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DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY: CHANGE OF SUBSTANCE OR ONLY OF STYLE?

Like most American presidents, Donald Trump did not campaign for the White House on a foreign policy agenda. He won the presidency by promising to create jobs and concentrate on internal issues. He did not put much stock by concepts such as George H. Bush's New World Order whereby the United States was the sole global power, obligated to intervene in events all over the world. Nonetheless he made some broad statements which indicated that one of his goals was a revision of American foreign policy. He criticized NATO's inability to stand up to terrorism and promised to take a hard look at international trade pacts to which the U.S. was a party. Cancelling the Iranian nuclear deal, significant reduction of U.S. financial involvement in NATO, closer relations with Moscow, immediate withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement were all among the changes he intended to implement during the first hundred days of his presidency.

Very little of this has actually happened. As many American presidents before him, Donald Trump has come to realize that the United States cannot relinquish duties and responsibilities resulting from being the world's superpower. And yet the president insists on presenting himself as anything but a run-of-the-mill politician. Therefore the question arises of whether he has truly made genuine efforts to alter the U.S. foreign policy or has basically continued the line

established by his predecessors, and most changes can be written off as stylistic rather than substantial.

One area where new style and substance seemed to go together was the U.S. reaction to events in Syria where Trump's course of action contrasted favorably with his predecessor's. Whereas Barack Obama declared he felt "very proud" of not following through on his declaration to punish Bashar Assad for using chemical weapons¹, very few world leaders shared this sentiment. The prestige of the United States suffered badly as a result of Obama's failure to act and a strong countermeasure was required to restore it. This is exactly what President Trump achieved with his swift missile strike on Assad's Shayrat airbase on April 4, 2017.

Obviously one action could not and did not resolve the Syrian crisis. The fight against extremism in Syria will continue, the task for Americans is far from over, and U.S. troops, as well as some civilians will need to remain engaged for some time. Significantly, the president restrained from making rash comments on Middle East on Twitter or elsewhere, and allowed the situation to develop at its own pace. According to a top special operations commander Maj. Gen. James Jarrard, "clearing buildings and getting civilians home [...]" in Raqqa alone, the final ISIS enclave, will not be completed before well into 2018: "[...] the grim and sizable job of clearing the IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and booby traps will require U.S. assistance [...]"² In other words, American troops will need to stay in Syria for months to come.

To achieve success, they will most likely need the cooperation of the U.S.-trained Syrian Democratic Forces, SDF. From the American point of view, they are the best measure to stop and eliminate rising Iranian influence in the region. The problem is, however, that they comprise also Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) forces, which Turkey finds unacceptable. Ankara considers the organization a threat and does not support the American idea that the SDF should continue to control parts of Syria. Erdogan believes that U.S.-supplied heavy weaponry and artillery will ultimately be used for terrorist purposes. One sign of Turkey's displeasure is the decision to purchase Russia's S-400 anti-missile system, ostensibly because Washington procrastinated on delivering a similar system to Ankara.

It seems that Trump is facing a dilemma not unlike that of Afghanistan of the 1980s, where arms provided for Mujahideens were subsequently used against the West by the Taliban. But no matter how the situation develops, President Trump has not indicated that he considers it his duty to deliver a plan for

¹ See: J. Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, April 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525> [accessed: 12.11.2017].

² G. Tzemach Lemmon, K. Baron, "Four New Questions For Trump on Syria", *Defense One*, 1.11.2017, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/11/four-new-questions-trump-syria/142229> [accessed: 9.11.2017].

permanent peace in Syria. The U.S. will in all likelihood continue to participate in further rounds of Geneva talks, whose success was recently made more promising by Putin's involvement in solving the Syria crisis. Whatever outside intervention, the future of Syria ultimately depends on the willingness of Saudi Arabia and Gulf nations to help pay for the reconstruction of the country.

Syria is but one area where seemingly local developments result from the Saudi-Iranian rivalry. Another one is Lebanon, whose prime minister Saad Hariri was forced by the Saudis to resign in November 2017 to counter the impression that cooperation with Iran (in this case via Iran-friendly Hezbollah) is a viable proposition. The Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman is also convinced that the United States is the most desirable ally in his country's feud with Teheran. Countering the Iranian threat is the goal of both Riyadh and Washington. The presumed missile attack at Riyadh's airport in November, which originated in Yemen but could not have been carried out without Iranian assistance, is the latest evidence that Saudi Arabia's fears are well grounded.

