

Exploring the Prospects for EU-US Relationship

On my first night in the United States, before going to bed I reached for a book sitting on a shelf in my room. As a young student from Poland on an Experiment in International Living visit to an American family in Minneapolis, Minn., I felt like reading something in what has always been a very foreign language to me, no particular topic or author on my mind. I spotted an intriguing title: “America Conquers Britain – A Record of Economic War”.¹ I opened it on page 19 (I have recently checked it for the purpose of this reminiscence) and read the following words: “The relations between the United States and Great Britain grow increasingly unhappy. The usual committees of friendship are being formed – always an ominous sign, and the usual signals of a faith in doubt are being flown, such as: ‘War between the United States and Great Britain is unthinkable’. When I hear that I am reminded of the sailor who in dire peril expressed a thankfulness that his religion was still left.” The author was quoting no lesser a person than the British Prime Minister of the day! Mesmerised, I went on reading: “War is unthinkable.” So Prime Minister Asquith said – wrote the author in question about an earlier Prime Minister – “A few days later Britain was at war with Germany. ‘War between America and Britain is unthinkable’, we are told now (...) War between America and Britain is more probable than the war between America and any other Power. This does not mean that such a war is inevitable. It does mean that the causes which have produced other wars, and specifically British wars, are active in virulent form in Anglo-American relations now.”²

Well, the author was quoting MacDonald, the book was published in 1930, I was sure there had been no such war, but uneasiness grew upon me all the same.

While putting the book back I spotted another interesting title: “The Uncertain Ally”... The blurb had this to say: “Is the American advocacy of freedom of international trade an instrument of imperialistic expansion? (...) Must we guard ourselves

¹ Ludwell Denny, *America Conquers Britain – A Record of Economic War*, Alfred A.Knopf Inc. 1930

² *Ibid.*, s.3

against a 'Washington-Moscow Axis', based on antipathy to the British Commonwealth? (...) Is Anglo-American friendship possible?" The book had been published in 1957. The author, an Oxford educated Conservative, doubled as a British M.P.³ The uncertain ally happened to be the United States. My bewilderment was compounded.

I was aware there and then (Summer of 1962) of my fellow Poles' bitter wartime memories of Nazi Germany, and Soviet Russia; I knew a lot about Poland's Western Allies and their performance during the Second World War, and I shared my country's outrage at being betrayed by them at Yalta. An yet, I cherished a vague and naïve expectation of something great and good about to befall us, in the East, courtesy of the West. Therefore the idea of an animosity between the major Western powers was something I could hardly have wished for before falling asleep anywhere.

Weeks afterwards, the Cuban Missile Crisis developed. I had no doubt that it would not be an American – European confrontation. But still an uneasy feeling of uncertainty stole over me. Was the US going to face the challenge alone? What was Europe going to do? Where were the Certain Allies? What could we, Poles, living in a foreign-dominated, i.e. dependent country, do about it?

These recollections invariably spring to my mind whenever I hear about Poland allegedly playing the role of the Trojan horse for the United States in Europe to-day.

The relationship between the EU and the US is one of the most serious issues facing both at the threshold of the Twenty First Century, and we are all going to live with the problem for a very long time. For the living generations of Poles, who remember the tragedy of the Second World War, who experienced the Cold War, have regained their full independence, have joined NATO and are negotiating the membership of the European Union, the problem is how to help the EU and the United States meet each other half way to face the forthcoming challenges, together, united in thought and action, united as much as their inherent differences permit. Security, crucial as it is, is not the only prem-

³ John Biggs-Davison, *The Uncertain Ally, 1917-1957*, Christopher Johnson – London 1957.

ise for recommending unity. Economic competition is another one. What we need is a strategic partnership.

The Polish Institute of International Affairs⁴ has just commenced systematically monitoring developments in the domain of the EU-US relationship. To initiate a series of conferences and to set up an international target group working and reporting on the subject, I had invited the University of Texas at Austin, and Centre for Studies of Democracy (a joint project of the University of Oxford and Bologna University) to hold a conference in Poland on “Prospects for the EU-US Relationship”. The UT covered the cost of the tickets for US participants, while the Centre helped to pay for the tickets of European participants. More significantly, the representatives of the institutions, Lawrence S. Graham, Associate Vice President for International Programs, University of Texas at Austin, and Laurence A. Whitehead, Official Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, became co-chairs of the conference and its commentators.

The conference took place in Warsaw, last December. I hope it will be the first of a series of conferences, promising to attract a wider group of sponsoring institutions and an enlarged attendance.

This book contains the Warsaw conference contributions, and additional commentaries. The organizers have managed to secure participation of a very diverse group of individuals in their capacity as participants-speakers. Most of them had send in their brief statements as their initial positions. The authors were free in

⁴ The Polish Institute of International Affairs Act of Parliament 1996 was adopted to establish an institution to carry on research in international affairs, provide expertise in international affairs, run courses for public servants in international affairs, inform the public about international affairs, co-operate with political, research and/or teaching organisations abroad, maintain a library (open to the public), publish books, periodicals and documents on Polish foreign policy and related matters. The Council of Ministers shall adopt the Bye-Laws for the Institute. The Prime Minister shall appoint the Director of the Institute for five years. The Minister of Foreign Affairs shall supervise the Institute with respect to the aforementioned Act of Parliament. The Council of the Institute, acting as an advisory body, shall include among its members: Specialists in international affairs (appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs), a representative of the President of the Republic, and members representing the Parliamentary Parties in the Sejm (Chamber of Deputies). The funding comes from the Budget, The National Research Fund Committee, and private sponsors. (The previously existing Polish Institute of International Affairs was closed down in 1995. The new Director was installed on 6 October 1999. The first office rooms were made available to the Institute on 29 April 2000.)

their presentations as the conference kept evolving in tone and contents, and people were undoubtedly taking note of the positions of others. Of course, the participants-speakers had ample opportunity to continue their debate outside the conference hall (see the agenda in the appendix). Some of them have substantially revised their contributions for this publication, after the conference. (Some of the participants-speakers were not interested in being published or were restricted by their exclusive commitments as writers.)

During the conference, albeit to a modest extent, we covered such areas as political culture, security, economy, and the commentators refer to the contributions extensively. The invited co-chairs from Austin and Oxford offered their comments during the closing session, and have updated them for this publication, drawing upon both the conference debates, conversations with the observers and other guests of the conference, a dialogue with the President of Poland, the subsequent developments in the EU and US, and consultations in our group of co-chairmen. What did start as a conference has been developing into a process of building up the monitoring system (see the comments) I referred to earlier in this foreword.

The problem in question needs further attention. In what way are the societal perceptions of the two sides, the EU and US, and their strategies mutually related; since international security requirements induce the EU and USA to cooperate, what is going to be the most effective way of accomplishing it; are their economic models converging; what cooperation system, if any, should emerge to help the EU and the USA (and Canada?) to optimise cooperation within the system, and maximize their collective position outside it, thus also enhancing also their contribution to the world governance; would NATO and the EU form the new institutional framework for the system in question; would an enlarged EU and an enlarged NAFTA jointly work towards setting up a customs union to start the process of the enhanced cooperation system; would Australia become its member, etc. Could the EU and the US jointly form a core of transatlantic economic area made of an enlarged NAFTA and of a would-be All-European economic area (including Russia, Ukraine and the remaining non-EU countries of Europe)? How can we progress towards balanced relations between such a cooperation system and Japan, China, India?

I hope that interested individuals and institutions may want to join in the efforts we have just started. This book is to encourage our potential partners.

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