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The Main Issues of U.S. Foreign Policy During the 1990s. Importance of Central Europe¹

Introduction

Executing foreign policy priorities defined within the framework of a national interest is one of the key tasks pursued by individual states in the international arena. The aim of this article is to analyze assumptions of the U.S. national interests and instruments employed for implementing the said assumptions during the presidencies of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. The analysis covers the 1990s, a decade in which the United States had to reformulate its foreign policy goals and methods due to political changes and the end of the Cold War. Research methods characteristic of the social sciences were used: source criticism, data analysis, and descriptive method.

As a result of political changes have taken place on the political map of the world at the turn of 1990s and the emergence of a unipolar system, the administrations of Presidents George H.W. Bush and William Clinton faced new challenges pertaining to foreign policy objectives and methods. During the Cold

¹ The article is based on a fragment focusing on the US foreign policy since 1989, published in the book: R. Wordliczek, *Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki wobec regionów o niskim stopniu zainteresowania na przykładzie wybranych państw Afryki Północnej oraz subregionu andyjskiego na przełomie XX i XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2015.

War the Soviet Union was defined as the rival. Paradoxically, the said state of affairs seemed beneficial for the United States, as it was free to apply optimum tools in the pursuit objectives of U.S. foreign policy targeted against the Soviet Union. The difficulty of the situation the United States found itself in consisted in a formation of a system without any clearly determined adversary or opponent².

In 1990, one of the U.S. main foreign policy goals was ensuring a peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union. As it quickly turned out, the policy towards the post-Soviet region was not a priority for the USA. From the U.S. perspective, the following goals have been set as priorities: establishing close cooperation with Japan as a growing economic power, leading global economic changes towards liberalization of commercial relations and preparing multilateral solutions as a response measure in the event of compromised international security with the aim to sustain the geopolitical balance of military power existing at the time³.

In this complicated international situation, the U.S. administration faced a fundamental question: to what extent should the United States engage in world affairs and to what degree is it responsible for international security as the world's only superpower? This raises the question of the role and place of Central European states in U.S. policy after the end of the Cold War. Accordingly, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What was the significance from the perspective of US interests of the Central European states during the presidencies of G.H.W. Bush and B. Clinton?
2. What determinants influenced the formation and evolution of U.S. policy towards Central European countries in the 1990s?

The Presidency of George Bush

Foreign policy was an important part of the political program of each and every U.S. President after World War Two. During the Presidency of George H.W. Bush, we tackled fundamental changes on the political map of the world, namely, the decline of the bipolar system, the end of the Cold War, the beginning of the democratization of Eastern European countries, the reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union⁴. Surprisingly to some international observers, the system that emerged in the world at that

² I. Kristol, *Defining Our National Interest*, [in:] *America's Purpose: New Visions of U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. O. Harries, ICS Press, San Francisco 1991, p. 53.

³ J.S. Jr. Nye, *American Strategy after the Cold War*, Harvard University Press, Incheon 1990, p. 34.

⁴ *A National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C. 1991, p. 6.

time was not multipolar but unipolar with the dominant role of the United States. In contrast to failures in domestic policies, changes in the international arena were attributed to President G.H.W. Bush, though the evolution of the global system was unquestionably a result of decisive actions taken by President Ronald Reagan. President G.H.W. Bush continued the policy initiated by his predecessor, which brought results at the turn of the 1990s. Therefore, political changes that occurred in the world during the presidency of G.H.W. Bush was considered a success of his foreign policy. In the new political reality, President George H.W. Bush declared a U.S. foreign policy program under the name of the New World Order. The end of the Cold War and the emergence of a new configuration in the international arena, which came about as a result of the collapse of the USSR, the fall of communism, and the reaffirmation of the United States' leadership role as the lone superpower, directly influenced the definition of U.S. foreign policy towards Central Europe.

The key assumption of President G.H.W. Bush's foreign policy was the United States' leading role in the modern world supported by international institutions such as the UN and other states. To achieve a kind of American World Order, President G.H.W. Bush took advantage of Russia's weakness at the time and President Boris Yeltsin's consent to recognize the decisive role of the United States in international relations. Three main assumptions of the American World Order can be listed here: the United States is at the forefront of collective security; it is necessary to form a democratic and peaceful Russia; neoliberalism is the key doctrine in the global economy. Moreover, the American leadership ought to be based not solely on military or economic dominance but also on cultural and political dominance⁵. The new direction in U.S. foreign policy was an actualized version of the traditional *realpolitik*. The modification made by G.H.W. Bush consisted in widening the circle of states that were to participate in the building of the international security system under certain conditions. Apart from states as the most significant actors on the international political stage, G.H.W. Bush saw a place for the UN. The President said about states and not nations. This line of reasoning entailed the risk that at the time, authorities of some states were fighting against the inhabiting nations. This can be exemplified by the greater concern the United States showed to central authorities, e.g., the authorities of the dissolving Soviet Union than to the endeavors of the inhabiting nations aspiring to independence (G.H.W. Bush's visit in Ukraine in 1991). A relative

