits as to what it can accomplish given an extremely partisan political landscape. It is likewise worth noting that President Biden may find it expedient to keep certain policies that Trump implemented...’’¹.

A Reorientation or Status Quo

When it comes to Central and Eastern European countries, there is certainly a significant amount of ambivalence currently prevailing in their mixed response to Biden’s victory, as some of them have established a close understanding with Donald Trump regarding certain topics and, additionally, have shared his ideas and ideological perspective. Even before his election, Joe Biden managed to provoke the likes of Poland and Hungary with his comments during a town-hall meeting, only two weeks before the election day. When asked by the audience to comment on Trump's foreign policy, Biden implied that the then-incumbent gave his support to "all the thugs in the world" and mentioned Poland and Hungary in the same context as Belarus. It did not take too long for Warsaw and Budapest to react with "Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said that Biden’s comments had ‘nothing to do with reality’, highlighting that Trump and Orban ‘take similar views on illegal immigration, border protection, security, supporting families and protecting Christian communities’’.² Petr Tuma from the Atlantic Council suggested that the enthusiasm with Biden’s election is deteriorating if we run through the map of Europe from West to East. He wrote: “The Trump administration – despite (and perhaps because of) its confrontational rhetoric towards Europe and the European Union in general – intensified cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe. With Biden’s election, some in CEE fear the return of the years led by former US President Barack Obama, when many

¹ Soroka, George. 2021. What the Incoming Biden Administration Means for Central and Eastern Europe. *New Eastern Europe* <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2021/02/03/what-the-incoming-biden-administration-means-for-central-and-eastern-europe/>

² Kafkadesk. 2020. Poland and Hungary Angered by Joe Biden’s “Totalitarian Regimes” Remark. *Kafkadesk: Ultra-local News from Central Europe*. <https://kafkadesk.org/2020/10/18/poland-and-hungary-angered-by-joe-bidens-totalitarian-regimes-remark/>

believed Washington (initially) sacrificed the region's interest in the name of a reset with Moscow."¹ The author further indicates that Biden would first probably want to assure the Western Europe partners, such as Berlin, Brussels, and Paris, that the United States will cut off with the unilateral approach in international relations that was heavily practiced by Donald Trump, that does not necessarily mean he will neglect CEE countries.

Joe Biden and Croatia

When it comes to Croatia, as it was mentioned in the introduction, Zoran Milanović was one of two European heads of state who publicly supported Biden during the campaign, and on many occasions, he underlined how Croatia would benefit if Biden would be elected. Milanović would often speak about similarities between him and Biden, and also said that the United States' fighter jets should be Croatia's first choice in the process of purchase that is currently ongoing, but without any lights at the end of the tunnel, at least, so far. Apart from military cooperation with the United States that will continue to move on regardless of whom do we buy fighter jets from, the country will remain Croatia's close ally and partner, especially now when Joe Biden took the presidency. During the last four years, Donald Trump did not show a particular interest in Western Balkans countries, but as soon as Biden was elected, everyone was happened to be aware of the fact that Biden has quite a profound knowledge of this territory and the war-period occurrences during the nineties. The project that the United States is interested the most is the LNG terminal on the Adriatic island of Krk that was officially opened just a month ago, at the end of January. Prime Minister Andrej Plenković called it a historic event that will bring benefit to both Croatia and the rest of CEE countries, taking into account the two other terminals, one in Lithuania, and the other in Poland. The project had United States' support back in 2016 when then-Prime Minister Tihomir Orešković met with Amos Hochstein, a State Department

¹ Petr, Tuma. 2020. What Biden's Election Means for Central Europe. *Atlantic Council* <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-bidens-election-means-for-central-europe/>

special envoy for international energy affairs, and was later backed by Biden himself. The United States' position is clear, their goal is to support CEE countries in energy diversification, especially regarding natural gas supply. However, in recent years, the United States has been advocating for a larger share of LNG output due to the fact that most of the natural gas is coming from the Russian Federation. Apart from energy cooperation, Croatia has other interests that have been already discussed with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The most important are visa-free travel and double taxation avoidance. The former agreement was reached in mid-February when the American Embassy tweeted that Croatia has met the criteria for visa-free travel and the decision will be effective later this year.

Conclusion

All in all, the election of Joe Biden for the next United States' President is expected to bring a positive force effect on CEE countries, as well as on Croatia. Tuma argued that “the future course of relations will depend on how these capitals (meaning Warsaw and Budapest; not in original citation) engage with the new administration and how they respond to key value-based expectations from Washington. Warsaw, utterly transatlantic, should have less of a problem (...) Hungary may be a bigger question mark”.¹ Croatia is expected to benefit, perhaps not so much from the change in United States' administration, but from the country's own efforts and engagement in previous years.

¹ Petr, Tuma. 2020. What Biden's Election Means for Central Europe. *Atlantic Council* <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-bidens-election-means-for-central-europe/>

The Czech–US relations: Love & Hatred

Ladislav Zemánek

The US vector belongs to the basis of the post-socialist regime. The Czech-US relationship is complex, being predominantly characterised by a subordinate role of our country and strong power asymmetry. Since its inception, it is of a considerable ideological nature. Notwithstanding sovereign formally, the Czech Republic has been exposed to Washington's interference in the internal affairs. In this briefing, I will analyse the fundamental moments of bilateral relations since 1918, focusing, nevertheless, especially on the recent development.

The first chapter of the relations

The modern history of Czech-US relations is longer than a century. Since the beginning of the existence of the independent Czechoslovak Republic, the ties with Washington were a part of the hegemonic discourse, the focal point of which was the personality of the first President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The narrative of the cult of personality imposed by the mid-war state authorities emphasised Masaryk's exile period and the role of the USA in the emergence of the new state while overlooking the significant contribution of the domestic actors. The mid-war relations with Washington were predominantly political ones emerging from several important moments, first and foremost the US President Woodrow Wilson's support for the Czechoslovak idea and the so-called Washington Declaration published by the Provisional Government in Paris in October 1918 but drafted by Tomáš Masaryk and his fellows in the US capital inspired by the US democratic model and republican values. In the post-socialist period after 1989, the new elites restored both Masaryk's cult of personality and the alleged crucial significance of the USA for the Czech nation, state and his destiny. This narrative was accompanied by the focus

on the US role in the liberation of the Czechoslovak territory during the second world war and concurrent tendencies towards marginalisation of the role of the USSR and the Soviet Army.

Another part of the post-socialist hegemonic narrative is the alleged persistent attempts to defend the Czechoslovak/Czech freedom and democracy against any enemies but especially those from the Soviet Union, Russia and recently China as well. The heritage of the first Czechoslovak President Masaryk was supplemented by the cult of personality of Václav Havel, the first Czech President, another adherent of the Czech-US partnership. In this interpretation, the ideals of the Washington Declaration were revived in Havel's political legacy and, similarly, the Masaryk-Wilson friendship found its continuation in the Havel-Bush one. Nevertheless, Havel became one of the symbols of the defeat of Soviet-style socialism in the CEE also for the West. Havel's visit to the USA in February 1990 and his speech in the US Congress were utterly symptomatic. The personality of the last Czechoslovak and first Czech President is glorified by supporters of the Euro-Atlantic partnership in general and the Czech-US one in particular on both sides. In 2014, a bust of Václav Havel was unveiled in the Congress on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the fall of socialism in the CEE, which was celebrated as a triumph of the liberal democracy originally. But it turned up later it was not – history has not ended.

Reaching the peak

One of the main points of the Czech-US consensus was the plan to incorporate our country into the Washington-led NATO which became a reality in 1999. The hegemonic political paradigm interprets NATO as the keystone of the Czech Republic's national security and there have been attempts to fulfil the obligation as for the minimum expenditures on military issues. Clear negative stances towards NATO does not belong to the mainstream yet, notwithstanding a wide array of controversial points. Several days after our country joined the US-led alliance, the Czech political representation including the then Prime Minister and the present

President Miloš Zeman supported the infamous „humanitarian bombing“ of Yugoslavia which was in breach of the international law. In the years to follow, our leadership dragged the Czech Republic into other US military campaigns in Serbia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Such a submissive behaviour led Washington to design a project of an anti-missile defence system in Central Europe. The consultation began in 2002 and one year later the US side introduced a plan of construction of a radar base in the Czech Republic. Even though the system was presented as strictly defensive in its essence and aimed at the prevention of missile attacks from Iran or North Korea, it might be perceived as a part of the US and NATO expansion eastward. Russia’s criticism of these ongoing attempts is therefore plausible. After several years of negotiations, a treaty on the location of a radar base in the Czech Republic was signed by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg in 2008 despite ambiguous political support, civil protests and citizens’ majority disagreement. In return for the Government’s support, the US Congress invalidated the obligation for the Czech citizens to apply for a visa in case of entry into the US territory. After Barack Obama became President in 2009, Washington withdrew from the treaty, giving up their plans to build a military base in the Czech Republic.¹

Although a strong resistance of the Czech civil society and a part of the political representation could have seemingly led to a deterioration in the bilateral relations, the opposite was true. In that period, the relationship reached its peak. Within the framework of the Czech presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2009, Prague became a place where an informal EU-USA summit was held.² In April 2010, the Czech capital witnessed a meeting between Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev. The Heads of State signed a nuclear arms reduction treaty called New START which was to last until February 2021,

¹ See the press release of the PM Jan Fischer at <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/pm-fischer-president-obama-has-informed-me-that-he-is-withdrawing-from-the-plan-to-build-a-radar-61775/>.

² For more information about the Prague summit see <http://www.eu2009.cz/scripts/modules/diary/action.php?id=3391.html>.

nevertheless, it has been extended until 2026.¹ The second decade of this century was, however, characterised by a decline in the US interest in our country whilst deepening ties with the adjacent Poland which is one of Washington's key allies in the CEE and Europe as a whole.

Geopolitical struggle continues

The Czech-US relations has become somewhat more formal at the political level but it does not mean that the Czech political elites would have abandoned the US vector. They repeatedly call for the necessity of the Euro-Atlantic partnership and NATO, declaring loyalty to the alleged "protector of global democracy and freedom". The current Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy considers the US the „guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security". According to this strategic document, the Czech side will develop bilateral cooperation in the field of economics, defence, science, research and human rights, and, similarly, strive to deepen EU-US cooperation in climate change, international economic regulation, liberalisation of trade, the introduction of the EU social, environmental and consumer standards, sustainable development or fight against terrorism.² Generally, bilateral interactions are especially intensive in business, military & security and nuclear development. During the civil war in Syria, the Czech Republic assumed protecting power responsibility for the USA. Unlike the USA and many other Western and CEE countries, Prague has never closed its embassy in Damascus, thus maintaining official relations with the legitimate Syrian Government and also providing services for citizens from a wide array of countries.

It shows that Washington maintains a certain level of trust in relation to the Czech Republic. Undoubtedly, it is connected with the Czech leadership's support for the US military campaigns or purchases of the US-made utility and attack helicopters (Bell UH-1Y Venom, Bell AH-1Z Viper) as a part

¹ Greater detail at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/04/07/a-new-start>.

² The full text available at https://www.mzv.cz/file/1574645/Concept_of_the_Czech_Republic_s_Foreign_Policy.pdf.

of the US pressure on our country to replace the Soviet/Russian military equipment with the American one. Washington also appreciated the Czech Government's measures aimed against the Chinese company Huawei adopted in 2018 in response to a warning about the use of the Huawei-related technologies in the state administration and infrastructure issued by the National Cyber and Information Security Agency, according to which the Huawei and the ZTE posed a security risk. Washington exerts increasingly strong pressure not only on the Czech side to exclude Chinese companies from participation in building the 5G networks within the concept of „Clean Network“ introduced by Donald Trump's administration in 2020. In May 2020, the Czech PM Andrej Babiš and the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo signed the Joint Declaration on 5G Security, committing to strengthening cooperation in the field of 5G technologies.¹ In August, Pompeo visited the Czech Republic in order to advance the US interests in the region – containment of both China and Russia, exclusion of Chinese and Russian companies from strategic projects, first and foremost 5G and nuclear industry.² In general, Washington has endeavoured to induce the Czech side to join the plan of formation of a global anti-Chinese front, doing its best to undermine 17+1 project while supporting a rival Three Sees Initiative promoted significantly by Poland. It is therefore crucial that the Czech political representation resist the constant US pressure and support the European Commission's efforts to carry out independent policies towards China (and Russia potentially) as proven – for instance – by the recently concluded Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

¹ See the full text at <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/deklarace-G5.pdf>.

² I analysed Pompeo's August mission in another briefing: <https://china-cee.eu/2020/10/05/czech-republic-external-relations-briefing-mike-pompeos-czech-mission-surprise-and-disappointment/>.

USA As A Historic Supporter and A Present-Day Ally of Estonia

E-MAP Foundation MTÜ

The outcome of the latest presidential elections in the United States, predictably, brought plenty of analytical ‘food for thought’. These days, all major powers as well as main international organisations are busy doing different kinds of sophisticated geo-strategic ‘re-calculations’, trying to leave the latest four years of relative and, sometimes, absolute unpredictability behind. As for smaller countries like, for example, Estonia, their interactions with the United States can be no less sophisticated, if compared to the bigger actors in the field of international relations. In general, before a more nuanced picture can be outlined, it is worth noting that Estonia’s predominant position on Joe Biden’s victory was voiced by Marko Mihkelson (*Reform*), Chairman of the *Riigikogu* Foreign Affairs Committee:

NATO members can breathe easy because the new US president will not be toying with the idea of abandoning its allies to face deepening international challenges alone. [...] Biden perceives Russia as the greatest threat to national security. [...] Biden will continue to pursue close cooperation with NATO allies, prioritizing the alliance’s eastern flank in order to deter Russia. [...] Biden will immediately bring the US back into the Paris climate agreement.¹

In a significant addition, Mihkelson underscored that “Estonia’s relationship with the United States has never nor should it depend on who

¹ Marko Mihkelson, ‘Estonia-US relations after Biden’s victory’ in *ERR*, 8 November 2020. Available from [<https://news.err.ee/1156576/marko-mihkelson-estonia-us-relations-after-biden-s-victory>].

is president in America”¹. This is, perhaps, the main strategic message-desire that the Estonian side keeps projecting towards the USA, because, indeed, as it was once argued by the country’s former Prime Minister Jüri Ratas, “[t]he commitment of the US to the development of the security and defence capabilities of Estonia and the other Baltic states has been invaluable”². Evidently, to a surprise of many, this interlinkage is not based on a generic meaningless *bravado*, but has a serious history as well as longevity of existence.