Trump's confrontational pose towards Iran makes perhaps for the starkest contrast with his predecessor. Barack Obama considered the multilateral JCPOA agreement³ his greatest foreign policy success. Under its terms Iran agreed to severely restrict its nuclear program in return for having most international sanctions against the country lifted. Trump's objections boil down to two aspects. One is that restricting the program does not mean it cannot be revived on a short notice, and two, that nothing in the agreement forbids Iran from continuing its work on ballistic missiles and exporting them to interested parties, such as North Korea. Ballistic missiles are intrinsically offensive, not defensive, and the U.S. tried but failed to include restrictions on their production in the JCPOA agreement.

If one wants to criticize the U.S. president for too frequent changes in foreign policy, his steadfast opposition against JCPOA defies this opinion. Trump criticized the pact while he was still a candidate, calling it "embarrassment" and "the worst deal ever negotiated". More than half a year into his presidency, he repeated his objections in the speech to the U.N. General Assembly on September 19. He stated that the U.S. "[...] cannot abide by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program".⁴ Trump believes that "The Iranian regime supports terrorism and exports violence, bloodshed and chaos across the Middle East"⁵, and it is this aspect which justifies Trump's conviction that even if Iran fulfills the letter of its obligations, it does not live up to its spirit.

³ The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, signed in 2015 by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China, the European Union and Iran.

⁴ White House, "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly", 19.09.2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/19/remarks-president-trump-72nd-session-united-nations-general-assembly> [accessed: 17.11.2017].

⁵ J. Mason, "Trump Says Iran Has Not Lived Up to Spirit of Nuclear Deal", Reuters, 6.10.2017, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-nuclear-usa-trump/trump-says-iran-has-not-lived-up-to-spirit-of-nuclear-deal-idUKKBN1CA2VK> [accessed: 8.11.2017].

Every 90 days the U.S. president must certify Iran's compliance with the terms of the agreement. Trump did so twice since assuming the White House, including the July decision, made against a very strong argument put forth by Ambassador John Bolton.⁶ But in mid-October 2017 the president announced his refusal to certify JCPOA. This does not automatically invalidate the agreement, but opens the door for Congress to do so. It has until mid-December to possibly re-impose sanctions, though at the time of this article it is not clear whether the legislature will decide to take up such a divisive issue. If it does, the Iranian question will also strain relations between the U.S. and Europe, whose leaders are satisfied with JCPOA. In any case, the threat of American economic sanctions may delay the ballistic missile program, but it is unlikely to make Iran abandon it altogether. Significantly, the president's views contrast sharply with those of his Secretary of Defense who unequivocally testified in Senate that the continuing existence of JCPOA "[...] is in the interest of the national security of the United States".⁷

In theory, the agreement could remain in force even if the U.S. walks away from it, but Teheran has signaled its inclination to abandon the pact in the event of American withdrawal. However, such a decision by Iran would endanger its international trade in oil. As Cliff Kupchan, the chairman of the Eurasia Group, wrote, "Iran is very unlikely to reflexively abrogate the agreement, given the substantial economic benefits it continues to receive [...]"⁸ But Karim Sadjadpour from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington makes a very pertinent point: "Iran relents when it faces international unity and lacks domestic unity. Trump is unifying Iran internally, splintering international unity."⁹

Invalidating a multilateral agreement because one party presumably violates its spirit, though not the letter, is a strained concept. The point of the deal was non-proliferation, and not Teheran's overall policy. Cancelling the deal will most likely result in Iran resuming its nuclear activity which would be impossible to halt again. Moreover, America's rejection of JCPOA may very well make Iranian-backed Shia militia escalate their attacks on American troops in Iraq. And yet, Trump's position is not without serious merits. The most significant of them is that the agreement set Iran free to intensify the conflict in Syria and strengthen

⁶ J.R. Bolton, "How to Get Out of the Iran Nuclear Deal", *National Review*, 28.08.2017, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/450890/iran-nuclear-deal-exit-strategy-john-bolton-memo-trump> [accessed: 3.11.2017].

⁷ See: Th. Gibbons-Neff, D.E. Sanger, "Mattis Contradicts Trump on Iran Deal Ahead of Crucial Deadline", *The New York Times*, 3.10.2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/03/world/middleeast/mattis-iran-deal-trump.html> [accessed: 15.11.2017].

⁸ J. Gambrell, "AP Analysis: Iran Angered by Trump, But Needs Nuclear Deal", *The Republic*, 15.10.2017, <http://www.therepublic.com/2017/10/15/ml-ap-analysis-iran-us/> [accessed: 15.11.2017].

⁹ <http://abcnews.go.com/amp/Politics/wireStory/ap-analysis-iran-angered-trump-nuclear-deal-50492596> [accessed: 8.11.2017].

its position in Iraq. Given the ten-year limit of JCPOA restrictions, these developments may help make Iran a regional hegemon and a formidable enemy of the West in less than a decade.