⁵ S.R. Schwenninger, *World Order Lost: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World*, "World Policy Journal", 1999, Vol. 16, 1999, p. 47.

distance to democratic tendencies did not constitute a strong basis on which a stable New World Order can be built⁶.

The emergence of the unipolar global system with the dominant role of the United States has created a seemingly comfortable situation where the rival of the United States, i.e., the Soviet Union, was no longer in play, and its role has not been yet taken by an equal opponent/state aspiring to the status of a great power. A stand-alone great power has no need to compete with anyone or to react to events that compromise global balance, since the hegemonic position of the United States is unchallengeable in the modern world. However, questions regarding the U.S. national interests in the creation of a post-Cold War international system have been emerging since as early as 1990⁷.

Positive political transformations in Eastern Europe did not relieve the United States from the burden of its responsibility for global security. Immediately after the end of the Cold War, in order to manifest the American leadership in the international system to other actors on the international stage the G.H.W. Bush Administration demonstrated its capability, i.e., by continuing the negotiations initiated in 1986 at the Uruguay Round of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) of a multilateral nature⁸. This economic initiative of President G.H.W. Bush was supervised by him in person. Apart from relations with the collapsing Soviet Union (arms reduction treaties) and Europe, G.H.W. Bush listed liberalization of commercial relations in the global economic system as one of the pillars of the New World Order.

The pursuit of economic tasks in the international arena was combined by President G.H.W. Bush with objectives related to the national interest of the United States. The economic activity of the United States in the international arena was to ensure beneficial outcomes to all members of NAFTA, namely, the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the participants of the Uruguay Round of the GATT. Nevertheless, the U.S. was open about the most significant objective of the initiative, which was to maintain and improve the U.S. living standards in the face of stiff foreign competition and sluggish economic growth. This statement reflects President G.H.W. Bush's view on the importance attached by the United States to economic issues. American initiative addressed primarily to states of the western hemisphere constitute one of the methods for strengthening the

⁶ E. Abrams, *Security and Sacrifice: Isolation, Intervention, and American Foreign Policy*, Hudson Institute, Indianapolis 1995, p. 97.

⁷ R.J. Art, S. Brown, *U.S. Foreign Policy. The Search for a New Role*, Macmillan, New York 1993, p. 3.

⁸ J.L. Ray, *American Foreign Policy and Political Ambition*, CQ Press, London/Washington D.C. 2014, p. 238.

position of the United States in the unipolar system⁹. President G.H.W. Bush called the negotiations under the Uruguay Round of the GATT the “highest trade priority”. For the sake of a more complete picture, it should be noted that the negotiations of the Uruguay Round of the GATT were commenced during President Ronald Reagan’s second term in office in September 1986 in the Uruguayan city of Punta del Este. The Bush Administration played the key role in the continuation of Reagan’s idea. In the early 1990s, the most important, most intense and most difficult negotiations were held. The discussion dragged along, as it pertained to such complicated issues like intellectual property rights, liberalization of food trade, liberalization in the service sector or provisions of law related to foreign investments. Japan proved to be a particularly difficult negotiating partner¹⁰. Another adverse condition was the fact that a possible dismissal of decisions of the Uruguay Round by the Congress dominated by the Democrats could consequently impose responsibility on the United States for an unsuccessful outcome of the discussion held¹¹.

At the turn of the 1990s, the international community faced the need to solve the following fundamental questions: does the United States have the right to apply hard power tools in its foreign policy? On what grounds and in what cases is it allowed to do so? Apart from negotiations of an economic character, another element of President G.H.W. Bush’s active foreign policy was military interventions. In May 1989, G.H.W. Bush decided to have another marine corps sent to Panama and to strengthen the American contingent of 13,000 soldiers who were stationed there. In the view of both political and military interests of the United States, the operation was concluded with success. Numerous critical voices drew attention to the unnecessary demonstration of the U.S. force against the small Central American state of Panama¹². But among Americans, the support for G.H.W. Bush’s policy in Panama was seventy-four per cent. Such a strong social support for President G.H.W. Bush’s policy constituted a highly significant capital required for

⁹ H.J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy toward Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. Issues and Controversies from Reagan to Bush*, New York University Press, New York/London 1992, p. 298.