In a normative sense, the process started on 28 July 1922 when Evan Young, the then US Commissioner in Latvia, informed Ants Piip (*Labour*), the then Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the United States recognised Estonia. By that time, the country was already a member of the newly adopted international system’s core organisation, League of Nations (from 22 September 1921)³, but having received the US recognition, Estonia both *de jure* and *de facto* successfully completed the very difficult ‘project’ on declaring and confirming its sovereign existence on the international stage. From there, in an ideal world, it would have been a boring annually reinforced *routine* of sending congratulatory notes on each other’s Independence Day, had the Soviet Union not decided to occupy Estonia in 1940 and then solidify the occupation in 1944.

On 21 September 1944, through the country’s representatives abroad, “the [G]overnment of the Republic of Estonia, formed in Tallinn, notified the outside world of the continuation of the activities of Estonia’s legal

¹ Mihkelson.

² Jüri Ratas as cited in ‘Estonian PM: US will remain an irreplaceable ally to Estonia’, *The Baltic Times*, 31 October 2019. Available from [https://www.baltictimes.com/estonian_pm_us_will_remain_an_irreplaceable_ally_to_estonia/].

³ ‘21. Estonia (1920-1940)’ in *University of Central Arkansas*, 2021. Available from [<https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/europerussiacentral-asia-region/estonia-1920-1940/#:~:text=Estonia%20joined%20the%20League%20of,Estonia%20on%20July%2028%2C%201922.>]

government in exile”¹. It was the beginning of the most important chapter in the USA-Estonia interrelations – together with the Republic of Ireland and the Vatican, the United States **never** issued either *de jure* or *de facto* recognition of the Soviet occupation of the Baltics, helping Estonia to maintain its state continuity. Objectively, this factor is considered a “cornerstone of Estonian-US relations”² until today, and, given the historic development, it has a decent chance to be treated as the basis on cooperation between the two countries in years to come.

As it was argued by Mari-Ann Kelam, when on 23 July 1940 Benjamin Sumner Welles, the then acting Secretary of State, declared that the “official position of the US government identified the activity of the Stalin-led Soviet Union as a breach of international law and rules, and confirmed that the United States would not recognise the violent change of the status and political regime of small states”, it substantially assisted countries like Australia, Canada, France, and the UK to formulate their position on the issue, “especially during the Cold War”³. At the same time, not only the American position on non-recognition “shaped an international political and legal axis that supported the pursuits of various movements [...] in trying to liberate the Baltic nations”, but it also, in a concrete way, “guaranteed that the diplomatic representations of the occupied Baltic States retained their status as members of the diplomatic corps in the US”⁴. In 1998, *The New York Times* reminded its global readership about Ernst Rudolph Jaakson, an Estonian Ambassador who managed to maintain his country’s consulate in New York after the Soviet occupation of Estonia until the restoration of Estonia’s independence. He had been “a diplomat

¹ Mart Nutt, ‘The establishment and restoration of Estonian independence and the development of Estonian foreign relations’ in *Aastaraamat 2007, Välisministeerium*. Available from [https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/web-static/439/Mart_Nutt.pdf].

² ‘Bilateral Relations’ in *Embassy of Estonia in Washington, DC*. Available from [https://washington.mfa.ee/bilateral-relations/].

³ Mari-Ann Kelam, ‘The Role of the United States in the Restoration of Estonia’s Independence’ in *ICDS*, 19 August 2016. Available from [https://icds.ee/en/the-role-of-the-united-states-in-the-restoration-of-estonias-independence/].

⁴ Kelam.

for 75 years – the longest-serving diplomat in the world, according to the State Department”, representing “Estonia’s interests before the Government and businesses of the United States and [...] continu[ing] to issue Estonian passports, leftovers from its years as a free nation, which ended in 1940”¹.

These historic facts had a distinct socio-institutional continuation when Toomas Hendrik Ilves, a Stockholm-born descendant of Estonian refugees and a former American citizen with academic degrees from Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania, became Estonia’s Ambassador to the United States in 1993 to then hold the Foreign Affairs ministerial portfolio on a couple of occasions to eventually become the country’s 4th President (2006-2016). During his decade-long presidency, Estonia managed to effectively contribute to a number of NATO-associated frameworks, especially in cyber security and strategic advising. It was also in Tallinn where, in September 2014, US President Barack Obama, visiting Estonia and being *en route* to Wales for a major NATO summit, met with President Ilves and the leaders of the other two Baltics, Latvian President Andris Bērziņš and Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė².

In May 2020, *The Atlantic* noted that “[t]o those who suggest that tiny Estonia isn’t an appropriate comparison to the mammoth US government: in 2007, the country was the victim of a digital offensive, known as a “distributed denial-of-service attack,” that originated in Russia”³. Back then, the story on the world’s first war in the cyber space found plenty of attention in the United States and globally – for example, in a *The New York Times*’ material, it was described as “a three-week battle that forced

¹ Barbara Stewart, ‘Ernst Rudolph Jaakson, 93, Estonian Diplomat-in-Exile’ in *The New York Times*, 25 September 1998. Available from [https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/25/world/ernst-rudolph-jaakson-93-estonian-diplomat-in-exile.html].

² ‘U.S President Barack Obama to visit Estonia’ in *Välisministeerium*, 15 August 20214. Available from [https://vm.ee/en/news/us-president-barack-obama-visit-estonia].

³ Nina Jankowicz, ‘Estonia Already Lives Online—Why Can’t the United States?’ in *The Atlantic*, 27 May 2020. Available from [https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/05/estonia-america-congress-online-pandemic/612034/].

the Estonian authorities to defend their small country from a data flood they say was set off by orders from Russia”¹. Clearly, considering Estonia’s high-level of digitalisation and plenty of e-governance platform, the cyber attacks on Estonia pushed for a multi-dimensional redesign of many security-linked policies, including within NATO where the United States is, by far, the most powerful member.

Therefore, there was no surprise when in November 2020, the Baltics, in a joint statement, reaffirmed the three countries’ “continuous strong commitment to this special and historical partnership”, declaring that “the United States of America is and will remain for us the closest Ally”². Arguably, the main point of the statement was security-focused – the Baltic trio underlined that they stay “convinced that strong transatlantic partnership and NATO remain indispensable for European security and defence”³. The most recent addition to the century-long cooperation between the United States and Estonia is related to the so-called Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which was extensively described in a previous brief. The idea interlinks 12 out of 27 EU Member States, being also featured by a distinct involvement of the United States into the process of designing the framework’s agenda. In October 2020, after the 3SI Tallinn summit, it was reported that the USA “announced [its] pledge of 30 per cent of the 12 Three Seas nations’ contributions to the scheme combined, up to a maximum of EUR 1 billion”⁴. Estonia’s contribution to the process was in the form of “a vision paper for a Smart Connectivity approach to transport, the energy sector and digitalization across the 12 nations, whose transport

¹ Mark Landler and John Markoff, ‘In Estonia, what may be the first war in cyberspace’ in *The New York Times*, 28 May 2007.

² ‘Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on relations with the United States of America’ in *Välisministeerium*, 6 November 2020. Available from [https://vm.ee/en/news/joint-statement-foreign-ministers-estonia-latvia-and-lithuania-relations-united-states-america].

³ ‘Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on relations with the United States of America’.

⁴ ‘Tallinn virtual summit: US pledges €1 billion to Three Seas region’ in *ERR*, 20 October 2020. Available from [https://news.err.ee/1149059/tallinn-virtual-summit-us-pledges-1-billion-to-three-seas-region].

links, particularly on the north-south axis, have long lagged behind those of western Europe”¹.

In short, from the beginning of the 1920s, not much has changed in the attitude of Estonian people towards the United States. Irrespectively of how big or small a trade volume between the two countries is (as reported, in 2020, “Estonia’s exports to USA amounted to EUR 975 million and imports from USA to EUR 229 million”²), Estonia’s call on the United States can be described by the following quote from the country’s former President, Lennart Meri: “With its bipartisan support for the non-recognition policy, America was a true friend of the Baltics in a time of need, acting as a beacon of hope throughout the long, dark, and cold years of the Soviet occupation”³. Not much to add on that in principle.

¹ ‘Tallinn virtual summit: US pledges €1 billion to Three Seas region’.

² ‘United States of America’ in *Statistics Estonia*. Available from [<https://data.stat.ee/profile/partner/us/>].

³ Lennart Meri, Speech on Signing of the U.S.-Baltic Charter, The White House, Washington, DC, 16 January 1998. As cited in *Freedom Through Democracy, Security, and Unity in Diversity*, p. 21. Available from <https://cisssm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2019-07/Freedom%20through%20Democracy%2C%20Security%2C%20and%20Unity%20in%20Diversity%20-%20011418.pdf>

The Greek-American Partnership

George N. Tzogopoulos

Summary: President Joe Biden is an experienced politician who is familiar with Eastern Mediterranean dynamics. His experience could be perhaps helpful for Greece which expects more support from the US in the management of its differences with Turkey. Greek-American relations did impressively evolve during the years of Donald Trump. This trend will likely be reinforced in the coming years. What deserves particular attention, however, is that while Athens counts on Washington in the hope to restrain Ankara's role in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, Washington approaches the region aiming at building partnerships against Russia and China. It is expected that the US will act to preserve Turkey in the Western orbit in spite of existing disagreements between the two countries. Greece can either collaborate with the US in that regard or just expect that the strengthening of Greek-American ties will magically alter Turkish behavior.

The Donald Trump years witnessed an improvement in Greek-American relations. The current Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis and his predecessor Alexis Tsipras visited the White House in January 2020 and October 2017 respectively. Additionally, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo came two times to Greece. In his first visit in October 2019 he co-signed with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias the protocol of amendment to the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA). In the second one in October 2020, he went to Thessaloniki and Crete. The visit in Crete, in particular, outlined the importance the US attributes to the Souda naval base. As Pompeo said in the joint press conference with Mitsotakis, he was in Crete 'to showcase one of America's strongest

military relationships throughout all of Europe' looking to Greece 'as a true pillar for stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean'.¹

The bilateral strategic dialogue is a key instrument that further promotes Greek-American relations. It encompasses different sectors: regional cooperation, defense and security, law enforcement and counterterrorism, trade and investment, energy, and people-to-people ties.² Two rounds of the bilateral strategic dialogue have been already completed, while the third one is expected to take place throughout this year. What, among other things, deserves attention is the interest of the US in activating its International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) in Greece. The DFC was created by the US Congress as a tool to push back against American great power rivals.³ In a February 2021 interview Minister of Development and Investment Adonis Georgiadis thanked DFC 'for the strong decision to participate in port tenders'.⁴ He referred to the port of Alexandroupolis and Kavala as well as Elefsis shipyards.

The Joe Biden presidency will likely further cement the Greek-American partnership. During the pre-election campaign Biden had promised to work with US 'close ally Greece to advance stability in the eastern Mediterranean'.⁵ He also pledged to 'call out Turkish behavior that is in

¹ US Department of State website, Secretary Michael R. Pompeo and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis Joint Press Statements after Their Meeting, available at: <https://2017-2021.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-and-greek-prime-minister-kyriakos-mitsotakis-joint-press-statements-after-their-meeting/index.html>, 29 September 2020.

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece website, Joint Statement Regarding the High-Level Review of the U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue, available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/joint-statement-regarding-the-high-level-review-of-the-us-greece-strategic-dialogue.html>, 28 September 2020.

³ See the interview of Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/opinion/interviews/253432/us-ready-to-invest-in-greece-pyatt-tells-kathimerini/>, 7 June 2020.

⁴ Listen to the interview of Adonis Georgiadis at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/opinion/interviews/253432/us-ready-to-invest-in-greece-pyatt-tells-kathimerini/>, 18 February 2021.

⁵ Greekcities website, 'US Presidential Candidate Joe Biden Presents Vision for Greece', available at: <https://greekcities.com/2020/10/16/us-presidential-candidate-joe-biden-presents-vision-for-greece/>, 16 October 2020.

violation of international law or that contravenes its commitments as a NATO ally, such as Turkish violations of Greek airspace'.¹ It should be, however, mentioned that a few months ago the State Department was not able to provide a full list of confirmed violations of Greece's airspace by Turkish fighter jets after 1 January 2017 due to a lack of consensus on the breadth of Greek national airspace.²

Nikos Dendias and the new Secretary of State Anthony Blinken held a telephone conversation on 15 February 2021. They emphasized their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations, including through the strategic dialogue format and the 3+1 process with Cyprus and Israel, while Blinken welcomed Greece's sustained leadership in advancing the transatlantic and European integration of the Western Balkans as it was showcased with the signing the Prespes Agreement.³ Looking towards the future, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs considered it significant for Greece and the US to update their MDCA.⁴ According to Greek media reports, talks concentrate on the duration of the MDCA and the usage of new military bases.⁵ In the interim, Greece is exploring offers to modernize the fleet of its navy including the American proposal for Multi-Mission Surface Combatant (MMSC) ships.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² *Kathimerini* English edition website, 'No Consensus on Extent of Greek Airspace, State Department Report Says', available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/259030/no-consensus-on-extent-of-greek-airspace-state-department-report-says/>, 11 November 2020.

³ US Embassy in Greece website, 'Secretary Blinken's Call with Greek Foreign Minister Dendias', available at: <https://gr.usembassy.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-greek-foreign-minister-dendias/>, 17 February 2021.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece website, 'Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias' Interview in the Athens Daily *Hi Kathimerini*', available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/minister-of-foreign-affairs-nikos-dendias-interview-in-the-athens-daily-kathimerini-with-journalist-vasilis-nedos-10-january-2021.html>, 10 January 2021.

⁵ Vassilis Nedos, 'Defense Deal Puts Greek-US Relations on a New Basis', available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1156052/defense-deal-puts-greek-us-relations-on-a-new-basis/>, 1 March 2021.

⁶ Valerie Insinna and David B. Larter, 'US Pitches Greece on a Frigate Co-production Deal', available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show->

While Greek-American relations are progressing, Greece's interest is to create a security umbrella that will protect it against Turkish actions in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece hopes that the excellent status of its relation with the US will play a catalytic role in restraining Turkey's strategy. Recently, for example, US military units reached the port of Alexandroupoli and were scheduled to fly from there to training areas in Romania.¹ In the end of February, Turkish journalist Nur Ozkan Erbay argued that it was 'difficult to predict that the US increasing its military presence [in Greece] is partly a move against Turkey, in addition to Russia and China' and saw, for her part, Greece's actions as 'provocations.'² Turkey will arguably change course but certainly monitors the evolution of Greek-American relations.