Another area where Donald Trump's policy differs from that of his predecessor, or predecessors, is how the United States handles the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear capability. The problem has been around for decades to the point where a specific "Korean cycle" was created. Pyongyang would demonstrate some advances in constructing weapons of mass destruction, whereupon the West (with Beijing's assistance) offered North Korea economic assistance in exchange for its promise to forego further work on developing such weapons. Food or direct financial aid was delivered, and North Korea slowed down its nuclear program. After a few years the process was repeated with similar results.

The most difficult time for North Korea was in the early 1990s, when Kim Jong Il assumed power, Moscow curtailed its largesse, and Beijing began normalizing relations with South Korea. About a decade later Kim Jong Un, who had succeeded his father, announced a doctrine of "simultaneous progress" in nuclear deterrence and economic development. It has soon become clear, however, that the new leader cares far less about the well-being of his people than about developing the country's independent nuclear capability. Barack Obama seemed to have missed this and continued traditional attempts at "bribing" the Korean leader, but eight years of pressuring North Korea yielded only a significant increase in its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems. Pyongyang used this time to make further progress in miniaturizing warheads and perfecting missiles which Iran obliged to provide. In 2016 alone Pyongyang conducted two nuclear tests and over 20 missile ones; it also performed four more nuclear tests so far in 2017. When Donald Trump became president, it was widely believed that the United States will assume a more intransigent policy towards North Korea, which he himself had clearly indicated.

Kim is now capable of destroying not only Seoul with its 25 million inhabitants, but also Japanese cities. His nuclear and missile installations are dispersed underground, underwater, and in various secret locations, so Pyongyang would most certainly retain capability to respond in kind to any attack. At the end of October 2017 Admiral Michael Dumont, writing on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, clearly stated in a letter to a U.S. Congressman that "The only way to 'locate and destroy – with complete certainty – all components of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs' is through a ground invasion [...]"¹⁰ In reality everybody knows, and so do people in the White House, that the cost of such preemptive strike would be catastrophic. Which, for all practical reasons, rules out any form of forcible removal of the threat that North Korea poses to the region. What is more, Japan and South Korea might feel they have no choice but to get their

¹⁰ "Joint Chiefs Say Invasion 'Only Way' to Totally Disarm N Korea", *BBC*, 5.11.2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41878123> [accessed: 22.11.2017].

own nuclear bombs to be used in the event the United States refrains from intervening in the conflict with North Korea, strong pledges by Donald Trump notwithstanding.

An underrated factor, missing from almost all discussions on the subject is the real-life effectiveness of various anti-missile systems currently deployed or being deployed in South-East Asia. According to Joe Cirincione, a recognized expert in the field, their usefulness is close to none: “The number one reason we don’t shoot down North Korea’s missiles is that we cannot”.¹¹ It is next to impossible to find and destroy a missile on its way up unless an Aegis ship is stationed in North Korean waters. The missile will then travel at the altitude of up to 750 kilometers, which is by far too high for the Aegis interceptors and the THAAD systems, not to mention the Patriot systems. Consequently, an incoming missile can be intercepted only in the terminal, descending phase, but the test record of Ground-Based Midcourse Defense interceptors (GMD), located in California and Alaska, is not encouraging either. They were only 50% successful when the defenders were given all pertinent data for the incoming missile, so according to the former director of operational testing for the Pentagon, “The success rate of the GMD systems in flight intercept tests has been dismal [...]”.¹² Terms such as “shield” and “dome” provide a false sense of security, and nothing more, despite \$40 billion spent so far on the GMD system and over \$320 billion on other missile defense systems.

All this is of course known to Pyongyang, Seoul and Tokyo, not to mention Washington, and some kind of a deal remains the only option. In other words, for all belligerent statements that President Trump has been making to “totally destroy” North Korea, his best hope is to follow the trail blazed by his predecessors, and hope that his well-advertized skill of deal making will work with Kim, too. Success may in fact be within reach not so much because of Donald Trump’s unique abilities, but because his public statements have created a different context for the talks. As Professor Balbina Hwang, a former State Department senior expert on North Korea indicates:

In the past, U.S. negotiations have been less than maximally successful, because we essentially entered them indicating we wanted or needed to reach a diplomatic solution more than the North Koreans [...]. If we try this again [...] we [must] convince both Pyongyang and Beijing that we are serious this time about bearing the ultimate costs of “really bad options”.¹³

¹¹ J. Cirincione, “No, We Cannot Shoot Down North Korea’s Missiles”, *Defense One*, 17.09.2017, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/09/no-we-cannot-shoot-down-north-koreas-missiles/141070/> [accessed: 2.11.2017]. Data presented in the following paragraph are derived from this analysis.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ S. Herman, “Trump: Tillerson ‘Wasting His Time’ Negotiating With North Korea”, *VOA*, 1.10.2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-tillerson-wasting-his-time-negotiating-with-north-korea/4051805.html> [accessed: 27.11.2017].