¹⁰ M.E. Janow, *Trading with an Ally: Progress and Discontent in U.S. – Japan Trade Relations*, [in:] *The United States, Japan, and Asia: Challenges for U.S. Policy*, ed. G.L. Curtis, W.W. Norton & Co., New York 1994, p. 58.

¹¹ S. Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration. In Search of a New World Order*, Pinter Publishing, London/New York 1999, p. 172.

¹² R.A. Strong, *Decisions and Dilemmas. Case Studies in Presidential Foreign Policy Making*, Routledge, Englewood Cliffs 1992, p. 198.

implementing a more difficult task that emerged over one year later, namely, the Persian Gulf War¹³.

The most significant point in the implementation of the policy New World Order was the First Gulf War of 1991. Some said that the main reason was the threat against the U.S. interests in a region of strategic importance in regard to American energy security. The G.H.W. Bush Administration itself considered the Persian Gulf region as highly important due to economic (dependence of the American economy on the Middle East oil resources) and political reasons, as well as due to security reasons (the possibility that the crisis spreads to other parts of the region, the potential threat to Israel)¹⁴.

In January 1991, an international coalition composed of thirty states was targeted against Iraq under the United States' leadership. President G.H.W. Bush built the coalition in two steps. The first one involved seeking support among leaders of Arabian states, i.e., Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. Having gained support of governments of the above countries, American diplomacy started seeking the UN's consent to their actions. The key to attaining the set objective was to convince their allies in Western Europe, Japan and, most importantly, the Kremlin authorities. From the view of President G.H.W. Bush who declared the New World Order, the fact that the American activity was based on the principles of multilateralism seemed significant. The diplomatic action proved successful, as on November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council authorized a military operation against Iraq under Resolution 678, provided that Iraqi occupational forces fail to vacate the territory of Kuwait by January 15, 1991¹⁵. Importantly, President G.H.W. Bush's policy towards Iraq received support from the collapsing but still standing Soviet Union. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait proved somewhat a gift of fortune to President G.H.W. Bush. The profound political changes occurring at that time in Eastern Europe and the massive crisis of the Soviet Union, the main opponent and a great power, could have resulted in a void within the international system¹⁶.

It is difficult to compare the military intervention in Panama and the Persian Gulf War, primarily due to a different geostrategic significance, different potential

¹³ R.A. Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool. U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean*, Routledge, Boulder/Oxford 2001, 93.

¹⁴ R.J. Jr. Pauly, *Foreign Policy and the Persian Gulf. Safeguarding American Interests through Selective Multilateralism*, Taylor & Francis Ltd., Aldershot 2005, p. 41.

¹⁵ D. Tananbaum, *President Bush, Congress, and the War Powers: Panama and the Persian Gulf*, [in:] *From Cold War to New World Order. The Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush*, eds. M. Bose, R. Perotti, Praeger, Westport/London 2002, p. 193.

¹⁶ R.J. Jr. Pauly, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

and strength of both states. The G.H.W. Bush Administration found justified reasons for both these military interventions. As for Panama, it was an act in defense of democracy, one of the pillars of the United States' system. As for the war with Iraq, the official and direct cause was considered to be Baghdad's attack on its weaker neighbor Kuwait. The United States protested in arms to protect the victim against the aggressor. Notably, the attack on Iraq was formally an outcome of actions taken by an international coalition under the auspices of the UN, though with an obvious dominant role of the U.S. In both cases, the United States made a rapid and spectacular success. President G.H.W. Bush, putting the dynamically changing situation to use, sought to confirm the major role of the United States in the newly emerging post-Cold War reality¹⁷. In hindsight, there are numerous negative opinions on the United States' foreign policy proposed by President G.H.W. Bush, maliciously referred to as the "New World Disorder".

According to critics, the global disorder caused by the fault of, or at least with the participation of the United States and due to neglect on its part. This neglect resulted in a dissolution of the Soviet Union and a disruption of the clear and paradoxically stable status quo in the Cold War period. Consequently, we are dealing with chaos in post-Soviet areas (e.g., conflicts concerning Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria). Still, the most dramatic example of the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the bloody war in Chechnya that took place within the Russian Federation. The post-Cold War mayhem manifested itself in an even more striking and tragic form in the humanitarian crisis in Somalia or the civil war in Yugoslavia that devastated all the parties to the conflict, which led to a dissolution of this state and incidents of genocide. According to the opponents of the policy proposed by President G.H.W. Bush, the United States lost a great chance given by history to play the leading role in an effective promotion of democracy and principles of free market economy in post-Soviet states. Granting the status of a successor of the nuclear power of the Soviet Union to Russia was a serious mistake, which President G.H.W. Bush was advised against¹⁸. Under the Almaty Declaration of 1991, governments of post-Soviet states agreed to return the nuclear weapons arsenal and nuclear installations located within their borders to Russia by July 1st of the following year. Automatically, this decision weakened such post-Soviet states like Kazakhstan, Belarus or Ukraine, on the territories of which nuclear