During the years of Donald Trump, the then US President and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan were enjoying a good personal chemistry and were frequent interlocutors. This will hardly be the case in the next four years as Joe Biden remains wary of Turkish general motivations. However, it is not clear whether Anthony Blinken will follow the line of his predecessor who had shown a preference for Greece over Turkey. In September 2020, for example, Mike Pompeo visited the Republic of Cyprus but only met President Nikos Anastasiades, whereas he made no stop in the northern part of the island to meet the then leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community Mustafa Akinci. Two months later he travelled to Turkey but only met the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Istanbul. On the contrary, Blinken is expected to look for midway solutions in order to preserve the engagement of Turkey with the Western community – in

[dailies/ausa/2020/10/19/us-pitches-greece-on-a-fragate-co-production-deal/](https://www.dailies/ausa/2020/10/19/us-pitches-greece-on-a-fragate-co-production-deal/), 19 October 2020.

¹ *Kathimerini* English edition website, 'US Army Units Deployed via Alexandroupoli', available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/multimedia/images/1155929/us-army-units-deployed-via-alexandroupoli/>, 26 February 2021.

² Nur Ozkan Erbay, 'What's Behind the Greek Provocations?', available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/news-analysis/whats-behind-the-greek-provocations>, 25 February 2021.

spite of existing problems such as its acquisition of Russia-made S400 missiles.

The resumption of exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey in January 2021 has not led to a de-escalation of tensions. While the NATO de-confliction mechanism has prevented a military incident, the situation is far from calm. Against this backdrop, Greece has two options. The first is to collaborate with the US in the shaping of a more inclusive environment in the Eastern Mediterranean where dialogue with Turkey on maritime zones will perhaps yield some results. And the second option is to opt for a policy of no-solution on maritime zones via dialogue in the hope that the strengthening of Greek-American relations will reach a level, which will render it hard for Turkey to continue with provocations. In making calculations Greece needs, at first, to understand American priorities which are linked to the policies of China and Russia. It can be anticipated for the US to work for the empowerment of NATO in order to achieve the maximum in its relations with Turkey. Greek-Turkish problems are of minor significance for Washington, while it will be debatable if Greece has to gain by endorsing Cold War dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Conclusion

Lessons from history suggest that Turkey does not refrain from using military force. In parallel with bolstering its armed forces, Greece needs to adopt a smart strategy vis-à-vis the US that will have a double goal. On the one hand, the country has to practically show its determination to proceed to the delimitation of maritime zones with Turkey. And on the other hand, it should expose Turkish tactics that combines dialogue to claims about the sovereignty of some Aegean islets and the militarization status of some Aegean islands. Turkish-American differences – including on sanctions – will allegedly lead the US to support Greece in the management of its own differences with Turkey. The US will likely act, in the next years, to prevent an outcome where Turkey will further step away from the West. Greece will benefit by preserving a proactive stance instead of waiting for such an outcome.

The Shining City on the Hill? Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Hungary

Csaba Moldicz

Summary: The economic crisis in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the US elections has significantly changed the global political environment to one in which diplomatic relations between the United States and Hungary can evolve. The 100 years anniversary of diplomatic relations also adds to the importance of this briefing. For these reasons, the briefing looks at the main points of the bilateral relations, we start with the possible new course the US foreign policy might take in the month to come, then take a look at the key stones of the Hungarian foreign policy. We also raise the question of what the implications of the new foreign policy course are for Hungary.

1. Seeking moral high ground—the American approach

The debate whether the United States is economically declining has a long history, since it has been ongoing for decades. The point that this is not the case can easily be argued for when looking at the main economic indicators, however when it comes to the moral decline within US domestic politics, it is rather easy to point out the signs of an increasingly chaotic and instable political environment, which is characterized by violence, anti-government groups, extremists and the “militarization” of US domestic politics. The implications of the impact that this harsh political environment, which started taking shape after 2016 and most likely reached its culmination with the siege of the US Capitol has on American foreign policy are ominous. The credibility of the United States to seek moral high ground in its foreign policy when it comes to Central and Eastern European countries, especially Poland and Hungary, who both have been having political debates regarding the state of democracy and the rule of law with Brussels for years, is very low at the moment.

Obviously, we do not say that the US is unable to restore its credibility in global politics, however it will certainly take more than a few symbolic gestures and rejoin multilateral institutions the United States left in the Trump-era. Looking back at the erratic course of the US foreign policy over the last two decades, the track record is not impressive, as it contains foreign policy disasters such as the destabilization of the Middle East (invasion of Iraq, policy blunders in Syria, Libya and a war in Afghanistan) and the poor management of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and 2009.

In other words, the future of the bilateral relations very much depends on the new course the US foreign policy might take. The Biden-administration can basically make a choice between two strategies; the one seeking to restore an Obama-style US foreign policy and the one recreating it. If the new Biden-administration chooses the restoration of the US foreign policy, tensions between Hungary and the United States will very likely grow in the months and years to come. In this scenario, the culmination point is — at least logically — the Hungarian Parliamentary election of 2022, which provides the US with the possibility to enhance leverage in Hungarian politics. However, considering other international examples, this kind of leverage usually backfires, moreover external push can easily be utilized by the ruling parties in election campaigns in order to mobilize hesitant voters.

The second scenario implies — as mentioned above — the restoration of previous US domestic politics. It must be underlined that the US military primacy and the economic weight did not deteriorate over the years. This means that the US can impose economic sanctions but they are rarely effective, and it also has military capabilities, however it has a limited utility to solve international disputes. That is why we argue that this recreation process must include a more equal American society which is not torn by political partisanship. The fact that the military and economic power of the US is intact does not exclude the option of the economic and military rise of China. This factor only makes the focus on domestic issues

more difficult for the Biden-administration since the recreation of US foreign policy must take place in an increasingly competitive environment.

In our opinion, the likelihood that the US attempts to restore, or rather recreate its foreign policy in the short term is very high, but at the same time the new administration will most likely face challenges and adjust the course to the new reality in the mid-term. This means that tensions within the US-Hungary relation are expected to remain in the next two years, however we anticipate a more relaxed period after 2022.

2. Seeking practical solutions — the Hungarian approach

Hungary has been very consistent in setting its foreign policy goals in recent years. Although the two countries are allies under NATO, the down-to-earth pragmatic goals of Hungarian foreign policy and the great power goals of the United States cannot always be reconciled. The two countries disagree on two fundamental issues.

1. How to secure the region's and Hungary's energy supply? The United States has been pushing Hungary in recent years to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, but American LNG cannot replace cheap energy from Russia. Even the gas fields on the Romanian Black Sea coast are not accessible to Hungary, in which case the investments of the American ExxonMobile could be the game changer, but there is no viable solution at this point. There is no real alternative to Russian energy in sight for these countries, and for this reason Hungary is ready to work closely with Russia in this field despite economic embargo and other US and EU measures against Russia. American efforts to marginalize Russia have not yielded results since the occupation of Crimea. For this isolationist strategy, the US needs the cooperation of its allies, but in this case the US seems to ask its allies to act against their own economic interests without being compensated for their losses.

In our opinion, the Three Seas Initiative could be the point at which U.S. foreign policy could compensate CEE countries, but the initiative's projects require significant funding. The Trump-administration signaled his willingness to contribute financially to the projects that would support North-South connectivity in the region CEE (see the Via Carpathia project) and secure energy supplies to the region (pipelines, LNG terminal etc.). The Hungarian Foreign and Trade Minister stressed that the initiative cannot only focus on communication, it has to focus on feasible and viable projects that improve infrastructure in the region as well.

2. Why trade with China? As we have shown in previous briefings, trade with China has not only been growing in recent years, but it grew in 2020 when trade volumes with the EU and US declined significantly. Although trade with China and investments from China are still not significant in terms of volume, they tend to increase, and Hungarian foreign and trade policy seems to have a long-term vision and is prepared for the time when China's intentions, like those of the US now, cannot be disregarded in any foreign policy strategy. In other words, there is no going back to the Obama era.

3. What if?

Against this backdrop, it is likely that Hungarian and American relations could go downhill quickly in the month to come. We can wonder what options both sides have to advance their interests. It is surprising, but the American side has little ability to directly influence Hungarian foreign policy. In military cooperation, Hungary has taken steps to meet military spending requirements. In economic cooperation, investment decisions are made by businesses, and Hungary appears to be an attractive investment destination based on recent FDI data. Even the business decisions of American companies could be influenced, and they could be discouraged from investing in Hungary, and taking into consideration that there is a massive FDI inflow to Hungary from other countries, the effect would be moderate. Directly influencing Hungarian politics does not seem to be an

efficient strategy to pursue, as it can easily backfire and strengthen the ranks of the ruling party. Increasing indirect pressure on Hungary via Brussels or Berlin could be more effective, but this strategy also has reached its limits in recent years.

4. Conclusion

"Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the foreign policy of the United States," to rephrase the sarcastic quote from Niels Bohr.¹ In this case, the difficulty arises from the question of how much time the US will take to recognize the changing reality in which a new approach to foreign policy must be applied. Although Biden made it clear when he said, "America is back. America is back. Diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy," that he wants to restore American foreign policy to the way it was before. In our opinion, it may take months or years to make the shift from restoring to reshaping foreign policy, and in the meantime, Hungarian foreign policy will have an uphill battle worth fighting, as fundamental political and economic interests of the country are at stake.

¹ The original Nils Bohr quote: „Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future.”

The Relations between Latvia and the USA

Nina Linde

Introduction

The challenges facing our world will not be resolved by any one nation. Global challenges require global solutions. The United States of America is Latvia's strategic ally. Latvia has always cooperated successfully with both Republican and Democratic Administrations. In the early days of Latvia's regained independence, the United States proudly played a guiding, supporting role for Latvia. Today Latvia and the United States being allies are part of international system, sharing advice and counsel and seeking common solutions to our mutual challenges.

As reported in Latvian external relations briefing in January, in 2021 Latvia will seek close cooperation with the incoming United States President and his Administration to jointly pursue strategic goals and reinforce the transatlantic relations between the EU and the United States. As Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out, "in 2021, we shall strengthen the relationship with the new U.S. administration to promote the bilateral political dialogue and the U.S. economic presence in Latvia"¹.

Short History of Bilateral Relations

The United States first established diplomatic relations² with Latvia on July 28, 1922, following Baltic country independence in the years after World War I. But since Latvia has become part of the Soviet Union in 1940 during

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https://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/ministrija/Annual_Report_of_the_Minister_of_Foreign_Affairs-2020.pdf

² <https://history.state.gov/countries/latvia>

World War II, the US legation in Riga was closed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Latvia claimed de facto independence, and the U.S. recognized the restoration of Latvia's independence on September 2, 1991, in an announcement by President George H.W. Bush. On January 16, 1998 the Presidents of the United States of America and the Baltic States signed the Charter of Partnership that laid a solid foundation for the development of U.S.-Latvia relations.

Nowadays, Latvia and the United States belong to a number of the same international organizations, including the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. In addition to membership of two countries in the same international organizations bilateral representation is also strong – both Latvia has its embassy in United States in Washington, and US has their embassy in Riga.

Common Vision and Shared Values

Since regaining its independence, Latvia has embraced democracy and the principles of an open market. Latvia and United States share vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, and are partners in their goal of promoting democracy, stability, and civil society among other post-Soviet nations. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, Latvia has used the knowledge it gained from political and economic reforms undertaken for accession to help others achieve security, stability, and greater prosperity¹.

United States see Latvia as a model for the peaceful consolidation of democracy and plays a key leadership role in the region, helping other

¹ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-latvia/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20and%20Latvia%20share,years%20after%20World%20War%20I.&text=In%201991%2C%20Latvia%20claimed%20de,independence%2C%20and%20international%20recognition%20followed.>

states undertake political and social reforms. Mindful of the long-standing and close relationship, the United States has relied on Latvia's experience and expertise in developing its own foreign policy approaches towards Latvia's eastern neighbors.¹

On the practical side, there are several global challenges faced by both United States of America and Latvia that require cooperation. The impact of climate change threatens not only the environment, but also the security and stability of our planet. In both the United States and Latvia, many families are struggling with the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. International efforts to strengthen and stabilize regions of international conflict and defeat threat of terrorism continue to pose a difficult and critical challenge. Since both countries have common vision towards how those challenges should be addressed, there is a potential for cooperation to resolve some global issues.

U.S. Security Assistance to Latvia

Strengthening of the United States military presence in Latvia still remains a high priority. Defense cooperation between the US and Latvia dates back decades and is based on a common perception of the threat. Military training exercises as well as US programs send a strong message to Russia of the US' commitment to Latvia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.²

In recent years the practical military and financial support from the United States to the Baltic region and European security is on the rise, regardless of strategic repositioning of its troops in Europe after decision of Donald Trump. The U.S. Department of State also provides financial security assistance to Latvia, including Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding. The

¹ <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/usa/articles/article-on-latvia-u-s-relations>

² <https://liia.lv/en/publications/latvia-and-the-united-states-revisiting-a-strategic-partnership-in-a-transforming-environment-514>

Department of State provided approximately \$19 million in Fiscal Year 2020 in security assistance to Latvia¹.

At the same time, Latvia and the United States also have signed a joint declaration on **5G security**. The declaration demonstrates common understanding of the importance of secure 5G networks and the need to develop and deploy 5G networks based on the principles of the rule of law, free and fair competition, and transparency. The joint declaration on 5G security has strengthened bilateral relations between Latvia and the United States and created additional opportunities for cooperation with Latvian companies related to 5G networks. Work on the 5G security declaration and implementation of the European Union toolbox on 5G cybersecurity will continue at the national level in 2021. There is synergy between the efforts of the United States and the European Union to strengthen 5G security, which will not only mitigate security risks but also strengthen the transatlantic link.

Bilateral Economic Relations

Latvia and United States are also linked by their robust economic relationship. According to US Department of State, US-Latvian economic relations are “dynamic, with room for growth”². Whether it is partnering to expand investment between our two countries or promoting entrepreneurship programs, both countries work together closely. Latvia and the United States have signed treaties on investment, trade, intellectual property protection, and avoidance of double taxation.

Increasing trade between United States and Latvia is a top bilateral priority. Service industries such as telecommunications, transport and logistics, and

¹ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-latvia/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20and%20Latvia%20share,years%20after%20World%20War%20I.&text=In%201991%2C%20Latvia%20claimed%20de,indpendence%2C%20and%20international%20recognition%20followed.>

² <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-latvia/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20and%20Latvia%20share,years%20after%20World%20War%20I.&text=In%201991%2C%20Latvia%20claimed%20de,indpendence%2C%20and%20international%20recognition%20followed.>

information technology are potential areas for US-Latvian investment and trade. The United States is also working to educate American businesses about the advantages of investment in Latvia. One of US interests in the country is to improve Latvia's investment climate by increasing transparency and creating a level playground for all businesses.