As an incentive, Trump could scale back or suspend U.S.–South Korean military exercises, which North Korea strenuously objects to, and suspend the deployment of new U.S. military assets in the South. Even, however, if North Korea agrees to refrain from further work on nuclear weapons, the tricky part will be, as always, compliance verification, as Pyongyang will need to allow IAEA inspectors back into the country. Still, this happened in the past and may be possible again.

It is generally recognized that the only country with sway over North Korea is China, which provides Pyongyang with oil and other vital materials. The two countries are also ideologically related. Experts seem to agree that China does not quite approve of the nuclearization of North Korea, but at the same time it strives to keep the peninsula stable and will not endanger this goal by exerting excessive pressure on Pyongyang. Yet this is not the only dilemma that Beijing faces in this context. Perhaps an even greater one is that its Communist leaders strive for good working relation with Donald Trump, but at the same time they'd rather keep him at a distance. North Korea's nuclear policy brings the United States too close for comfort to Chinese borders, not to mention strengthening America's trilateral cooperation with Japan and South Korea which includes enhancing the military capabilities of these two countries.

Xi goes out of his way to show how much he appreciates Donald Trump and the U.S., which was clearly visible during the extraordinary welcoming ceremony in Beijing in November 2017. Trump reciprocates by softening his language with regard to China's economic transgressions, but he also keeps a powerful weapon in his arsenal. It is the threat of sanctions not against China but against Chinese individuals and entities that engage in illicit financial activities with North Korea. Such activities not only weaken the overall impact of U.N. sanctions but also indicate to Pyongyang that Beijing might not be quite serious about measures it voted for. This, in turn, would weaken Trump's ability to exert pressure on North Korea.

China is clearly wary of antagonizing the new American president, which is evidenced by an unprecedented step of approving strong Security Council sanctions. Beijing indefinitely suspended Air China flights from Beijing to North Korea and closed for "maintenance" the Friendship Bridge on the main road between the two countries. It tries to act as an honest broker between Washington and Pyongyang and has proposed the so-called freeze-for-freeze concept, whereby North Koreans would freeze their nuclear program and the United States would freeze or reduce its joint military exercises with South Korea. It is a reasonable proposition, whose major weakness lies in the fact that one side has to carry out its part of the deal first, which would look like giving in and is thus unacceptable for either party. Even if both leaders were inclined to trade down their respective military readiness, Donald Trump fully understands the importance of timing and Kim certainly knows a lot about double dealing.

In the meantime instead of confronting each other directly, the United States and North Korea make motions which seem threatening but stop short of taking irrevocable steps. Americans have B-1 fly close to the Korean border, and Kim keeps talking of his country's delivery capabilities with a clear suggestion of using EMP (electromagnetic pulse) against the USA. Such a strike can be either missile-launched or satellite-launched and while it does not harm humans directly, it could seriously interfere with the target country's electronic systems. Various tests performed with regard to the effectiveness of EMP rendered inconclusive results, but the vision of incapacitating, perhaps irrevocably, the United States must be greatly alluring to Kim. However unlikely, even a partial success of such a strike would also make North Korea a power in Asia. China would not entertain such turn of events, which may be another reason why it supports strong economic and technological sanctions against Pyongyang.

It would be naïve to assume that Beijing's support for the United States comes with no strings attached, even if no quid pro quo has yet been formulated. It will presumably come not only in the predictable form of Taiwan or trade and investments issues, but also in a divisive and even explosive form of matters related to the South China Sea. This is where Trump is likely to face his major test in foreign policy: how to return China's favors without giving in to Beijing's unreasonable demands and without antagonizing other countries in the area which do not accept China's claim to the monopoly to what lies under the sea bottom. Hopefully President Trump understands that in the long run he will get more cooperation from Beijing if he remains firm on issues, but the danger exists he will go for short term gains and give China what it craves at the expense of its neighbors.

Their respective policies towards North Korea are only one aspect of U.S.–China relations which are undergoing fundamental reevaluation under President Trump. To describe the dynamics of those relations, Harvard political scientist Graham Allison coined the phrase “Thucydides Trap”. He referred to the ancient historian's explanation of the inevitability of conflict between Athens and Sparta caused by the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this development evoked in Sparta. Allison's concept is not universally accepted, yet it cannot be easily dismissed either. Regardless of when (and if) China catches up economically with the United States, its constant growth is a fact; what is debatable is whether this indeed causes fear in Americans similar to that raised by the communist Soviet Union.