¹⁷ R.J. Payne, *The West European Allies, The Third World, and U.S. Foreign Policy. Post-Cold War Challenges*, Praeger, London/New York 1991, p. 22.

¹⁸ P. Doty, *President Bush's Arms Control Challenge*, [in:] *U.S. Foreign Policy in the 1990s*, ed. G. Schmergel, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 1991, pp. 117–128.

arms arsenals were located at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. According to numerous researchers, the future of the post-Soviet nuclear arms arsenal constituted the most important issue to be challenged by the G.H.W. Bush Administration at that time due to both the United States' security and international stability¹⁹. Another specified element was the marginalization of the meaning of transatlantic relations. This proved to be supported by, i.e., misunderstandings and discrepancies between the United States and Europe during economic negotiations at the Uruguay Round of the GATT²⁰. Despite the criticism and probably even mistakes, it should be indisputably stated that the key objective of President G.H.W. Bush's foreign policy was attained. The United States has made a vital contribution to the implementation of evolutionary democratizing changes worldwide.

The Presidency of Bill Clinton

In the late 1990s, there was a shift in the expectations of the international community regarding the United States. The Persian Gulf War proved both to the United States and the international community that America's leadership in international policy following the end of the Cold War, based on President G.H.W. Bush's New World Order, has become a fact. When taking the office of the President of the United States in 1993, Bill Clinton was aware of the United States' responsibility. The international situation at the time when he assumed presidency was highly complicated due to conflicts in many regions worldwide and, despite the declaration of the New World Order, a failure to form a thoroughly new international system under the decisive leadership of the United States. Hoping for the three great powers (Trilateral Concert of Great Powers), i.e., the U.S., the EU and Japan to collaborate, President Bill Clinton soon realized that the alliance from the times of the Cold War will not work in the new reality²¹. Discrepancies with regard to the future of the North Atlantic Alliance emerged in the relations with Europe. The main dispute concerned the following questions: what role is to be played within North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the new international order by the Americans and by their European allies? Who is then to bear the greater responsibility for the future of the Alliance

¹⁹ M. Lindeman, M. Malkasian, W. Rose, *The Role of the United States in a Changing World. Choices for the 21st Century*, Dushkin Publishing Group, New York 1993, p. 69.

²⁰ S. Hurst, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

²¹ Haliżak E., *Struktura współczesnego porządku międzynarodowego*, [in:] *Stosunki międzynarodowe: geneza, struktura, dynamika*, eds. Haliżak E., Kuźniar R., Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2006, p. 448.

and the transatlantic security system? The enlargement of NATO in 1999 to include Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary was implemented according to the will of the United States. Some European members of the organization distanced themselves from this idea. President Bill Clinton's administration was aware that Central European countries could become an important element of European security in the future. The basic argument was the belief that Central Europe remaining outside NATO structures would not promote stability in the region or in Europe as a whole. Moreover, President B. Clinton was concerned, bearing in mind the historical experience of the countries in the region, that the area could become an area of German-Russian rivalry in the future. This was confirmed by the decision to admit the three post-communist states of Central Europe to NATO. It should be emphasized, however, that the United States viewed the security of the entire European continent in the context of national interest in the key role of democratic Russia. The decision to admit Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO had already been made at the North Atlantic Alliance summit held in Madrid in July 1997. Thanks to Poland's pro-Western stance, since the mid-1990s the United States has seen Poland as a leader of change in the region and a kind of ambassador supporting political and economic transformation in countries such as Ukraine and Romania²².

Furthermore, in relation both to the European Union and the increasingly more aspiring Japan, a problem of an increasingly stronger economic competition arose, which manifested itself in highly difficult negotiations with both partners carried out at the Uruguay Round of the GATT. Another complicated matter was the future of the area of the former Soviet Union. This pertained to the vast areas varying in many terms, from the Baltic States through Ukraine, the countries of the Caucasus, to Central Asia. The world players, e.g., the United States, the EU, Turkey, Russia, Iran, China and India, competed for influence over this area²³.