Also, Latvia participates in the visa waiver program, which allows nationals of participating countries to travel to the United States for certain business or tourism purposes for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa.

Public View on Relations Between Two Countries

Talking about perspectives of cooperation between Latvia and United States, public opinion on its external relations should be considered. One of the biggest Latvian newspapers "Diena" ("Day") have recently published the results of the Datapraxis and YouGov survey among European citizens, conducted after the request of European Council on Foreign Affairs. Latvia was taking part in the survey as well. The topic was the opinion of European on new US administration and prospects on relationship of USA and EU. The results of the survey show that most Europeans do not think that new US President Joe Biden can help America make a comeback as the pre-eminent global leader, and majorities in key member states now think the US political system is broken, and that Europe cannot just rely on the US to defend it.

Survey shows, that majority of respondents believe that China will be more powerful than the US within a decade and would want their country to stay neutral in a conflict between the two superpowers. Two-thirds of respondents thought the EU should develop its own defense capacities. Also, the European Council on Foreign Affairs mentioned that "Washington cannot take European alignment against China for granted"¹.

¹ <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-crisis-of-american-power-how-europeans-see-bidens-america/>

It is projected that public opinion will have a bigger effect on the involved countries relationship than it once did, and needs to be taken-into-account.

Conclusion

Latvia have close transatlantic relations between the European Union and the United States of America on a broad range of issues that include security aspects, close cooperation in international organizations, strengthening green economies and promoting contacts in the field of high technology. As stated by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvia will advocate a pragmatic approach to addressing the trade issues between the European Union and the United States of America. In the future both countries expect close cooperation on mitigating climate change consequences and 5G security matters.

However, although Latvia and United States are strategic allies, public mood is not very favorable for United States.

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[6], [7] U.S. relations with Latvia - Bilateral relations fact sheet. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, December 3, 2020. Available [here](#).

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An Outlook on Lithuania's Special Relations with the US

Linus Eriksonas

On 26 February, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda called upon the heads of the EU Member States at the European Council video conference discussing the security and defence issues to focus on expanding modes of cooperation and reinforcing the ongoing joint projects such as military mobility. The President emphasized the importance of transatlantic relations, highlighting NATO's role as the Community's strategic partner to better ensure Europe's security. President Nausėda underscored the need to deepen further collaboration with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and strengthen the EU and NATO linkages.

The same day, as reported, Lithuania's Deputy Minister of National Defence met with representatives of the Office of Defence Cooperation of the US Embassy in Lithuania to discuss jointly conducted infrastructure development projects that contribute to the improvement of training and living conditions of the NATO troops in Lithuania. Echoing the President's position, the Deputy Minister acknowledged that "security and defence cooperation with the United States is one of the most important priorities of the Government".

Below is a brief outline of the recent US and Lithuanian relations that led to Lithuania becoming one of the most ardent advocates in Europe of the transatlantic cooperation and the close ties with the United States. It further considers the geopolitical reasoning behind and estimates the current status of Lithuania's unique relations with the US in the context of regional security architecture.

Lithuania has been aiming to forge a close relationship with the US since the reestablishment of statehood in 1990. Two main factors have

contributed to the emergence of a reciprocal link between the superpower and a small state. Firstly, the relatively large, concentrated and politically active diaspora have worked with the post-war US administrations to keep the cause of Lithuania's independence alive; the personal contacts within the policy circles helped support Lithuania's diplomatic efforts after the restoration of independence. Secondly, Lithuania emerged out of the Cold War as a result of the victory of the US against the Soviet Union; the US has become de facto a guarantor of the post-Cold War order and Lithuania's regained independence.

Importantly, the United States did not recognize the Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries, allowed to keep the diplomatic representation in Washington with the consulates in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles. This policy of non-recognition of international territorial changes executed by force followed the Stimson doctrine formulated for the first time in response to the occupation of north-eastern China by Japan in 1932. Interestingly, during the Sino-Soviet tensions in 1964, the doctrine was invoked by the People's Republic of China, which, like the US, also maintained that the Soviet seizure of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and other territories in Europe and Asia was a violation of the principles which formed a basis for the Stimson doctrine.

The US primary interest in deepening the cooperation with the Baltic countries, including Lithuania, which stood at the doorstep to the militarized district of Kaliningrad, has reflected the changing geopolitical considerations about the Russian Federation, a successor state to the Soviet Union. The US has aimed to prevent the development of power relationships dangerous to the security of the United States and international peace and ensure that any successor regime or regimes do not have sufficient military power to wage aggressive war. As these policy objectives were entirely in sync with Lithuania's national interests, security and defence became the main fields for bilateral cooperation between the US and Lithuania for the last two decades.

The path to forge a special relationship emerged during the George W. Bush administration, which opened NATO's doors to Lithuania. During his state visit to Lithuania, on 23 November 2002, President George W. Bush Vilnius made a speech at the city's historic town hall declaring that "anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America". Since the accession of Lithuania to NATO in 2004, these words became legally binding. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that an attack on any NATO member is regarded as an attack on all of its members. Effectively, it means that Lithuania's enemy by default becomes an enemy of the US as the leading military power behind the NATO commitments.

The US - Lithuanian cooperation has gained importance during the Ukrainian crisis in 2013-2014, which led to the largest destabilization of the post-Cold War order to-date. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea and the occupation of the south-eastern parts of Ukraine in 2014 under the pretext of support to separatist forces, the need to create a NATO deterrence shield along Russia's western borders has become the urgency.

Since 2014 the US has considerably stepped up military support to the Baltic countries by selling arms and defence services through security assistance programmes to enhance electronic and hybrid warfare capabilities, border security, maritime, air domain awareness, and NATO interoperability. Lithuania received assistance for military education and training. The plans have been prepared to defend Lithuania in case the military threat becomes real. In 2019, Lithuania signed with the US the Defence Cooperation Strategic Roadmap to signpost the concrete steps for bilateral defence cooperation to achieve the defence policy objectives until 2024. The aim is to deter Russia from exercising military options in the region by demonstrating the resolve and the military power of the Alliance to defend its members in any circumstances.

During the Trump administration, the differences exacerbated with the EU about the engagement with the US. Yet, the Baltic and Central European countries that owe the security shield to NATO have deepened the

cooperation with the US. Lithuania has become actively involved in the Three Seas Initiative involving 12 countries which aim to attract the matching EU and the US investments for major infrastructure projects that have strategic importance for increased mobility of people, goods and, equally so, for military deployments.

Over the last five years, Lithuania has gained prominence as an ally of the US in three directions. In the Nordic-Baltic area, Lithuania focused on strengthening the NATO interoperability plans across the Baltic region by pursuing NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in large numbers. Concerning the Central European countries, Lithuania's focus was a collaboration with Poland on security and defence cooperation with Ukraine and the development of connectivity infrastructure (the electricity transmission grids, the gas interconnections, the multimodal transport corridors) to address the need for the rapid deployment of troops and the adequate logistics support. Concerning the Eastern Partnership area, Lithuania spared no effort to support the delegitimization of the authorities in Minsk and increase the pressure on Russia within the EU and in the US.

However, all three directions within which the US and Lithuania's interests intersect stand and fall on all the consensus within the EU to embrace the pro-US policies, including taking a tough stance on the countries such as Russia and China, the suppliers of energy sources and materials for primary industries in Europe. However, due to the decisions taken to achieve the zero-emission economy targets by 2050, the EU's reliance on crude oil imports, natural gas, and solid fuels will start diminishing. It thus creates an opening for a more transatlantic policy which makes the US – Lithuanian relations increasingly relevant in a multilateral format; the need to advocate for deepening of the transatlantic ties in the EU has become pertinent more than ever.

Thus, to show the commitment to NATO presence on the EU eastern borders, on 3 March, as reported by Lithuania's Ministry of Defence, a US B-1B strategic bomber flew over Vilnius along with the NATO Air Policing fighter jets as a part of a U.S. training flight coordinated in

advance with other NATO allies. “Our transatlantic partner United States has once again demonstrated with this deployment the NATO solidarity, unity, collective defence commitments to the allies, as well as the ability to respond to threats expeditiously as a means of deterrence,” the Minister of National Defence said on this occasion. “And that has immense importance to Lithuania since the majority of our country residents view the United States as one of the key strategic defence partners of our state, and also are in favour of Lithuania’s membership in NATO,” he added.

The Pew Research Centre survey conducted in 2019 showed that Lithuania is the 7th country in the world where the population holds favourable views of the United States; 70 per cent of Lithuanians confirmed that. Only the respondents in Ukraine, South Korea, Poland, the Philippines and Israel showed higher levels of appreciation of the US. All those countries have been developing unique relationships with the US. They have become the cornerstones of the American global power architecture in different regions - the hotbeds of the rivalry between great powers. The main geopolitical reasoning behind the development of a network of allies is based on the realisation that the balance of power in the post-Cold War world depends on the small nations which act as balancing counterweights. An influential American expert has argued that the Baltic defence is vital to the United States’ national security because “a world of spheres of influence in which small nations’ sovereignty is negotiable and limited is a dangerous world in which a major war always looms”.

The ever-closer cooperation with the US has made Lithuania more vociferous on the global stage, yet more exposed, narrowing the number of diplomatic avenues and options open for taking bargaining positions. Meanwhile, the consensus in the EU capitals has been leaning towards a more middle-of-the-ground position on Russia. The policy experts have argued that the EU should exhibit indifference towards Russia rather than pro-actively engage in further deterrence policies. The limited nature of the adopted new sanctions attests to that. Brussels has also voiced a preference for a more moderate approach concerning other foreign policy goals, such

as pursuing value-based policies in the EU neighbourhood and globally. Yet Lithuania's links with the US has undoubtedly become a factor in European politics. Though still by and large limited in terms of scope and immediate impact, they add to the equation when the balancing between the great powers occurs.

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Montenegro - USA Relations

Milika Mirkovic

Over the years, Montenegro has maintained good relations with the United States. Confirmation of good relations and mutual respect was shown by the visits of American officials to Montenegro two years ago. An important part of the relationship between Montenegro and the USA is related to the security policy and Montenegrin membership in NATO. Certainly, the political changes after the presidential elections in the USA can be reflected in different ways on Montenegro, as well as the Western Balkan region. In addition to diplomatic, an important segment of relations between Montenegro and the USA is economic cooperation, where there is a significant space for improving and intensifying cooperation and opportunities for investment inflows from the USA.

Overview of the relations between Montenegro and USA

Diplomatic relations between Montenegro and the USA have been formalized after Montenegro's independence in 2006, but these relations existed many years earlier. Relations were very significant during the 1990s given the turbulence in society in Montenegro and the region. Therefore, the USA has played an important role in maintaining peace and multi-ethnic harmony in the country and the entire region. Throughout the previous period, Montenegro has cultivated and was committed to maintaining good relations with the USA.

Currently, good relations with the USA can be seen through participation in the NATO Alliance and through the support that the USA provides to Montenegro on its path to the EU. Over the past few years, the USA presence in the Western Balkans region has grown after a lull over an earlier period. First of all, in 2019 the USA appointed a special envoy from the State Department for the Western Balkans. That the focus of USA policy is the stability of the Western Balkan region is also shown by the

visits of American officials to Montenegro. Namely, a special envoy from the State Department for the Western Balkans and the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Mike Pompeo visited Montenegro during September - October 2019. Since US officials visited Montenegro, but not all Western Balkan countries, it indicates strong US relations with Montenegro. Also, the US Secretary of State's visit as a confirmation of the long-standing relations and friendship between Montenegro and the USA. Also, the appointment of a Special Envoy from the State Department for the Western Balkans represents a significant support and impetus to EU enlargement policy. At the same time, this step in the USA external policy indicates that the focus is on a more presence in the Western Balkan region, compared to previous years¹.

As mentioned above, the presence of the USA in Montenegro is of strategic importance as it represents support in the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Montenegro and the entire region. Thus, one of the fields of cooperation between Montenegro and the USA is the security policy and Montenegro's membership to the NATO Alliance, where the USA played a significant role during the accession process of Montenegro and membership in 2017. This support includes programs and assistance in fighting organized crime and corruption, strengthening civil society, encouraging free and independent journalism, and promoting stability in the Balkans². In this regard, the United States provided financial assistance in the field of modernization of the equipment of the Army of Montenegro. In this case, various projects were funded through several programs, such as the Foreign Military Finance Program (FMF), the United States European Command (EUCOM) Humanitarian Aid Program, the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), and others.

¹ <https://china-cee.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019er1088%EF%BC%889%EF%BC%89Montenegro.pdf>

² Karastanovic, Azra (2020) "Montenegro between the East and West: Who will prevail in the 'land of seas and mountains'?" (Study: The Strategic Role of External Actors In The Western Balkans), Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and the Political Academy of the Austrian People's Party, 2020 <https://ascg.me/en/montenegro-between-the-east-and-west-who-will-prevail-in-the-land-of-seas-and-mountains/>

Therefore, it can be expected the continuation of good cooperation and strengthening of relations in coming period, precisely through initiatives and activities within NATO.

Friendly relations between Montenegro and the USA were also confirmed during the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Support to the health system by USA is reflected through various types of donations, i.e. through donations of equipment and materials in order to provide more efficient respond to the virus pandemic. However, USA support to the Montenegrin health system has been noted in previous years in the form of various donations.

An important issue concerns the role of the USA in the Western Balkans region, and thus in Montenegro after the presidential elections and the change of administration in the USA. Although a part of the ruling coalition in Montenegro supported Trump's policy and administration, Montenegro is not expected to change the course of foreign policy towards the USA in the coming period. On the other side, the political changes that took place in the US presidential elections will reflect to a certain extent on the change in the course of that geo-strategic force in the Western Balkans, and thus in Montenegro. Expectations are different, and most of the Montenegrin public believes that the role of the United States will change and strengthen. Additionally, the opinion of the dominant part of the political scene in Montenegro, but also of the non-governmental sector is that a significant US presence in Montenegro would contribute to greater stability, since the new US president was previously involved in the processes taking place in this region. However, some political parties in power would rather see a stronger influence of other foreign powers, above all Russia.

In addition, an important segment in the analysis of relations between Montenegro and the USA is the views of citizens. A survey conducted by CEDEM in 2020 shows that 17.2% of Montenegrin citizens think that foreign police of Montenegro should rely on the USA, which is a lower percentage in relation to attitudes towards the EU and Russia (more than one fourth of citizens think that Montenegro's foreign policy should rely on the EU and almost one fifth to Russia). Compared to the previous period,

turning to USA varied. Percentage of citizens who think that foreign police of Montenegro should rely on the USA is somewhat lower in relation to the attitudes of citizens from 2017-2019¹.