Some commentators, including Graham Allison again, discuss the Sino-American relation by referring to Huntington's concept of “the clash of civilizations”.¹⁴ Potentially the most disruptive feature of Chinese culture may be its authoritarian character and unquestionable acceptance of hierarchy, both

¹⁴ See: G. Allison, “China vs. America: Managing the Next Clash of Civilizations”, *Foreign Affairs*, 2017, Vol. 96, No. 5, pp. 80–89.

in social life and international relations. While Americans are fully aware of the power of their country but refrain from using it as an argument, preferring to portray the United States as a benevolent lawmaker, the former Chinese foreign minister saw nothing wrong with settling the discussion on the South China Sea at the 2010 ASEAN meeting by stating: "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact".¹⁵

During the presidential campaign Trump was quite critical of China's predatory economic behavior: dumping, devaluation of the yuan, unfair competition with American products. This did not seem to bode well for the bilateral relations. Again, however, it was a matter of style rather than substance. Once in the White House, President Trump changed his policy towards China from emotionality to constructive realism. He realized that a conflict, even if not a military one, would be counterproductive for both parties. And in fact the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Donald Trump have so far had an exceptionally close relations starting with their first meeting at Mar-a-Lago in April 2017, where they concentrated on establishing personal bonds rather than on debating divisive issues. Trump developed a genuine respect for Xi, and Xi clearly reciprocated. In less than a year they met three times (while Trump refused so far to meet the Dalai Lama) and Trump lavished praise on his counterpart, his tweets critical of China notwithstanding.

After the meeting at Mar-a-Lago four high-level dialogue mechanisms were established: on diplomacy and security; economy; law enforcement and cyber security; and the social and cultural issues. Trump stopped calling China a currency manipulator and did not slap punitive tariffs on Chinese imports. When he spoke at the Great Hall of the People during his visit to Beijing, he actually ventured so far as to blame his American predecessors rather than China for its huge trade surplus with the United States: "I don't blame China [...] in actuality, I do blame past administrations for allowing this out-of-control trade deficit to take place and to grow".¹⁶

This, however, should not be misconstrued as complacency. Trump continues to be adamant about the need to observe intellectual property rights, and has three carrier battle groups accompany him on his tour of the Pacific in November 2017. There is little doubt that the U.S. fleet will continue its annual maneuvers in the South China Sea, as the U.S. prestige in Southeast Asia depends on its readiness to stand up to Beijing when necessary. This is certain to adversely affect relations with China – unless, that is, America's show of power is abandoned in exchange for Beijing forcing Pyongyang to drop its nuclear program, which is not a likely development.

¹⁵ Ch.P. Twomei, Xu Hui, "Military Developments", [in:] *Debating China: The U.S.–China Relationship in Ten Conversations*, ed. N. Hachigian, Oxford 2014, p. 168.

¹⁶ White House, "Remarks by President Trump at Business Event with President Xi of China. Beijing, China", 9.11.2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-business-event-president-xi-china-beijing-china/> [accessed: 11.11.2017].

One must remember that for all significance of China for American foreign policy, Washington needs also to consider the interests and fears of other countries of the region. Most of them are victims of Beijing's "predatory economics" and many are wary of China's growing political and military power. They were bitterly disappointed by Barack Obama's "pivot to Asia": the former president did not produce means to match the declaration, was blindsided by China's growth and revealed his helplessness with regard to the threat from North Korea. Their fears were not alleviated by President Trump's uncertain position regarding American military obligations in Asia or by the abrupt withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, followed by his demands to renegotiate the South Korean and Japanese Free Trade Agreements with the United States.

But in December 2016 the president-elect took a congratulatory phone call from Tsai Ing-wen, the president of Taiwan, making him the first U.S. president or president-elect to speak officially to his Taiwanese counterpart since the two countries broke off formal relations in 1979. Later that month, he told Fox News: "I don't know why we have to be bound by a 'one China' policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade".¹⁷ Even though he did not repeat such sentiments after moving to the White House, Trump clearly wants to strengthen his hand in negotiations with Beijing. The spectre of Washington upgrading its relations with Taipei is certain to irritate Beijing and Trump presumably knows from his business days how to use this tactic. He may respect Xi, but he would gladly outmaneuver him.