The threats resulting from the bipolar system were replaced with other ones, while some of the old ones were strengthened: the unstable Middle East region, the Balkan conflict, Africa permeated with conflicts, successful and unsuccessful attempts at coup d'état in Latin American states, the international security compromised by dictatorial states with weapons of mass destruction. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, a great nuclear power, allowed a flow of nuclear data and technologies, which could be purchased by other states

²² Stachura J., *Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec Europy w okresie postzimnowojennym*, "Studia Europejskie", 1998, Vol. 2, 1998, p. 85.

²³ S.R. Schweninger, *World Order Lost: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World*, "World Policy Journal", 1999, Vol. 16, 1999, p. 63.

or terrorist groups. In the mid-1990s, another problem emerged: nuclear competition between Iran, Pakistan, increasingly stronger China and the United States. Lastly, it should be noted that in this very period a new dangerous phenomenon clearly appeared in international relations, namely, organized international terrorism. Some analysts underestimated the potential threat posed by terrorism to international security and the United States. In the view of the reality after September 11, 2001, one can even claim some analysts, e.g., Brian Jenkins, to present a somewhat infantile approach. According to Jenkins, in the first half of the 1990s, terrorists did not constitute a real threat to the international order, since “terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead”. In turn, Kenneth Waltz put forward a thesis stating, “terrorists are rational political actors with long-term goals, and as a consequence they would not use nuclear weapons”²⁴.

When Bill Clinton took the office of the U.S. President, he focused on economic activities and on implementing tasks related to the internal policy, in line with the political program declared in the electoral campaign. From the very beginning of his presidency, Clinton did not consider it appropriate to pursue an active foreign policy. Over time, influenced by events in the international arena, he attempted at making a transition to more offensive actions in the international arena, which were to confirm the leading role of the United States in the post-Cold War unipolar system. President Clinton is not free from suspicions pertaining to his hesitation in formulating his foreign policy. The dilemma consisted in choosing the key vectors of the foreign affairs: whether the chosen option would be the United States’ active presence in the international arena (internationalism) or whether neoisolationism would become dominant in this regard. In May 1993, Peter Tarnoff, the Under Secretary of State at that time, signaled neoisolationism to be the possible choice of President Clinton’s as the main direction to be adopted in U.S. foreign policy²⁵.

Here, four main pillars of the global dominance of the United States should be mentioned, which have become the basis underlying actions taken by the Clinton Administration:

1. The American military and economic power. The events of the 1990s showed a shift in the tasks the American army will be used in. The U.S. military power was to face other problems of various nature, not exclusively military, which

²⁴ R.A. Falkenrath, R.D. Newman, B.A. Thayer, *America’s Achilles Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 49.

²⁵ T.H. Henriksen, *Clinton’s Foreign Policy in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti and North Korea*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1996, p. 21.

was characteristic for the time of the Cold War. This pertains to the successful mission in Haiti, sustaining peace in Bosnia, supplying thousands of tons of medications, food and clothes to war victims in Rwanda or the humanitarian operation in Somalia²⁶. Having been adjusted to new challenges, the U.S. army does not have to be as numerous as during the peak of the Cold War, yet it should be flexible and under perfect command. In turn, the economic power of the U.S. in the new reality should be based on the competitiveness of the United States' economy in the global environment. President Clinton appreciated the positive role and the active attitude played by his predecessor in this area (the completion of negotiations at the Uruguay Round of the GATT, the finalization of negotiations regarding the signing of NAFTA, the approval of the agreement with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member states on free trade in Asia and the Pacific and the signing of over one hundred contracts promoting liberalization of bilateral trade relations). Owing to these steps taken by President G.H.W. Bush, export has become the most rapidly developing branch of the United States' economy and has made it one of the most competitive in the world²⁷. In the context of U.S. economic interests, due to their relatively small economic potential, U.S. attention is not focused on Central European countries. For example, in the mid-1990s, the share of Central European countries in U.S. exports amounted to only 1%, and a similar share was taken by imports to these countries. Investments of American companies until 1997 amounted to USD 3.2 billion in Hungary and USD 3 billion in Poland²⁸.

2. The United States' capacity to take effective action in the international arena to ensure peace in numerous locations worldwide. The recent history soon verified this aspect of the United States' strategy. The peak took place in 2003 (the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans), when the weakness, unpreparedness and the lack of possibilities to conduct an operation on this scale in different locations worldwide at once, not even of a military but a financial nature, became exposed. The military operation in Iraq alone cost the American taxpayer over USD 200 billion. Additionally, it is estimated that the American intervention in Afghanistan consumed in the first two years USD one billion per month, whereas the United States' engagement in the

²⁶ W. Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, Praeger, Westport 1999, p. 62.