Economic cooperation: current situation and opportunities

Economic cooperation between Montenegro and the USA can be analyzed from the aspect of foreign trade, FDI inflows and tourism. Data on the volume of foreign trade with the United States indicate a large area and potential for improvement, given that trade with the United States represents a small percentage of total exports and total imports of Montenegro. Namely, in 2019, total exports of goods to the USA were at the level of EUR 1.8 million or 0.4% of total exports of Montenegro. However, compared to 2018, exports of goods more than doubled. On the other hand, imports from the USA were higher than exports, so that Montenegro has a deficit in foreign trade with USA. Total imports in 2019 were many times higher than exports, when it was at the level of EUR 25.5 million. Compared to 2018, it was almost twice as small. Imports of goods from the USA represent 1% of total imports of goods in Montenegro. Compared to the other non-European countries, the export of goods to the USA is at approximately the same level as to Russia, while it is 9.5 times lower than the export of goods to China².

The total number of tourist arrivals from the USA in 2019 was 35,757, which represents 1.4% of the total number of tourist arrivals and who realized 123,387 overnight stays or 0.9% of the total number. In addition, according to the Central Bank data, the total FDI inflow in 2020 from the USA was at the level of EUR 29.5 million which represents 4.4% of the total FDI inflow.

¹ Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (2020) Political Public Opinion of Montenegro, August 2020: <https://www.cedem.me/en/programmes/empirical-research/politacal-public-opinion/send/33-political-public-opinion/1976-political-public-opinion-poll-august-2020.%20Accessed%2021%20November%202020>

² Source of data: MONSTAT, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=171&pageid=171>

According to the American Chamber of Commerce in Montenegro (AmCham Montenegro), in total around fifty companies from the USA operate in Montenegro from different sectors, such as information and communication technologies, finance, banking, tourism, real estate, pharmacy. The role of AmCham Montenegro is reflected in the improvement of the business environment, which should result in an increase in investment inflows from the USA. Further improvement of relations and more intensive and stronger economic cooperation with the USA would bring great economic benefits for Montenegro through the inflow of investments from the USA and the increase of foreign trade.

Strengthening relations between Montenegro and the USA could contribute to the stability of the region and resolve the challenges and issues that exist and have been raised in the recent period. In addition, intensifying economic cooperation with the USA would have positive effects on the Montenegrin economy. Increasing the inflow of FDI from the USA would have significant effects, which are not consisted only in finances, but also in the transfer of knowledge, experience, business standards, ideas, which would favourably affect the competitiveness of the economy.

The Background and Current Status of Macedonian-US Relations

Gjorgjioska M. Adela

Summary: Located in the midst of the Balkan Peninsula, N. Macedonia is 9,228 km air-travel distance from the United States. Although geographically the country belongs to Europe (and Euroasia in a broader context), geopolitically it has been located within the Euro-Atlantic space. This was officialized and institutionalized in March 2020, with the country's accession to the NATO alliance, as its 30th member state. Due to a complex set of interlinked historical and (geo)political processes, the question of Macedonian-US relations does not rest only within the realm of external relation, as it is deeply consequential for the country's internal socio-political and economic developments, as well as for its relations with third countries.

March 27th 2021 will mark the first anniversary since North Macedonia (*Macedonia thereafter*) officially joined the NATO alliance as its thirtieth member-state on March 27th 2020.¹ The article analyses Macedonian-US relations in the run up to official membership and in the year since. It argues that the NATO alliance has been normatively legitimized through a set of processes and institutions which have "laid the foundations" for membership. In turn the NATO alliance has acted as an ideological and institutional mechanism for solidifying Macedonian-US relations; enabling the United States to maintain a persistently strong influence over the Macedonian political establishment with far-reaching implications for both the internal and international politics of the country.

¹ "North Macedonia joins NATO as 30th Ally", available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174589.htm accessed on 26.02.2021

Since the early 1990s, a range of mechanisms of legitimation were set in motion, which aimed to project the image of NATO as “a kind of United Nations in military uniform”.¹ On a discursive level, the framing employed phrases such as “Euroatlantic values of freedom and security”, “cooperation and security”, “just and lasting democracy”, “human rights” and “the rule of law”, in order to reconfigure, normalize and normatively legitimize the NATO alliance. Kuus describes this evolving mechanism in (potential) member states as “cosmopolitan militarism”; not cosmopolitan, but rather packages and enacts itself as such.² Indeed, in the Macedonian context, this discourse has been (re)produced through a network of NGOs, some of which operate in other NATO member and partner countries, sometimes in collaboration with umbrella associations that coordinate their activities.³ For example, the Youth of the Euro-Atlantic Council (YATA) of Macedonia belongs to the umbrella organisation YATA, which links nearly thirty such national NGOs and calls itself “one of the strongest and most influential youth NGO networks in the world”.⁴ The relatively decentralized and widespread network means that there are many channels through which these discourses of legitimization can be diffused to the public and can influence its opinions. In view of an environment circumscribed in this manner, the surveys which have reported consistently high public support for NATO membership, may come as no surprise. The International Republic Institute has reported NATO’s acceptability rate to

¹ The Economist 2006, “NATO’s future: predictions of its death were premature”, 23 November,

page 14-16, available at <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2006/11/23/predictions-of-its-death-were-premature>

² Kuus, M. (2009). Cosmopolitan Militarism? Spaces of NATO Expansion, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. 2009;41(3):545-562. doi:10.1068/a40263

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

be 92% in 2008, 73% in 2016 and 77% in 2018.¹ Other surveys have reported lower acceptability rates, of around 60%.² In any case, surveys may also be viewed as an extension of the mechanism of legitimization, which serve to create rather than track public opinion. In view of this, a good indicator of the public opinion is the referendum held on 30 September 2018, which posed the question: “Are you in favour of European Union and NATO membership by accepting the agreement between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece?”³ Following a campaign aimed at delegitimizing the referendum, which resulted in the participation of only 36,89% of the population, the referendum on the name change failed. This in turn meant that the ensuing process, which included the country’s name change preceded by constitutional changes, was pushed through by the political establishment in the absence of popular support and legitimacy.⁴ As a result, Macedonian academics have described the Prespa Agreement and the name-change as “a product of arm-twisting for the sake of advancing NATO, i.e., predominantly US interests in the region”.⁵ In turn, the large opposition towards the name change (widespread amongst

¹ “IRI High support for EU and NATO, ahead of the referendum” - “ИРИ: Висока поддршка за ЕУ и НАТО, спроти референдумот”, 29.08.2018, available at <https://mk.voanews.com/a/iri-poll-macedonia-/4548832.html> accessed on 01.02.2021

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³ Macedonia sets question for name referendum, 30 July 2018, available at <https://euobserver.com/tickers/142494>

⁴ Gjorgjioska, M.A. (2019). Ethnicity and nationality in and around the “Prespa Agreement on the Macedonia Name Issue”, European Yearbook of Minority Issues, Volume 17, 2018, https://brill.com/view/journals/ymio/17/1/article-p190_190.xml?language=en

⁵ Biljana Vankovska (2020) Geopolitics of the Prespa Agreement: Background and After-Effects, Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 22:3, 343-371, DOI: 10.1080/19448953.2020.1739880

the ethnic-Macedonian population) has started to translate into a growing public discontent towards both NATO and the United States.

First year of NATO membership

The public's growing disillusionment with NATO is at odds with positions espoused by the political establishment and its ecosystem of partners and affiliates. This has become particularly pronounced in the first year of NATO membership, which coincided with the coronavirus pandemic. As the health crisis unraveled, it demonstrated the consequences of neoliberal healthcare and the collapsed social state more broadly. Moreover, it cast fresh doubts on the relevance of the NATO alliance as human security needs took precedence over abstract terms such as "collective security", which feature prominently in NATO rhetoric.¹ The rift between the country's political elites and its public became increasingly more pronounced as the year went on, manifesting itself in divergent and conflicting positions between the two. At the same time, it took the shape of specific government actions, taken at the detriment of the population and for the benefit of the NATO alliance.

In November 2020, Minister of Defense Shekerinska announced that the defence budget will reach 1,57% of GDP in 2021 or 11 billion denars as a requirement for all NATO member states since the 2014 Wales Summit.² In the context of the pandemic, the increase meant that the Government is willing to prioritise military expenditure and its close relations with NATO over fiscal expenditures on the collapsed healthcare facing an ongoing pandemic. By mid-March when Macedonia ranked amongst the 10 worst affected countries worldwide by Covid 19, more such military expenditures were announced. On March 16th 2021, the US Defense Security and

¹ Gazizullin, A. (2019). The Significance of the 'Human Security' Paradigm in International Politics, available at <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/02/29/the-significance-of-the-human-security-paradigm-in-international-politics/>

² Government Press Release: "Shekerinska: The budget for defence for 2021 continues to grow, we have demonstrated that we can be trusted" <https://vlada.mk/node/23356> published on 28.11.2020

Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced “a Foreign Military Sale to the Government of North Macedonia of Stryker Vehicles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$210 million”.¹ It stated that “the sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally which is an important force for political and economic stability in Europe.”² The press release by the Macedonian Ministry of Defence stated that “The project is being implemented as a “Government-to-Government” contract with the US Government and includes the procurement from two renowned US defence contractors, including “Oshkosh Defense” and “General Dynamics Land Systems”. Moreover, it added that “The realization of this project for equipping and modernization of the Army, in addition to meeting the requirements for interoperability arising from the NATO Package of Goals’ capabilities, it also enables the Republic of North Macedonia to plan and protect its vital and national interests.”³ Since news on the purchase only surfaced in the public domain after the deal had been concluded, it provoked a wave of public discontent. Macedonians used social media to criticise the agreement juxtaposing it to more urgent spending priorities. The only political party to publicly condemn the purchase was the political party Levica (the Left), which is also the only party in the country which openly opposed NATO membership: “Whilst the Macedonian healthcare is collapsing and the Macedonian people are sinking in poverty, the Government is spending public funds on subsidising the US military apparatus.”⁴ The statement concluded that “when it comes to the NATO alliance the political establishment works against the interests of the

¹ North Macedonia - Stryker Vehicles, DSCA Press Release available at <https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/north-macedonia-stryker-vehicles>

² Ibid

³ MOD Press Release, available at: <http://www.mod.gov.mk/?mainnews=us-department-of-state-ja-odobri-nabavkata-na-lesni-oklopni-vozila-za-armijata-na-mkd&lang=en> published on 17.03.2021

⁴ Press Release published on 17.03.2021, available at <https://levica.mk/2021/03/17/vladata-nabavuva-54-oklopni-borbeni-vozila-oprema-od-sad-za-210-milioni-dolari/>

people. It is using the state and its institutions to advance its own interests in order to maintain the support of the US for its corrupt and criminal government”.¹ In contrast to these positions, the current SDSM-DUI Government is an unequivocal partner of the United States, a relationship which has been institutionalised with the country’s official accession in the NATO Alliance. Minister of Foreign Affairs Bujar Osmani confirmed this position on his first day in office as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in September 2020. “Deepening the strategic partnership between the United States and North Macedonia is one of the key priorities of our foreign politics”, he stated during a telephone meeting with Philip Ricker, Acting Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.²

Depending on whether the focus is placed on the political elites or the public, a different picture emerges with regards to the status of the relationship between the United States and Macedonia. The political establishment maintains a strong and close relationship with the USA, which has been officialised and institutionalised through the country’s official accession in the NATO Alliance. Most recently this relationship manifested itself in the purchase of \$210 million worth of military equipment from the USA. When the focus is placed on the public, the state of the relationship is not as straightforward. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the Macedonian public criticised the military expenditures, which were presented as a requirement of NATO membership. This in turn served to add to a public sentiment, which is increasingly more sceptical of the benefits of membership, adding to the bitter and fresh memory of the illegitimate name change of the country, which is inseparable from the country’s NATO accession pathway.³ In

¹ Ibid

² Press Release by the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued on 31.08.2021, available at <https://www.mfa.gov.mk/mk/page/13/post/2339/oficijalen-telefonski-razgovor-osmani-riker>

³ Gjorgjioska, M.A. (2019). Ethnicity and nationality in and around the “Prespa Agreement on the Macedonia Name Issue”, European Yearbook of Minority Issues,

view of this, it is to be expected that the Macedonian internal and international relations will continue to follow the trajectory of the United States and NATO, even in situations when this is at odds with the wishes and urgent priorities of the Macedonian public.

Volume 17, 2018, https://brill.com/view/journals/ymio/17/1/article-p190_190.xml?language=en

Polish-American Relations

Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska

Since the end of the Cold War, relations with the United States have been of paramount importance for Poland. The membership in the European Union has not radically changed this state of affairs. At the same time, these relations have always been asymmetrical in terms of the size of the territory, population, GDP and role in global relations. The result of such a huge difference in potentials and the international importance of both countries is the assumption that the state of mutual relations was mostly influenced by the perception by the American political elite of the possibility of using Poland to achieve their goals in the field of foreign policy, security and economy. The Polish elite's perception of using the American potential to achieve Warsaw's goals was less critical. However, this does not mean that it was irrelevant. For Warsaw, maintaining vivid bilateral contacts was always an element of the *raison d'état*. In fact, each of the successive Presidents and governments saw transatlantic relations as crucial.

Assessment of relations since 2016

Pro-American sympathies of Polish society and the unequivocal support of Polish political leaders for deepening relations with the United States made the implementation of the transatlantic policy relatively simple over the years. Also recent good personal relations between Polish and US Presidents, Andrzej Duda and Donald Trump translated into good affairs with the American administration and have brought many successes.

Over the last few years, the dynamics of meetings at the highest level has been very high: summits of the Presidents, numerous visits of members of the American cabinet to Poland and the ministers of the Polish government to the USA have resulted in decisions of great importance for bilateral

affairs in terms of political and defence, economic, as well as scientific cooperation.

- Politics and defence

President Trump visited Warsaw already during his second trip abroad in July 2017. His stay in Poland was not only bilateral but was also associated with participation in the Three Seas Summit, a format of cooperation significant for both countries. Duda paid his first official visit to Washington in September 2018. During the visit, both Presidents adopted the declaration “Defending freedom and building prosperity through the Polish-American strategic partnership”. It expanded the possibilities of supporting the US administration to implement Polish security priorities, including strengthening the US military presence in Poland, cooperation in the energy sector, and deepening trade and mutual investments.