The real meaning of all this will remain hidden for a long time to come because the main question is the deep meaning of China's friendly attitude to the United States. If genuine, it will mark a new era in the global order, with the two great powers cooperating for the benefit of all. An equally possible alternative, however, is that China's long-term goal is to remove the U.S. from Asia. Too weak to do it now, Beijing's best policy is to anesthetize Washington until the balance of power shifts in China's favor. America's best defense would be to strengthen its ties with other Asian countries without antagonizing China. It remains to be seen if Donald Trump can play this multilateral game deftly enough.

Successful or not in the long run, the U.S. policy towards China remains challenging and demanding. This is not the case with the Russian policy, which has practically stalled. Early reports on candidate Trump indicated that Moscow would be at the center of his foreign policy. Most commentators expected a continuation of Obama's non-antagonistic attitude as the president-elect had high praise for Vladimir Putin and promised to focus on relations with Russia.

As it turned out, reports of Russia's interference in American election, whether true or false, forced Trump to practically freeze relations with Moscow. In July 2017 both Houses of Congress approved a new sanctions bill, aimed at

¹⁷ D.P. Chen, *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy*, Cham 2017, p. 196.

Russia's defense, intelligence and energy sectors, and the president signed it into law, however reluctantly. Had he vetoed the bill, allegations of collusion between his presidential campaign and Russians would have gained unwelcome strength.

This was followed by less significant but quite aggravating measures: seizing each other's properties and requiring that the size of respective diplomatic staff be reduced. The latter measure gave the public an idea of how large the legations are, as Russia told the United States to reduce its diplomatic staff by 755 people. All these measures seemed to follow the rules of behavior observed during the Cold War, but believed abandoned since then.

Restoring warmer U.S.–Russia relations will be difficult not only because there is an ongoing investigation in Washington concerning election improprieties, but first of all because of the unresolved issue of Crimea and Donbas. While a candidate, Trump made an unsubstantiated and widely publicized statement that the people of Crimea would rather be part of Russia, but once he moved into the White House – and severed his ties to Paul Manafort – he unequivocally maintained that Russia should return Crimea to Ukraine. Significantly, however, since a flurry of tweets to that effect in February 2017, Trump has not revisited the issue.

There is little doubt that it will require patience and good will on both sides to bring the United States and Russia closer from the current low point in relations. Just how bad they are at the moment was underlined by the fact that their leaders did not meet formally during the Asia-Pacific summit in November 2017. The stated reason was a scheduling conflict, but everybody understood that the meeting could not produce any tangible results and was thus counterproductive.

This non-development contrasts sharply with another apparent about-face by Donald Trump, which is his attitude to NATO. During the campaign he was critical of the organization, even if the most publicized comment of the pact being “obsolete” was quoted out of context. As president, he continued to exert pressure on other members of the Alliance to increase their share of financing NATO, and the U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis told NATO members in February that “Americans cannot care more for your children's future than you do [...]”.¹⁸ Yet on several subsequent occasions Trump underscored the importance of the alliance and in particular of its Article 5. This change of substance, or perhaps only of style, is of particular importance because, as Michael Mandelbaum is right to stress, “Europe must take more responsibility for defending Western interests and values, but it cannot replace the leadership of the United States. Without that leadership [...] a world freer, more peaceful, and more prosperous than at any other time in history, will not endure”.¹⁹

¹⁸ M. Mandelbaum, “Pay Up, Europe: What Trump Gets Right About NATO”, *Foreign Affairs* 2017, Vol. 96, No. 5, p. 112.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

More controversial were Trump's policies regarding other multilateral programs, such as TPP, TTIP, the Paris Agreement, and even NAFTA. The least developed of them, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was "put on ice" by the U.S. president even before negotiations between the United States and the European Union were finalized. In April 2017 the U.S. Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross, offered to reopen the talks with the European Union over the TTIP, but no progress has been made.

Trump's opposition to TTIP is not necessarily bad news even for European supporters of free trade. It was a highly divisive issue and hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in protest when it seemed close to being finalized. Now the situation is even more delicate. Reopening negotiations would most certainly expose EU officials to charges of colluding with President Trump who is highly unpopular in Europe. The EU is thus likely to delay any negotiations, as it does now, and later insist on positions that Washington could not accede to. The most prominent among them would be formulating the non-negotiable precondition for the Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanism (ISDS) to take the form of an international investment court, which the United States said it would not accept.

European negotiators will also have to consider a newly discovered truth that any free trade agreement to which the U.S. is a party can be cancelled by the American president with a simple executive order for which he needs no congressional approval. This is indeed what happened with the Paris Agreement, from which the United States withdrew in June 2017 on the strength of the presidential fiat (as per the Agreement rules, the U.S. will technically remain a party to it for four more years). The ability to invalidate multilateral treaties unilaterally renders them much less attractive.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was considered by former president Barack Obama one of his greatest achievements, perhaps equal to the Iran nuclear agreement, but Donald Trump called it "a horrible deal". TPP was signed in February 2016 by 12 countries. To take effect it would have had to be ratified by February 2018 by at least six countries with 85% of the group's economic output, which was a roundabout way to indicate that the USA had to be on board. Only Japan had ratified it by January 23, 2017 when President Trump signed the "Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement".