²⁷ W. Christopher, *In the Stream of History. Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1998, pp. 105–115.

²⁸ J. Stachura, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Balkans in the last decade of the 20th century required ab. USD fifteen billion²⁹. The Americans can be present in every part of the globe, yet in places where their vested interests are at stake, they should take the risk of intervention in the name of the highest value of peace and international security. The most prominent example of a region on which subsequent administrations are focused on during the war and following its end is the Middle East. The Middle East conflict combines the pursuit of U.S. political and economic interests in the region, and the idea of a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict³⁰.

3. Pursuing reduction of mass destruction weapons and exerting pressure on non-democratic regimes (North Korea, Iran) that have an arsenal of nuclear weapons at their disposal and constitute a threat to the international order. The end of the Cold War not only does not relieve the United States from its special responsibility for the disarmament process, but also imperatively requires it to become the leader as the only global superpower. In this regard, President Clinton continued George H.W. Bush's policy, who succeeded in negotiating the signing of START I and START II. As a result of these treaties, over 9,000 American and Soviet nuclear warheads were eliminated.
4. The American leadership in the building of a new system of international institutions and agreements with the aim to support democratization in various parts of the world. As part of this task, President Clinton actively supported democratic reforms in Russia³¹.

The dominant position of the United States in the international system, which became a fact in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War, was to serve for the implementation of three fundamental objectives of U.S. foreign policy: to ensure international security by means of the capacity to conduct military interventions in various parts of the world, to promote democracy and to support free market reforms.

Regarding foreign affairs, the presidency of Bill Clinton can be divided into two basic stages. The first stage covers the first two years of his office, though according to some observers it covers the entire first term of office. At that time, President Clinton became known as an advocate of multilateralism and

²⁹ J. Garrison, *Ameryka jako imperium. Przywódca świata czy bandycka potęga?*, Von Borowiecky, Warszawa 2005, p. 188.

³⁰ R. Fiedler, *Od przywództwa do hegemonii. Stany Zjednoczone wobec bliskowschodniego obszaru niestabilności w latach 1991–2009*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, Poznań 2010, *passim*.

³¹ S.R. Berger, *End of the American Century? Searching for America's Role in the Post-Cold War World*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington D.C. 1996, p. 3.

limited engagement in the international arena. In 1993, the new administration's activities were focused in the area of foreign policy on the implementation of economic tasks that had a direct impact on the internal policy. In April 1993, at a meeting between Clinton and Boris Yeltsin in Vancouver, the amount of financial aid for Russia was settled with the aim to transform the Russian economy into a capitalist one. In return for the financial aid of USD 1.6 billion provided by the United States. and another USD 4 billion from the budgets of G-7 member states, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, President Clinton hoped for a significant share for American companies in the reformation of the Russian economy³². Driven by the U.S. economic interest, in December 1993 Clinton finalized commercial agreements concluded in the framework of NAFTA and the Uruguay Round of the GATT. At the beginning of his term of office, the United States' passive attitude in the international arena was due to the fact that "Clinton was a prisoner of his own instinctive aversion to the use of military force"³³.

The second stage is characterized by President Clinton's disappointment with the collective security system and the transition to acting based on the principle of unilateralism. The building of the collective security system was compromised by the shooting down of a Serbian warfare aircraft in the territory of the former Yugoslavia by NATO air forces in March 1994. The questions that symbolize the disordered character of actions taken as part of this operation are: were the U.S. aircraft conducting actions as UN-NATO armed forces or was the decision taken arbitrarily by the U.S. President, and thus should be considered exclusively "American"? Who has the right to issue a decision on an international intervention or only the U.S. intervention in various parts of the world, in this particular case, in the former war-torn Yugoslavia, and in what circumstances? When answering the above questions in a document submitted to the Congress in February 1996, President Clinton drew attention to the reasons behind the unilateral actions. He claimed:

We will do whatever it takes to defend these interests, including when necessary – the unilateral and decisive use of military power. (...) The decision on whether and when to use force is therefore dictated first and foremost by our national interests. In those specific areas where our vital or survival interests are at stake, our use of force will be decisive and, if necessary, unilateral. In other situations posing a less immediate threat,

³² M. Morley, J. Petras, *Empire or Republic? American Global Power and Domestic Decay*, Routledge, New York/London 1995, p. 107.

³³ W. Hyland, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

our military engagement must be targeted selectively on those areas that most affect our national interests – for instance, areas where we have a sizable economic stake or commitments to allies³⁴.