The next official visit of President Duda to the White House took place in June 2019. At that time, specific agreements were accepted - “Joint declaration on defence cooperation in the presence of the armed forces of the United States of America in the territory of the Republic of Poland”, signed by both Presidents in the White House; as well as two intergovernmental agreements – “On strengthening cooperation in the field of preventing and combating serious crime” and “On cooperation in the field of border security and immigration”. These two documents were an essential step towards Poland’s inclusion in the visa-free regime. During this trip, the Polish leader also visited Texas, Nevada and California, which resulted in signing the agreements in the field of energy, medical, scientific and technical cooperation.

Also, in June 2019, the Government Plenipotentiary for Strategic Energy Infrastructure Piotr Naimski and Energy Secretary Rick Perry signed an agreement on strategic cooperation in the field of nuclear energy used for civil purposes, and the presidents of PGNiG and Venture Global LNG concluded a contract for the supply of LNG from the USA to Poland.

On September 23, 2019, the Presidents also signed a significant declaration on deepening the defence cooperation and the presence of US troops in Poland. Thus, Poland joined the group of countries where US troops are stationed. The agreement confirmed the “permanent” presence of 4,500 American soldiers in Poland and also approved the sending of an additional 1,000 soldiers in the near future. Notably, US troops’ “permanent” presence is not enduring, and there will still be no stable US military base in Poland. In addition, in October 2019, a favourable decision was made regarding the purchase of F-35 fighters from the American company Lockheed Martin.

Last summit meeting took place on June 24, 2020 - Andrzej Duda was the first world leader to visit Washington during the pandemic, and the fight against COVID-19 was the main topic of talks.

The intensity of contacts was evidenced moreover by government and parliamentary visits. In 2017-2020, several visits of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs to the USA took place. They always had a bilateral component but were also associated with significant multilateral events such as the NATO summit, conferences on combating ISIS or discussions on religious freedom. There were also frequent visits by the head of the Ministry of National Defense and his deputies. Cooperation between other ministries was also developing, including the Ministry of Health - an agreement on cooperation in the field of health and medical sciences was signed in July 2018. Parliamentary contacts between Poland and the United States were also intense, including meetings between the members of Polish Sejm, the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the US Senate.

- Economy

According to the data of the US Department of Commerce, US goods exports to Poland in 2019 amounted to USD 5.96 billion, which is an increase of 11.4% compared to 2018. In turn, imports from Poland increased by 4.3% (from USD 8.04 billion to USD 8.38 billion). As a result,

the total trade in goods between the USA and Poland reached USD 14.34 billion in 2019 (7.1% higher than in 2018). The negative balance of the United States in trade in goods with Poland amounted to USD 2.42 billion (USD 270 million lower than in 2018). Due to the fact that the dynamics of mutual trade in goods was higher than in the case of some other countries, Poland moved from place 40. to 37. in the ranking of the most important trade partners of the United States.

On the other hand, the US is Poland's 9th most important trading partner, including the 4th among non-EU countries (after China, Russia and Great Britain). The US share in Poland's trade in goods in 2019 was 3.06%. Export to the USA ranks 8th among crucial directions for the supply of Polish goods abroad, and in 2019 it had a 2.87% share in all Polish exports.

Both countries are also engaged in intensive economic cooperation at the highest level. Polish politicians paid many visits to USA, which had an economic profile. Over the years, talks were held with energy companies such as Cheniere and ExxonMobil; or with Amazon, Microsoft and Boeing on expanding their presence in Poland and deepening cooperation with Polish partners, including building academic centers, and R&D institutions. Talks were also held on the possibility of American involvement in the creation of the Central Communication Port.

- Social cooperation

An unquestionable success of recent years in the dimension of social relations, having a great impact on the quality of Poland's relations with the US, was Poland's inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program on November 11, 2019. For 25 years, efforts were made to maintain the interest of influential American political circles in the subject of the abolition of tourist visas. The visa waiver is undoubtedly facilitation for people travelling for tourist or business purposes and contributes to strengthening Polish-American relations.

Scientific cooperation is also essential in this respect. It is based on the Polish-American agreement on the scientific and technological collaboration of 2018. The agreement's benefits include the possibility of developing contacts between scientists at different stages of their careers, participation in conferences and joint research. The deal enables closer cooperation between Polish and American government agencies responsible for the distribution of research funds.

It is also worth mentioning the Polish-American Science Award, which aims to strengthen the rank of cooperation between scientists from Poland and the USA. The award is granted jointly by the Foundation for Polish Science and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which distinguishes researchers from the USA and Poland for outstanding achievements in the framework of Polish-American scientific cooperation.

What perspective?

Change of the leader in the White House caused particular consternation among the ruling camp in Poland, who worked closely with Donald Trump's administration. Congratulations from Polish President Duda, many weeks late, certainly did not help to establish a cordial relationship with Joe Biden. It can already be seen today that Duda's and Biden's relations will be relatively calm.

Biden's foreign policy priorities include diplomatic relations with China and Russia, and transatlantic ties include rebuilding contacts with France and Germany. The style and nature of Trump's actions towards Poland were less formal and more casual and personal. This was also due to the very pragmatic and, above all, the former President's transactional approach to politics - which suited Warsaw. In Biden's case, the behaviour based on standard diplomatic patterns is the main thing to play.

Polish politicians, however, are trying to stay in shape. Krzysztof Szczerski, Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the President, recently assessed that: "We have simply closed one chapter in Polish-American

relations, and we are opening another one, the foundations we have laid for these relations, especially in the last four years, are solid and nothing should disturb them.” Indeed, the foundations for a relationship - economic or social - are vital. Warsaw, therefore, quietly hopes that the Americans will not give up this intense cooperation. Yet, the question is whether the Polish authorities themselves will be able to animate contacts with the Americans?

The Relations between Romania and the USA

Oana Popovici

Summary: Romania's relations with USA are governed by a Strategic Partnership which represents an essential landmark of Romania's foreign policy, as well as a tool to support domestic efforts in the field of political, economic, military and administrative reform. The progress in the bilateral relation significantly improved in the last couple of years, in both the field of security and defence, as well as in economic and energy cooperation. There is an extended intergovernmental agreement for the built of the Units 3 and 4 of the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant and plans for further cooperation on various levels in the civilian nuclear field or in regional interconnection projects. Romania still advocates for the abolition of visas and accession in the Visa Waiver program.

Romania celebrated, in 2020, 140 years of bilateral diplomatic relations with the USA. This year, a decade has passed since the conclusion of the "Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century Between the United States of America and Romania" and the Agreement on the location of the USA missile defence system in Romania. The declaration is a statement of the long-term and continuously developing partnership between the two countries and also establishes the pillars of the Romania-US relationship: political dialogue, security, economy, science and technology, research, education, culture. In the context of the Joint Declaration adoption in 2011, a Task Force to implement the principles agreed in the document was set up and further launched in October 2012. Another important moment in the evolution of the Romanian-American bilateral relationship was the signing of the Agreement on the activities of the US forces stationed on the Romanian territory in 2005. Later on, negotiations on the legal framework governing the location of US missile

defence system components in Romania began in June 2010. Romania hosts several NATO divisions for supporting security in Europe's southern flank, the last NATO military command being established here in July 2020.

The Joint Declarations on the implementation of the Strategic Partnership were renewed several times since then, the last one being adopted in 2019, during the visit of the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis in Washington and his meeting with President Donald Trump. At present, six sectoral working structures are operational within the Task Force, on political and military issues; cyber security and digital business; economic and trade issues; energy security; education, science, innovation, technological cooperation and culture; internal affairs and consular affairs (including visa issues). According to the previous US ambassador to Romania, Adrian Zuckerman, Romania has made huge progress in deepening the bilateral relationship with the US, reaching new heights in the cooperation in the field of military and security, economic development, energy, agriculture, in application of the rule of law, 5G legislation, law enforcement, the fight against organized crime and human trafficking. The strategic partnership between Romania and the US occupies a central place in the architecture of Romania's foreign and security policy, being one of the three important pillars of the foreign policy, along with increasing Romania's role and importance within the EU and NATO.

An overview of the most important data related to bilateral economic cooperation shows that there are 7,991 companies with American capital on the Romanian market, representing 3.5% of the total number of the companies with foreign participation in the share capital. The total value of the share capital was USD 1.16 billion, meaning 1.86% of the total value, USA being the 14th largest country with such contribution, according to the latest data at the end of 2020 of the National Trade Register Office. USA is the major non-European investor in Romania, with a share of 1% of the total volume of foreign direct investments in 2019, representing EUR 901 million. Foreign investments mainly targeted the following sectors: energy,

manufacturing, information technology and telecommunications, service, and consumer products sectors. Bilateral trade relationships place USA on the 15th place as regards the share in total goods exports (1.9%, representing EUR 1.3 billion) and the 19th in terms of imports (0.9%, namely EUR 0.8 billion) in 2019. Romanian exports are mainly focused on machinery, vehicle parts, steel and metallic items, and fertilizers, while imports from the USA cover machines, appliances, electrical equipment; mineral products; products of the chemical industry etc.

During 2020, significant progress was made and important bilateral projects were set up in the field of security and defence, as well as in the field of economic and energy cooperation. An extensive program of military cooperation between Romania and the USA for the next 10 years was signed between the two countries in October 2020, envisaging strategic priorities for strengthening cooperation on the Black Sea region, the continuous rotation of US forces in Romania, the consolidation of efforts in the field of cyber security, resilience, respectively US assistance for meeting the goals of allied capabilities and modernizing the armed forces. In addition, other programmes include U.S. Department of Justice assistance for strengthening the rule of law, combatting corruption and human trafficking and enhancing cyber security. Bilateral cooperation in the field of equipment acquisition is an element that strengthens the Strategic Partnership, Romania allocating 2% of the GDP for the defence budget since 2017. The Bilateral roadmap dedicated to defence cooperation, for the period 2020-2030, is a plan for modernizing Romanian army endowments and strengthening the position as a NATO member. In this context, the first PATRIOT system was purchased from the US. In fact, in the last years, the collaboration with the US was mainly enhanced by the collaboration within NATO, in the missions in Afghanistan or in the region of common strategic interest of the Black Sea.

The economic and energy component of the Strategic Partnership was extended by concluding the Intergovernmental Agreement in the field of civil nuclear energy. Romania and the US have signed an extended

intergovernmental agreement for the built of the Units 3 and 4 of the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant and for the refurbishment of Unit 1. The works are developed under a financing package of USD eight billion provided by the US Import-Export Bank, the largest financial support received so far by Romania from the US. In addition, USA will contribute with expertise and technology, alongside a multinational team which forms a consortium of companies from the USA, Romania, Canada and France. Further cooperation on various levels in the civilian nuclear field or in the area of natural gas extraction in Romania are also planned. In addition, progress was made in identifying sources of funding for strategic projects in this field, as well as for major regional interconnection projects promoted by Romania, such as the Constanta-Gdansk railway project (Rail2Sea) and the Via Carpathia road project.

Despite good cooperation so far, Romanians are still required to have a visa to enter the USA, while other EU citizens are exempt from this obligation for short stays, as are US citizens when visiting the EU. In this context, one bilateral working group was specially created for obtaining concrete progress regarding Romania's accession to the Visa Waiver program. The Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed with his US counterpart to continue further cooperation and coordination on this subject, in order to achieve this common goal. This would lead to better cooperation between the business environments in the two countries by facilitating direct contacts and enhancing trade and investments.

The year 2020 marked, in the context of combating the COVID-19 pandemic, new ways of consolidating the Strategic Partnership. The two countries have granted mutual aid, including facilitating the air transport of medical materials in Romania, repatriations of citizens, exchange of experience. Romania has also deployed a medical team and a radiological, biological and chemical decontamination team to the Alabama Department of National Defence in order to support USA in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemics and to share good practices in limiting the damages of the disease.

As regards further plans of cooperation, Adrian Zuckerman, the previous US ambassador to Romania, recommended that the large number of state-owned companies in Romania, the highest in Europe, must be subject to privatization. Potential cooperation is therefore envisaged in such a context. In addition, he indicated the need of a stable, predictable, fully transparent business environment, in order to stimulate development, which the Romanian Government already assumed in discussions with the business representatives in different countries.

President Klaus Iohannis considers that deepening and expanding the Strategic Partnership is one of the basic pillars of Romania's foreign and security policy. In the context of the administrative change involved by the election of a new US President, the Romanian Minister of External Affairs underlined the need for the bilateral dialogue to continue at the same sustained pace in order to take advantage of the existing opportunities, and expressed the conviction that the new American administration will support the further deepening of the Strategic Partnership with Romania. A similar message was sent by one of the Romanian vice-presidents in the same context, political class in Romania pointing that it is interested in a strong and lasting relationship with the US.

The Relations between Serbia and the USA

Ivona Ladjevac

Summary: In the historical sense, the relations between the United States of America and the republic of Serbia are characterized by the alliance in the two world wars, as well as the relatively fair cooperation during the Cold War period. After the deterioration of relations during the disintegration of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the severance of diplomatic relations due to the NATO bombing in 1999, relations were renewed in November 2000 at the ambassadorial level. Today, bilateral relations are significantly improved.

Introductory notes

As a country that occupies a key strategic juncture at the social, political, and geographic crossroads between Eastern and Western Europe, in geopolitical terms, Serbia is a country of great interest for main international players, including the USA. Bilateral relations between two countries were solid, during the world wars they fought at the same side, but situation significantly changed during the nineties after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia when the USA openly supported other constituent republics of SFRY. The USA was the leading country in engaging its air forces in bombing Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war led from 1991-1995. But, that was only the announcement of the USA's hostility towards Serbs that fully manifested in 1999 when the USA engaged NATO forces and conducted illegitimate bombing of then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro). Bombing campaign lasted for 79 days. Afterwards, the USA succeed in providing its physically presence in the area – the Bondsteel base has been built in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo and

Metohija. Since then, Serbia is leading its internationally battle, supported by Russia and China, to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Phased (re)developing of relations between the USA and Serbia

In the period after 2000, five phases of redeveloping bilateral relations may be observed. The first one starts in 2000 and ends in 2004. This period can be characterized as a period of improved cooperation and mutual relations. Second is a period of parallel cooperation and aggravation of relations due to negotiations on the status of Kosovo which lasted from 2005 until 2008. The third, 2008–2010, a period of silent confrontation was followed by period of slight improvement, 2010–2014. In 2014 current period has started.

Since October 2000, both Belgrade and Washington have taken certain steps to normalize relations. Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was admitted to the international community with the support of the United States, which also supported the null of debts to the London and Paris clubs at the donors' conference in the summer of 2001. After the successor countries signed the relevant agreement, the USA authorities have unfrozen the property of the former National Bank of Yugoslavia. By the decree of the American President, George W. Bush, in the spring of 2003, the FRY was finally removed from the list of the countries that threatened the national interests of the United States. Very soon the export ban on weapons was lifted, although that act had more symbolic than commercial significance.