If TPP were allowed to function, it would have covered 40% of the world trade volume and the population of about 800 million people, almost twice as many as the European Union. Unlike the EU rules, however, the agreement would have removed most, but not all, tariffs and not necessarily from the day one. Still, tariffs on US manufactured goods and practically on all American farm products would have disappeared, which did not stop some American critics from maintaining that TPP would have eliminated jobs in the United States.

What matters most, however, is not the disappearance of the pact as such, but the fact that many Asian countries counted on it as a defense against Chinese bullying. With TPP gone, the only multilateral economic programs in the area are China-centered, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations. This is where the change introduced on Trump's watch has perhaps made the greatest negative impact, exacerbated by his approach to NAFTA.

NAFTA was created to integrate Mexico with the economies of the United States and Canada. Since 1988 there existed the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) and the enlargement was groundbreaking because of the wage differentials, with Mexico's per capita income at just 30 percent that of the United States. The agreement entered into force in January 1994 with bipartisan backing – while it was negotiated by Republican President George H.W. Bush, it passed Congress and was implemented under Democratic President Bill Clinton.

However, the outcome was mixed at best. Mexico's economy grew at an average rate of just 1.3% since 1993 and the expected “wage approximation” between U.S. and Mexico never happened. What is more, critics blame NAFTA for job losses in the United States. For instance, in the automobile sector American workers enjoy an hourly pay about seven times higher than in Mexico, which largely accounts for the fact that Mexican automobile sector gained some 400,000 jobs since 1994, while its American equivalent lost almost as many.

Even more significantly, the U.S.–Mexico trade balance changed from a \$1.4 billion U.S. surplus in 1993 to a \$64 billion deficit by 2016.²⁰ This is one of main reasons why Donald Trump kept his campaign promise and in May 2017 informed Congress that talks would start with Canada and Mexico aimed at renegotiating NAFTA. They began in August with the goal of producing a new agreement by early 2018. Details are kept secret, but after the fifth round of talks held in late November, the prospect is grim. Seven rounds in all were planned, but their number can be increased if necessary. The Trump administration made it known that it would aim first of all at reducing the U.S.–Mexico trade deficit and at updating the pact by including digital services and intellectual property issues.

The president also wants to introduce “the sunset clause”, whereby the pact would have to be renewed periodically or left to expire. This would practically negate NAFTA as unpredictability makes long-term investment decisions unviable. In the meantime the president reiterated his threat to withdraw the United States from the agreement, which is indeed a substantial shift of policy when compared with his predecessor's.

It cannot be denied, however, that Trump's takes that position with the best interest of his country in mind. When he repeats the slogan “America First” he clearly means it. His critics tend to forget that all leaders must consider

²⁰ United States Census Bureau, “Trade in Goods with Mexico”, <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2010.html#1994> [accessed: 25.11.2017].

the interests of their respective countries before considering possible profits and advantages of others. The same rule applies also to the president's approach to the question of illegal immigration to the United States.

It is indeed amazing that so many foreign politicians can at the same time make every effort to protect their borders and expect that the United States would neglect to safeguard its own, only because historically it was peopled with immigrants who until a hundred or so years ago could enter that country practically at will. An even less convincing argument is that the standard of living in the U.S. is so high that citizens of other countries should be allowed to partake in American prosperity.

The U.S. southern border is ca. 3,000 km long, and the existing fence covers just over 1,100 km. Trump wants to add about 500 km, as well as improve the existing structures where needed. The remaining part of the border is practically inaccessible or otherwise impassable. There is also the 1970 Boundary Treaty between the U.S. and Mexico which stipulates that no structure will be erected that would disrupt the flow of the rivers, which define the border in Texas (Rio Grande)²¹ as well as a small section of it in Arizona (the Colorado River). The construction of the fence was carried out under the Secure Fence Act of 2006 and subsequent presidents, including Barack Obama, continued the work under its authority. The same applies to President Trump who needs only to issue a simple executive order to make work on border protection resume.