Importantly, the bombardment of Serbian positions by NATO air force in Bosnia contributed to the signing of a peace agreement in Dayton in November 1995. Despite the transition to actions based on the principle of unilateralism, it should be noted that until the very end of his term Clinton attempted to return to the concept of multilateralism in U.S. foreign affairs.

The shift of the point of view in the foreign policy has played an important role in the failure of the peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Haiti (the first military operation of the United States in the western hemisphere in history that was conducted upon receiving the UN mandate, with the objective being de facto to protect the U.S. interests), Sierra Leone, Angola or, lastly, Bosnia and Herzegovina, all of which were under the aegis of the UN. Clinton was an ardent supporter of multilateral actions in Haiti and Bosnia. He praised President G.H.W. Bush for creating an international coalition to fight against Iraq³⁵.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that most conflict-generating areas, perhaps apart from Haiti and, earlier, Iraq, were peripheral to the U.S. interests. President Clinton's faith in multilateral actions under the aegis of the UN was disrupted as a result of dramatic events of October 1993. A tension between the United States and the UN occurred as a consequence of the death of twelve marines in Somalia in October 1993. Clinton attributed responsibility for this tragic occurrence to the decision-makers of the UN, faulting their incompetence. Unfortunately, American soldiers got killed in the part of the operation that was not authorized by the UN under the command of their generals. Thus, the responsibility for this occurrence falls upon President Clinton, as it was him, who driven by his enthusiastic faith in American power, transformed a strictly humanitarian mission commenced by President G.H.W. Bush in August 1992 under the mandate of the UN, into a military intervention. Hence, he increased the risk for the U.S. soldiers stationed there. Critics stress that the military engagement in such a dangerous region of Africa, further intensified by President Clinton, was neither necessary nor reasonable, since the situation in Somalia did not constitute a direct threat to the United States' interests³⁶.

³⁴ *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, Washington D.C. 1996, p. 10.

³⁵ B. Clinton, *Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the 21st Century*, New York/Toronto 1996, p. 149.

³⁶ R. Kłosowicz, *U.S. Marines jako narzędzie polityki zagranicznej Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2008, pp. 250–255.

Furthermore, the unanimity of the decision-making process executed by the members of the UN Security Council on the authorization of peacekeeping missions gave rise to some concerns. For instance, in order to obtain Russia's support for the peacekeeping mission in Haiti, the American party unofficially consented to a possible Russia's intervention in Georgia in the future. These actions on the part of Russia might have indicated an attempt and a willingness to rebuild its area of influence known from the Soviet Union era, which was obviously in conflict with U.S. interests. Among President Clinton's actions based on the principle of unilateralism taken in his second term of office, one should list: the attacks on terrorist bases in Afghanistan and Sudan (1998), non-ratification of the statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) or the NATO operation in Kosovo (1999)³⁷.

The American hegemony in international relations was confirmed by the use of the U.S. military forces in Yugoslavia in 1999 without the official consent of the UN Security Council. Despite the NATO action having been taken under the American leadership without the UN consent, in the subsequent official document titled *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* dated December 1999 Clinton discloses his sentiment for the idea of multilateralism, promoted by the Clinton Administration at the beginning of his first term: "NATO military operations against Serbia in the spring of 1999 had three clear goals. (...) Those goals were achieved. Now, NATO, the UN and the international community face the challenge of establishing a stable mechanism for mutually beneficial interaction and establishing a sound basis for combined action should that be desired"³⁸. A similar casus of unilateralism occurred in 1989 – it was the American intervention in Panama under G.H.W. Bush's presidency. However, in the case of NATO air attacks on Yugoslavia, the situation proved symptomatic, as it pertained to an intervention carried out not in a traditional United States' policy interest, i.e., the Western Hemisphere, but in a former communist European state. The United States has made yet another step towards unilateralism. It can be concluded that the principle that President Clinton based the American foreign policy on is selective multilateralism. Although the American intervention in Yugoslavia did not have the UN mandate, it was supported by NATO allies, representatives of a part of the international political scene. The military operation in Yugoslavia was surprising, though consistent

³⁷ J. Zając, *Koncepcja bezpieczeństwa USA*, [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe po zimnej wojnie*, ed. R. Zięba *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe po zimnej wojnie*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2008, p. 58.

³⁸ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, Washington D.C. 1999, p. 30.

with Clinton's statement declared in 1996: "When our national security interests are threatened, as will, as America always has, use diplomacy when we can, but force if we must. We will act with others when we can, but alone when we must"³⁹.