In March 2004, during the violence of extremist groups of Albanians in Kosovo against Serbs population, KFOR contingents (including the United States) responded to protect the Serb population and cultural and sacral buildings. Strong political action from Belgrade was perceived as legitimate in Washington and strengthened contacts with the US military in the field. Belgrade's parallel engagement in strengthening its influence in Washington has gained some formalization through the creation of so-called Serbian caucus in the Congress in 2004, after a series of mutual visit

of congressional officials, congressmen and senators from one of the Serbian diplomats and politicians on the other side.

Second period was marked by American support for organizing negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina that will end with mutual recognition of independence. The main crisis in relations after 2000 occurred after the unilateral one Kosovo's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008 with was followed by American support and swiftly recognition of independence by Washington. At the demonstrations in Belgrade against Kosovo's independence, sponsored by the authorities, American embassy has been damaged, with one death. As a diplomatic protest gesture, Serbian Ambassador to the USA, Ivan Vujacic, was withdrawn to Belgrade for several months. Attempts to improve the relationship were made during Vice President Joseph Biden's visit to Serbia in May 2009. Biden's visit to Belgrade was based on the principle "we agree not to agree", where both sides stated their disagreement in their attitudes towards Kosovo independence but also expressed readiness to seek new fields of cooperation.

A somewhat more positive level of relations was noted in the December visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeremic to Washington and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. General US support Serbia's European integration was confirmed, with the acceptance of the invitation to state in 2010 the secretary visited Serbia. Hillary Clinton visit's to Serbia was realized, but nothing significantly changed. She said that the united States are ready to help and alleviate the situation, to support and persuade the parties to agree among themselves. But, she emphasized, in the end, everything depends on the leader and people who will have to find solutions for their future.

Problems in the negotiations, accompanied by the violence in Kosovo during the spring and summer 2011, again led to a cooling of relations with the United States. The USA even made a pressure towards the EU not to approve Serbia status of candidate country, i.e. to condition it by the status of negotiations with so called Kosovo authorities. Serbia finally agreed to

accept negotiations which followed up by the Brussels agreement in 2013. As a “reward” Serbia was allowed to the start the EU membership talks in January 2014.

But, in the meantime, due to the world economic crisis and also due to improving relations with China, America starts to perceive Serbia with different eyes. That change was caused by Serbian joining to the platform of cooperation between China and the CEEC’s countries (2014), as well the Serbian full support to Belt and Road Initiative were not welcomed in Washington. According to their interpretation, it was a manifest of Chinese soft power spreading in the Balkans with the aim to rise, eventually, into the hard one.

The Embassy of the United States of America to the Republic of Serbia put more efforts in improving its own image. It was particularly visible in 2018 when they launched strong media campaign “You are the world” referring to the great minds of Serbian scientists and novelists that made Serbia known worldwide. The USA also offered an almost predominant economic approach to the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina that has resulted in certain improvement of the ordinary Serbian people perception of the America.

Serbian President, Aleksandar Vucic, in September 2020 visited Washington and on that occasion has signed the Washington Agreement. That Agreement caused great controversies dealing with relations between Belgrade and Pristina, decision to transfer Serbian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but also impacting into relations between Serbia and China due to its provisions regarding the 5G network! Fortunately, that Agreement never came to the Serbian Parliament and therefore cannot be legally binding.

Still, Washington Agreement contained one article that was favorable for Serbia: the provision on establishing the office of the American

International Development Financial Corporation (DFC) in Belgrade.¹ Serbian Government has announced that it expects the first economic effects of the DFC's entry in the region to be visible in the next month's already. It is too early to judge upon the effects of the DFC office in Belgrade, but data from 2020 could be used as a base for comparison. In 2020, the total trade amounted to 811.6 million USD, of which exports from Serbia amounted to 369.3 million USD and imports in the amount of 442.3 million USD.

It seems that in this phase, America has chosen economic than pure political measures in order to revive its presence in Serbia.

Conclusion

After extremely unfavorable period, after 2000 relations between Serbia and the USA started to improve. According to available data, in last twenty years, the United States provided close to 1 billion dollars in aid to Serbia to help stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system, and promote good governance. Despite the United States' disagreement with Serbia over Kosovo's independence and the mixed messages Washington works on strengthening its own relationship with Serbia through deepening economic cooperation and reinvigorating its former strategy of active engagement with the Western Balkans, in particular relations with Serbia.

¹ DFC is the U.S. federal agency formed in 2019, based on the the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act. It brings together the capabilities of OPIC and USAID's Development Credit Authority with a range of innovative financial products that bring private capital to the emerging markets. It is primarily responsible for providing and facilitating the financing of private development projects, with the lending capacity of \$60 billion. The DFC's financing tools include loans, loan guarantees, equity placements, technical assistance and insurance for development projects across sectors such as energy, healthcare, critical infrastructure and technology. DFC also provides financing for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Relations between Slovakia and the USA

Juraj Ondriaš

Since the end of communist rule in Czechoslovakia in 1989, and Slovakia's independence in 1993, one of the guiding principles of the Slovak governing elites was affirming Slovakia's place as a Western country in the narrowest sense – i.e., not only as an heir to Western or European civilization, but also as a part of the Western political and economic consensus. This consensus has an economic and a political dimension. In the economic sphere, it is based on economically liberal and free-market values defined in the Washington consensus.¹ In the political sphere, it encompasses values such as democracy, respect for human rights (especially “negative” or first-generation rights), the rule of law, etc.² This is combined with a universalist worldview, seeing this Western consensus as normatively superior to other value systems and therefore universally applicable to all countries and cultures globally. In Slovakia, this manifests as a strong orientation toward the main representatives of the Western consensus – the USA and major Western European powers, as well as the international organizations created by these powers, such as NATO, the EU, and the international financial and trade organizations underpinning the Western-led global economic order. Of these pillars of the Western order, the USA has the pride of place as being the guarantor of the system in both the economic and political-security sense. The USA, through its dominant role in NATO, is seen in Slovakia (as in the Central and Eastern European region as a whole) as the main military guarantor against any attempt by outside powers at revisionism of the post-communist regional political and

¹ MULTINATIONAL MONITOR: *Unraveling the Washington Consensus: An Interview with Joseph Stiglitz*. Apr 2020. Available from: <https://multinationalmonitor.org/mm2000/00april/interview.html>

² MZV: *Slovensko a USA strategickí partneri*. Zahraničná politika sa nás týka – platform Odboru strategickej komunikácie Ministerstva zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 28 Oct 2020. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/zahranicnapolitikasanastyka/photos/a.1589122421173955/3388329051253274/?type=3>

economic order, principally from Russia, but also other non-Western powers. The USA is considered as an effective and committed defender of this order, while the other Western powers and organizations are seen as unable or unwilling to effectively stand up to the challenges to the Western order from outside, due to the competing interests of these powers or lack of competencies to deal with the major challenges.

Also in the economic sphere, the USA remains a major partner for Slovakia, despite the natural dominance of the Western European countries. The USA was Slovakia's 9th largest export partner as of 2019, according to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. The value of mutual trade was steadily increasing, from just under 2 billion Euros in 2014 to 3.5 billion Euros in 2019.¹ The results for 2020 are expected to be worse due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but trade is expected to bounce back since there are no intrinsic barriers to mutual economic relations – although there were some fears that former US president Donald Trump's protectionist tariffs on EU automobiles would have a negative effect on Slovak exports,² they did not come to pass and the policies of the new US president Joe Biden give cause for optimism. Slovakia also benefits from a long-term positive trade balance with the USA, amounting to 1.581 billion Euros in 2019.

This dual importance in both the economy and security realms leads to a strong orientation towards Atlanticism in Slovakia (as in the CEE region in general). The Atlanticist orientation of Slovakia has been a matter of broad consensus between all relevant parties of both the left and right throughout the thirty-year history of Slovakia, with only the fringe parties of the radical left and right being opposed to the pro-Western consensus. Any minor differences in the attitudes of the political parties and their electoral base can be broadly described as the result of the political, economic and social

¹ MZV: *Ekonomická informácia o teritóriu Spojené štáty americké*. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 2020. 34p. Available from: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/620840/Spojené+štáty+americké+-+ekonomické+informácie+o+teritóriu+2020>

² TOMA, B.: *Trump vydesil Európu clami na autá*. Pravda, 19. Feb 2019. Available from: <https://ekonomika.pravda.sk/ludia/clanok/502651-trump-vydesil-europu-clami-na-auta/>

transformation of Slovakia after the fall of communism. The “winners” of the transformation, i.e. the wealthier and better educated voters concentrated in urban areas, tend to vote for parties of the center-right, which are firm adherents of Atlanticism and the Western consensus, to which their voters ascribe their higher status and standard of living. By contrast, the “losers” of transformation, i.e. the poorer and less educated voters living more in rural areas, tend to vote either for parties to the left of center or for right-wing populist parties. These parties have a cooler attitude to the Western consensus, since their voters blame the Western liberal economic values for their troubles.

However, such a cooler stance on the part of these parties is more often than not a populist ploy to obtain votes from these less successful segments of society – as mentioned above, this consensus is shared by all relevant parties and political elites. Therefore, even when such parties are in government, they limit their opposition to the Western consensus to verbal criticism and gestures to appease their political base, but do not take active steps to change Slovakia’s geopolitical orientation. It must be said that most of the populist criticism is aimed at the EU and its dominant Western European member states, since these are more involved in the tangible economic issues bothering the less favored segments of Slovakia’s population. By contrast, the USA or NATO are more distant to the relevant bread-and-butter issues and therefore less controversial in the political arena. A strong pro-USA and pro-NATO stance is thus a more fixed part of the Slovak foreign policy consensus. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, such as during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, which was unpopular in Slovakia due to a sense of connection of Yugoslavia as a fellow Slavic country, or during the Iraq war, when the stationing of Slovak soldiers in Iraq as part of the US-based coalition was equally unpopular and seen as needlessly involving Slovakia in a foreign war.

In this vein, the parliamentary election which took place on February 29th of last year saw a government of four center-right parties take power from a three-party coalition spanning the center-left, center-right and right wing

of the Slovak political spectrum. Two of the parties of the former government, the dominant center-left Smer-SD and the right-wing SNS, were parties representing the less privileged sectors of society and consequently had a (slightly) more critical stance of the USA and other Western countries and organizations. However, the government did not take any measures in contravention of these allies and organizations, apart from opposition to EU-mandated migrant quotas (which was even shared by the more pro-Western parties of the then-opposition center right) and a less hostile view towards alternative centers of power such as Russia or China. By contrast, the new government was expected to deepen relations with the USA. Indeed, while the previous government did identify NATO as a pillar of Slovak alliance policy, the new one explicitly mentioned the USA as the sole non-European ally of Slovakia.¹ While this is mostly a cosmetic difference, it does show the more explicit identification of the Slovak center-right parties with the USA and its policies and values.

The new government adopted several priorities which reflected its stronger pro-USA and pro-Western stance. One of these was an increase of spending on defense to over 2% of GDP, which was a long-term request by the USA of its European NATO partners.² Another new priority was an emphasis on the fight against the spread of hoaxes and “fake news”.³ While this goal has merits, as seen during the Coronavirus crisis with the spread of disinformation about alleged cures and anti-vaccine messages, these terms often function as a dog-whistle in the Western political and media environment against news sources seen as hostile to the Western consensus and dismiss them as propaganda. The targets are not only domestic news

¹ YAR, L.: *Zahraničná politika podľa Matovičovej vlády: K Washingtonu môže mať Slovensko oveľa bližšie*. Euractiv.sk. 22. Apr 2020. Available from: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/news/zahranicna-politika-podla-matovicovej-vlady-k-washingtonu-moze-mat-slovensko-ovela-blizsie/>

² RTVS: *Noví slovenskí veľvyslanci v Bruseli*. Správy RTVS. 28 Feb 2021, 37:19. Available from: <https://www.rtvs.sk/televizia/archiv/13982/261764#2359>

³ YAR, L.: *Zahraničná politika podľa Matovičovej vlády: K Washingtonu môže mať Slovensko oveľa bližšie*. Euractiv.sk. 22. Apr 2020. Available from: <https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/news/zahranicna-politika-podla-matovicovej-vlady-k-washingtonu-moze-mat-slovensko-ovela-blizsie/>

sources, but also foreign ones, with Russian government and news outlets bearing the brunt of this campaign.¹ However, Chinese sources are also frequently targeted, e.g. by claims they are trying to divide and weaken the EU or whitewash the actions of the Chinese government in Hong Kong or Xinjiang.² Over the past year, focus has turned to Chinese coverage of COVID-19 and its aid to Slovakia, identified as part of a wider disinformation campaign by the Chinese government.³

The new government also more explicitly took the side of Ukraine in its conflict with pro-Russian separatists and with Russia over Crimea. Admittedly, the previous government also took a pro-Ukraine stance in line with the USA and other Western powers and organizations, including support for sanctions on Russia and its representatives. However, Slovak government politicians often criticized the sanctions for the loss of business with Russia and warned against antagonizing Russia – yet they always supported the Western consensus when it came to renewing these sanctions, showing the populist nature of their criticism, meant to appease the pro-Russian, anti-Western, conservative and anti-capitalist segments of the electorate. By contrast, the parties of the new government, with the notable exception of the conservative-populist Sme Rodina party, support the sanctions more enthusiastically.⁴

¹ MZV: *Martin Klus: Fenomén dezinformácií a pokusy o prepisovanie histórie nám pripomínajú, že hodnoty demokracie a právneho štátu treba neustále chrániť*. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 28 Jan 2021. Available from:

https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnSciPx/content/martin-klus-fenomen-dezinformacii-a-pokusy-o-prepisovanie-historie-nam-pripominaju-ze-hodnoty-demokracie-a-pravneho-statu-treba-neustale-chronit?p_auth=jcWiUS53&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnSciPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2021%26mesiac%3D0

² ŠIMALČÍK, M.: *Ako slovenské media uverejnili čínsku propaganda*. Central European Institute of Asian Studies. 27 Aug 2019. Available from: <https://ceias.eu/sk/ako-slovenske-media-uverejnili-cinsku-propagandu/>

³ CEIAS ADMIN: *COVID-19 a meniac sa taktika čínskej propagandy na Slovensku*. Central European Institute of Asian Studies. 14 Jun 2020. Available from: <https://ceias.eu/sk/covid-19-and-chinas-changing-propaganda-tactics-in-slovakia-2/>

⁴ YAR, L.: *Zahraničná politika podľa Matovičovej vlády: K Washingtonu môže mať Slovensko oveľa bližšie*. Euractiv.sk. 22. Apr 2020. Available from:

One area where alignment with the USA remained equally close both before and after the change of government in Slovakia was in the continued Slovak opposition to the Nordstream II natural gas pipeline linking Russia and Germany through the Baltic Sea. Slovakia is a transit country for Russian oil and natural gas to the rest of Europe, so it stands to lose out on transit fees if the pipeline is completed. It therefore shares the opposition of the other CEE countries to this project. Both the previous and current government were and continue to be closely allied to the USA, which is a fierce critic of this pipeline. The criticism is ostensibly based on values-oriented reasoning that it strengthens the position of Russia (and its perceived influence over Europe, in the form of the spread of authoritarian tendencies and fake news) to the detriment of Ukraine and the other CEE countries. These countries are set to lose their leverage over Russia as necessary partners in the transit of natural gas from Russia to Western Europe. It is feared by the opponents of the pipeline that this would weaken and divide the EU as a beacon of Western values. It is debatable if this is the true reason, or if it is merely an example of rent-seeking behavior couched in idealistic rhetoric by countries unwilling to lose out on lucrative transit contracts.