While Trump's concept of the wall encounters strong criticism, there are over 40 areas in the world where some forms of a wall or a fence define the border. No barrier can be fully impenetrable, what with desperate people going over or under it, but when finished, the wall on the Mexican border will minimize the flow of illegal entrants into the United States. The unresolved question concerns the cost of the project. The fence erected so far cost ca. 2.5 billion dollars, and it could cost ten times as much to have a possibly secure wall along the length of the border that needs securing. The U.S. president repeated several times that he would make Mexico defray the expense, which that country strongly rejected. Trump followed by indicating the possibility of seizing remittances from undocumented immigrants, which is impractical and possibly illegal, as well as increasing fees on entry visas for Mexicans, which would not amount to a significant part of the construction cost.

In any case, the expense will first be borne by the United States before efforts begin to have it reimbursed by Mexico. As it stands now, the House has passed a spending bill that includes 1.6 billion dollars for the wall in fiscal year 2018, as per the president's request. As the House Majority Leader said, "Every single dime the President requested to start building a wall on our southern border he's going to get".²² The Senate is still working on its version

²¹ The length of the Rio Grande boundary is usually given as 1,900 km, though data vary.

²² <https://www.majorityleader.gov/2017/07/27/making-america-secure/> [accessed: 19.11.2017].

of the budget, and the two texts will then have to be reconciled. Nonetheless, preliminary work has already started with six companies erecting prototypes of the wall near San Diego.

This is one clear instance when the change is more than just stylistic. Taken together with the renegotiation of NAFTA and rejection of other free trade agreements, the president's strong message seems to be that America will no longer apologize to the world when it does what other countries routinely do: secures its borders, protects its workforce, strives to achieve a surplus in the balance of trade.

* * *

The fall of the Soviet Union created fears that the United States might claim a "peace dividend" and withdraw from the world. Quickly enough, however, American political leadership coined the concept of "utopian globalism". The events of 9/11 seemed to confirm the need for this new role of the United States in the world.

When Donald Trump became president, he vowed to "make America great again" and put "America first". These slogans seemed to indicate a fundamental redefinition of what constitutes American national interest. The worst-case scenario would lead to American unilateralism or insularity. Luckily, events have so far proved such turn of events most unlikely. The United States continues its presence in Afghanistan, squarely faces the North Korean threat, confirms the validity of NATO security guarantees, and does not hesitate to punish the Syrian leader for killing its own citizens even though no American life was threatened.

If there is a danger in Trump's presidency, it is the result of his style, of impulsive, and frequently capricious approach to foreign policy. He believes he has events under control even when it is not necessarily so. However, his ultimate success or failure as a global leader will not depend on verbal declarations but on the president's ability to transfer words into a program of action beneficial to the United States as well as to its friends and allies.

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Polityka zagraniczna prezydenta Donalda Trumpa: zmiana istoty czy tylko stylu?

Artykuł jest wstępną oceną pierwszych miesięcy polityki zagranicznej prezydenta Donalda Trumpa. Autor argumentuje, że wbrew szeroko nagłaśnianym tezom amerykańska polityka zagraniczna nie uległa w tym czasie istotnym zmianom. Trump wykazał większe zdecydowanie wobec wojny domowej w Syrii niż jego poprzednik i zajął bardziej konfrontacyjne stanowisko wobec Korei Północnej, ale w najistotniejszych kwestiach, jak np. polityka wobec Chin czy wobec Rosji, nie uczynił niczego, co uzasadniałoby obawy o kierunek działań Stanów Zjednoczonych w świecie.

Z kolei wycofanie się Waszyngtonu z porozumień międzynarodowych (TPP, TTIP) czy też pojawienie się takiej możliwości (NAFTA) to wynik kierowania się przez Trumpa przede wszystkim interesem swego kraju, co jest regułą obowiązującą wszystkich przywódców. Wszystko to sprawia, że w 2017 r. polityka zagraniczna USA odnotowała pewną zmianę stylu jej prowadzenia przy zachowaniu niezmienionej substancji.

Słowa kluczowe: Prezydent Trump, polityka zagraniczna, stabilna polityka, nowy styl

Donald Trump's Foreign Policy: Change of Substance or Only of Style?

The article is an initial assessment of the first months of Donald Trump's foreign policy. The author argues that contrary to widely publicized theses, American foreign policy has not undergone significant changes so far. Trump showed more decisiveness than his predecessor when faced with the civil war in Syria, and took a more confrontational position towards North Korea, but in the most important issues, such as politics towards China or Russia he did not do anything that would justify fears about the direction of American actions in the world. Washington's withdrawal from international agreements (TPP, TTIP) or the emergence of such a possibility (NAFTA) is the result of Trump's concern with his own country's interests, which is what all leaders do. All this means that in 2017, US foreign policy noted a certain change in the style of its conduct while the substance remains unchanged.

Key words: President Trump, foreign policy, stable policy, new style