Conclusions

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States became, as Samuel Huntington said, a lonely superpower in the world. No country could match or balance the United States. The dominance of the United States on the international political stage was undisputed by anyone. At the beginning of the 1990s the Gulf War occurred an easy victory. This situation proved to the international community the military power of the United States. The United States' self-confidence on the international stage during the 1990s was a result of two factors: international situation and domestic policy. From an international perspective, creating the unipolar system in the world with the hegemonic position of the United States was the crucial element. Unilateralism was a consequence of the crisis of the U.N. and other international institutions. Due to unilateralism the United States desired to maintain the hegemonic position in the world. The unilateral decisions taken by President G.H.W. Bush – intervention in Panama – and President B. Clinton – bombing of Iraqi – were not caused by direct threat to the U.S. national security. Many observers in the United States and abroad think that the United States by the unilateral decisions pursued a narrow and selfish conception of its national interest. In the beginning of the 1990s, from the perspective of the US national interest, the countries of Central Europe in U.S. politics were treated marginally. During Clinton's presidency the situation slightly evolved. Central Europe has not become a leading area for U.S. policy, but there have been elements of change: U.S. involvement in resolving the conflict in Bosnia (the Dayton Agreement), the bombing of Serbia in 1999 and the enlargement of NATO to include Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. U.S. policy towards Central European countries under President Bush was subordinated to relations with the USSR. From the perspective of long-term US security, relations with the USSR and Russia were defined as strategic. President G. Bush's defensive policy toward Central European states was defined by U.S. concern about the Kremlin's reaction to over-active engagement in this part of Europe. After B. Clinton took over as president, there was a slow evolution and increased interest in Central Europe on the part of the U.S. President

³⁹ B. Clinton, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Book I (January 1 to June 30, 1996), Washington D.C. 1996, p. 541.

B. Clinton was aware of the priority importance of Russia for the international security architecture of the time, but unlike his predecessor, this did not hinder a change in U.S. policy toward Central European countries. On the contrary, according to the administration of B. On the contrary, according to the Clinton administration, the inclusion of such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary into NATO structures and, in the future, the European Union, was in line with U.S. interests. Democratization and the adoption of a pro-Western policy by these countries were necessary to build a post-Cold War system of international security. This thesis was confirmed by the consistent support of the U.S. for the membership aspirations of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary and their acceptance into NATO in 1999, despite the reluctance of some Western European countries. President Clinton motivated his decision, among other things, by the desire to permanently limit Russian influence in Central European states. From the economic perspective of the U.S., Central European countries do not play a key role due to their relatively small potential.

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Summary: As a result of the end of the Cold War, the United States became the hegemon in international political relations. This paper deals with the main aspects of the U.S. national interest during the last decade of the 20th century. It is an analysis of the main assumptions of U.S. foreign policy during the presidencies of George W.H. Bush and Bill Clinton. The declarations of both politicians showed that Central Europe and the Balkans were very important for U.S. interests. Political reality and U.S. involvement have shown that they have placed priorities in other regions of the world: Panama, Iraq. For President Clinton, the most important tasks were related to the development of an international economic partner, e.g., with Japan or the European Union. With regard to the region of Central Europe and the Balkans, the United States has become active in the process of NATO enlargement and through diplomatic and military involvement during the conflict in the Balkans.

Keywords: George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, United States, foreign policy

Główne zagadnienia polityki zagranicznej USA wobec Europy Wschodniej w latach 90. XX wieku

Streszczenie: W wyniku zakończenia zimnej wojny Stany Zjednoczone stały się hegemonem w międzynarodowych stosunkach politycznych. Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy głównych aspektów interesu narodowego USA w ostatniej dekadzie 20 wieku. Jest to analiza głównych założeń polityki zagranicznej USA podczas prezydentur George'a W.H. Busha i Billa Clintona. Deklaracje obu polityków pokazały, że Europa Środkowa i Bałkany są bardzo ważne dla interesów USA. Rzeczywistość polityczna i zaangażowanie USA zweryfikowała te stanowiska. Administracje prezydentów Busha i Clintona umiejscowiły priorytety polityki USA w innych regionach świata: np. w Panamie, Iraku. Dla prezydenta Clintona najważniejsze zadania związane były z rozwojem międzynarodowej współpracy gospodarczej np. z Japonią czy Unią Europejską. Wobec regionu Europy Środkowej i Bałkanów Stany Zjednoczone zaktywizowały się przy procesie rozszerzenia NATO oraz poprzez zaangażowanie dyplomatyczne i militarne w czasie konfliktu na Bałkanach.

Słowa kluczowe: George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki, polityka zagraniczna