Another foreign policy initiative of the new government, which was interpreted by media observers as meaning to align Slovakia with the USA, was the intent to adhere to the International Religious Freedom Alliance (IRFA) proclaimed by the Trump administration a few weeks previously.¹ The goal of this alliance is to “... *focus on combating blasphemy laws, the use of technology in religious oppression, and persecuting people who convert to another religion. They are also considering the possibilities of using sanctions to punish the religious persecutors.*”² Joining such an

<https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/news/zahranicna-politika-podla-matovicovej-vlady-k-washingtonu-moze-mat-slovensko-ovela-blizsie/>

¹ YAR, L.: *Zahraničná politika podľa Matovičovej vlády: K Washingtonu môže mať Slovensko oveľa bližšie.* Euractiv.sk. 22. Apr 2020. Available from:

<https://euractiv.sk/section/vonkajsie-vztahy/news/zahranicna-politika-podla-matovicovej-vlady-k-washingtonu-moze-mat-slovensko-ovela-blizsie/>

² CHO, E.-J.: *Trump Promotes 'Religious Freedom' Initiative Amid Criticisms Over Travel Ban.* *Voice of America.* 6 Feb 2020. Available from: <https://www.voanews.com/usa/trump->

initiative makes political sense not only from the perspective of forging closer ties with the USA, but also due to the strength of the conservative Catholic elements in the dominant party of the new government, OĽANO. It must also be said that all of Slovakia's neighbors have expressed a desire to join this alliance, as have 13 other EU member states or 12 other members of the 17+1 Platform. Yet the fact that no more has been heard about this IRFA in Slovakia after the transition to the Biden administration suggests that ingratiating itself with the USA was Slovakia's primary motive.

Yet another aspect of the new government's attempt at closer alignment with the USA is more relevant to China, as it concerns the development of a 5G network for the internet. On October 22, 2020, the foreign ministers of Slovakia and the USA signed a joint declaration on the security of 5G networks.¹ In this declaration, Slovakia affirmed that the issue of 5G internet has a strategic security dimension, and that the USA is the principal guarantor of Slovak security. It follows that Slovakia means to cooperate with the USA in guaranteeing the security of information and communication systems. While Slovakia did not explicitly claim that it refuses to cooperate with Huawei or any other non-Western contenders, it is difficult to interpret this any other way, given the critical stance of the USA on Huawei. By contrast, the previous government refused to commit to ruling out Huawei or any other competitor from the Slovak 5G market.²

Further abroad, still another example of the new government's aligning of its foreign policy with that of the USA and its EU allies was the decision, made on July 1st, 2020, to recognize Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president

[promotes-religious-freedom-initiative-amid-criticisms-over-travel-ban](#)

¹ SME: *Korčok podpísal spoločné vyhlásenie Slovenska a USA k bezpečnosti sietí 5G*. SME Domov. 22 Oct 2020. Available from: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22516963/korcok-podpisal-spolocne-vyhlasenie-slovenska-a-usa-k-bezpecnosti-sieti-5g.html>

² YAR, L.: *Huawei a V4: Slovenskí politici sa témy nechytajú, jasnejšie záujmy má Praha, Budapešť aj Varšava*. Euractiv.sk. 4 Jun 2019. Available from: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/huawei-a-v4-slovenski-politici-sa-temy-nechytaju-jasnejsie-zaujmy-ma-praha-budapest-aj-varsava/>

of Venezuela.¹ Similarly, Slovakia refused to recognize the result of the Venezuelan parliamentary election of December 6, 2020, claiming that they were neither free nor democratic.² Since political and economic relations between Slovakia and Venezuela are negligible, such gestures are a low-consequence way to bring Slovakia in line with its allies.

For 2021, one of the Slovak foreign policy priorities was to open a strategic dialogue with the USA after the Biden administration took power.³ The relevance, substance and form (whether strictly bilateral or multilateral within the EU) of such a dialogue remains to be seen, but the inauguration of Joe Biden bodes well for the ambitions of the Slovak government. As expressed in a meeting of EU foreign ministers on February 22, Slovakia would welcome closer cooperation of the USA and the EU on issues such as the situation in Ukraine or in the Western Balkans.⁴ Both these regions are among the long-term priority areas of Slovak diplomacy. This may be seen as a signal that Slovakia does not consider the EU to be a strong enough actor in these regions, meaning that the presence of the USA is desirable for the ambitions of Slovak foreign policy in these areas. A closer synergy between the EU and the USA is something that Slovakia advocates

¹ TASR: *Slovensko uznalo Guaidóa za dočasného prezidenta Venezuely*. Pravda. 1 Jul 2020. Available from: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/556136-slovensko-uznau-guaidoa-za-docasneho-prezidenta-venezuely/>

² MZV: *Stanovisko MZVEZ SR k voľbám vo Venezuele*. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 8 Jan 2021. Available from: https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/stanovisko-mzvez-sr-k-volbam-vo-venezuele?p_p_auth=CPy6CoAR&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2021%26mesiac%3D0%26strana%3D2

³ TASR: *Zahraničnú politiku bude formovať euroatlantická orientácia*. Teraz. 25 Jan 2021. Available from: <https://www.teraz.sk/spravy/mzvez-srzahranicnu-politiku-v-roku-20/522904-clanok.html>

⁴ MZV: *Ivan Korčok na zasadnutí ministrov zahraničných vecí EÚ so šéfom americkej diplomacie A. Blinkenom: teraz je čas na obnovu dôvery v transatlantických vzťahoch*. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky. 22 Feb 2021. Available from: https://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/Iw1ppvnScIPx/content/ivan-korcok-na-zasadnuti-ministrov-zahranicnych-veci-eu-so-sefom-americkej-diplomacie-a-blinkenom-teraz-je-cas-na-obnovu-dovery-v-transatlantickych-vz?p_p_auth=8rawowDj&_101_INSTANCE_Iw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2021%26mesiac%3D1

for on other issues as well, such as economic relations, the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, supporting democracy, etc.¹ In general, Biden's declarations on the renewal of trans-Atlantic unity and attempts to portray the administration as tough on its adversaries are in line with the Slovak foreign policy consensus and the Slovak government's expectations of the role of the USA in the region and globally. Therefore, the tendencies described above should continue to develop (with the possible exception of the IRFA), notwithstanding the change in the leadership of the USA or any possible changes in the government of Slovakia.

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History and Current State of Relations between Slovenia and the United States

Tina Čok

Summary: During the four years of Trump's presidency, relations between the EU and the US have been tense and occasionally stormy. There have been US withdrawals from the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Agreement and the World Health Organization, as well as the trade war in some areas.

The appearance of the new US President Joseph Biden is heralded as a possible return of Washington to multilateralism. The change in the White House could have a significant impact on the strength of the North Atlantic Alliance, the final stages of negotiations between Brussels and London on Britain's exit from the EU, and the influence of populist leaders in Europe.

The general assessment that prevailed for Slovenia during Trump's presidency was that relations between the two countries were neglected. The initial prediction that Slovenia had a strong weapon in bilateral relations with the United States in the First Lady Melania Trump proved to be wrong, as the Trump administration did not find any particular reasons for the US president to visit Slovenia or to host Slovenian political summits in the White House that could make a significant contribution to restoring the friendship between the two countries.

Slovenian relations with the USA since independence

If one considers the balance of power between the USA and Slovenia, two million Slovenian citizens against 270 million American citizens, one can see that Slovenia cannot be the focus of Washington's interest. In addition, American policy has countries compartmentalised. Slovenia is considered

a member of the EU and has not shown much proactivity in its relations with the United States over the last ten years.

Twenty years ago, when Slovenia had clear foreign policy goals, joining Euro-Atlantic integration, especially the EU and NATO, was much more proactive and politically unified in coalition-opposition relations than it is today. The successes in relations with the United States were also more noticeable because of these factors.

In 2000 and immediately thereafter, Slovenia was much more present in American politics. The year before, US President Bill Clinton visited Slovenia. Then Slovenia managed to organize a meeting at the summit Bush-Putin in Brdo near Kranj. At that time, in 2001, Slovenia was perceived as a new star in the European political sky, as it had managed a rather successful transition by then, which aroused sympathy among the American administration. Therefore, it enjoyed a lot of attention in American political circles.

The continuity of Slovenian interests in foreign policy was not affected by the change of government at the turn of the millennium. In 2000, there were two changes of government in Slovenia, but that did not affect our foreign policy priorities. We declared the same thing in Washington at that time, regardless of which Foreign Minister was visiting. Slovenia's commitment to the Euro-Atlantic partnership, regardless of the parties that led the government, aroused great sympathy in the United States. The EU-US summit during Slovenia's EU presidency was already a blueprint for U.S. treatment of Slovenia within the EU, as the country became a member in 2004.

Since Slovenia's EU accession, and especially in the last decade, bilateral relations with the United States have deteriorated.

American relations with Slovenia under Trump's administration

Under Trump, the usually pragmatic American foreign policy has become pure business. It is left to each country to pursue its own interests in

international relations. The close alignment of American and Slovenian interests only occurred when the third Janša administration took office.

Apparently, the Trump administration found that Slovenia could serve American interests, and so US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo came to visit us in August. It is in Slovenia's interest to maintain a close partnership with the United States. Sometimes it is necessary to show understanding for American interests, especially when we take into account the asymmetry of power between the two countries, and the political decisions taken must first and foremost take into account the security and well-being of the people of Slovenia. In the area of 5G network security, the Janša government has listened most decisively to American interests and signed a bilateral declaration with the United States that precludes the entry of other high-tech providers into the Slovenian market. This is an exclusively American geopolitical interest that the Slovenian government was willing to listen to.

An even more important issue in Slovene-American relations is the construction of the second unit of the Krško nuclear power plant. The construction was strongly supported by both Janša and the former government of Marjan Šarec, both of whom favored the American provider Westinghouse, which already has a presence in Krško. But Janša's government has gone much further than Šarec's in demonstrating its commitment to close ties with the United States. Indeed, parliament recently passed a law on investments in the Slovenian Army amounting to 780 million euros, with most of the money, a good half, to be spent on the purchase of armoured vehicles and, under the current government, apparently on American arms companies.

Reversed relations and a prime minister's tweet

Just when it seemed that Janša and his government had done everything right to actually improve neglected relations with the United States, along came the American elections, which did not go according to the Slovenian Prime Minister wishes. Janša's ally Trump lost the election. Nevertheless,

to the dismay of the domestic and European public, Janša prematurely congratulated him on his victory and did not convey his congratulations to the new president, whom he called the weakest in American history, until his inauguration.

There are differing opinions about the consequences of Janša's tweets and his insistence on the content of his tweets for bilateral relations with the US. Also on how the Biden administration, which is anti-Trumpist, unifying, multilateral and environmentally oriented, will work with Janša's administration. Some are convinced that the US administration doesn't care too much about tweets, that it is primarily concerned with capital and support for military operations. What matters, then, is how much Slovenia is willing to contribute to American goals. The importance of capital is related to what Slovenia can buy from the US, because Slovenia cannot invest in the US. It is also be very important to them whether Slovenia sends its soldiers to NATO or to the American wars. American investments basically go to countries that are traditionally pro-American, such as Poland. This summer, however, Janša addressed an initiative to the United States to install a rotating unit of the U.S. Army in Slovenia. His initiative is appreciated in the United States, but talks with host countries about the transfer of U.S. forces from Germany are expected to take some time. Estimates that American soldiers will eventually be transferred to Slovenia are not very optimistic.

Less optimistic commentators say Slovenia will remain an external partner. The leaders will meet at NATO. Although it will not be visible from the outside, Slovenia will certainly be disadvantaged in some areas. Janša's tweets, according to assessments, will undoubtedly cause Slovenia significant damage in its relations with the US. We are also said to be affected on the international stage, as the whole world has witnessed the indecent communication of Prime Minister. These are things to remember in high diplomacy. It is also said to be bad because we have now put ourselves on the map of problematic countries, as the Prime Minister tweeted on behalf of the country. Slovenia has meanwhile sent a new

ambassador to the United States. The prestigious diplomatic post is held by Tone Kajzer, a confidant of Janša. Kaiser won the Trump administration aggregate in record time. How he will be accepted under the new Joseph Biden administration, only time will tell. At the end of January, the American ambassador Lynda Blanchard also left Slovenia, whom Trump sent to us two years ago as his donor and supporter. As a politically minded diplomat serving the President of the United States, she resigned at the time of the inauguration of the new President, who accepted the resignation. Procedures are now underway to find a new ambassador.

Conclusions

In the days following the US election in November, a heated debate also erupted in Europe over European Union strategic autonomy, dividing its members and calling for a strategy on how to secure a stronger alliance and better partnership with the transatlantic ally.

Last year, under the government of Janez Janša, Slovenia accelerated the consolidation of its relations with the United States, which had previously been considered neglected. The highlight of bilateral relations was US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to Slovenia in August and Slovenian Foreign Minister Anže Logar's return visit to Pompeo and the outgoing government of the defeated President Donald Trump, where the two launched a strategic dialog.

After the new president took office, questions naturally arose about the future direction in Slovene-American relations and how Slovenia and the United States will build and launch relations after Janša's inglorious tweet. To answer questions concerning the future of diplomatic relations between the two countries, we can only borrow the response of the former Chinese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai who, when asked how he assessed the implications of the French Revolution of 1789, famously replied, "It is too early to say."

