

EUROPEAN UNION AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: ROTATING PRESIDENCIES OF FRANCE, CZECH REPUBLIC AND SWEDEN

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Abstract

The relationship between EU and US has always been strategic in case of both parties and this relationship takes different shapes during the different presidencies of the European Union. This situation composes a debate about the transatlantic relations of EU. For discussing the existing debate about relationship between EU and US, first it is crucial to analyze bilateral relations between them. In accordance with that to see the most recent differences of the relationship between EU and US, trio presidencies of French, Czech and Swedish are examined in case of transatlantic relations. The article investigates an answer to the question of whether EU presidencies give priority to their national interests or EU interests in their relations with other parties or not? In order to be able to find a concrete answer to this question, first the general bilateral relations of France, Czech Republic, and Sweden with US is analyzed. Then, the relationship of each of three countries, during their period of EU Presidency, with US is examined.

Key Words: *EU Presidency, Transatlantic Relations, National Interest, Supranational Entity, French, Czech, Swedish EU Presidency.*

Özet

Avrupa Birliği ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri arasındaki ilişki, taraflar için daima stratejik bir öneme sahip olmuştur ve ikili arasındaki ilişki değişen AB Dönem Başkanlıklarında farklı şekiller almıştır. Bu durum, AB'nin ABD ile olan ilişkilerinde tartışma konusu olmuştur. Taraflar arasındaki ilişkiyi tartışmak için öncelikle AB ve ABD arasındaki ikili ilişki değerlendirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda ikili arasındaki en güncel ilişkiyi değerlendirmek için AB'nin Fransa, Çek Cumhuriyeti ve İsveç dönem

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başkanlıkları süresince ABD ile olan ilişkileri incelenmiştir. Bu makale ile AB'nin değişen dönem başkanlıkları sırasında ABD ile olan ilişkilerinde dönem başkanı olan ülkenin kendi mili çıkarlarına mı yoksa AB çıkarlarına mı önceliği verdiği sorusuna yanıt bulmak amaçlanmıştır. Bu soruya somut bir cevap bulmak amacı ile öncelikle Fransa, Çek Cumhuriyeti ve İsveç'in ABD ile olan genel ikili ilişkileri incelenmiş ardından da bu ülkelerin AB Dönem Başkanı oldukları süreçte ABD ile olan ilişkileri değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *AB Dönem Başkanlığı, Atlantik Aşırı İlişkiler, Milli Çıkar, Uluslararası Kuruluş, Fransa, Çek Cumhuriyeti, İsveç AB Dönem Başkanlıkları.*

Introduction

The existing literature on the European Union (EU) Presidency and transatlantic relations is very broad. This research includes assessments about trio presidencies of France, Czech Republic, Sweden and transatlantic relations of EU during these presidencies. Before one can start discussing the details of each presidency's relations with US, it is crucial to recall what EU Council Presidency is and how it is likely to develop in the future. The first thing that should be stressed is that EU Council Presidency is not the presidency of EU but the presidency of one of the EU institutions. The responsibility of EU Presidency is first to play the role of a chairperson and to listen the views of different member states. Hence this responsibility of EU Presidency requires leadership but before leadership it requires dialogue and to put a side his/her national position to reach European consensus. However as it is well known EU is a community of nation states. Some of these nation states are very strict against anything that challenges their dominance in the political arena although when they became EU member, they pool their sovereignty to EU as a supranational entity. Any tendencies that had cross-national assertions and ties are regarded with suspicion. National orientations of member states towards EU are divers. For some member states EU was an opportunity for others it is a restriction. This research investigates whether member states during their EU Presidency give priority to their own national interests or give priority to EU as a supranational institution. In this respect mainly this research focuses on EU and its transatlantic relations specifically during the trio presidencies of France, Czech Republic, and Sweden. For reaching more concrete assessment first each country's historically bilateral relations with US will be examined and also their relations under EU Presidency umbrella will be evaluated.

EU-US Relations

“The relationship between US and Europe constitutes the world's strongest, most comprehensive and strategically most important partnership”¹ especially in case of economy they dominate world trade and they provide lion share of economic development. EU and US represent %40 of the world trade and they hold together %80

¹ Jose Manuel Barroso, Brussels, 9February 2005, Press Release.

of the global capital markets.² In general EU and US agree on some common objectives about the strategies on peace, stability and economic development in the world.

Although generally they share common objectives and similar analysis of threats, the way that each of them uses for achieving their objectives or for fighting against threats is completely different from each other. This situation caused some people to ask whether EU and US actually are friends or rivals.³ Hence EU-US relations yes the most powerful but also one of the most complicated relations in the world.

The EU-US partnership had remained the focus of any EU foreign policy strategy, although there had been occasional fluctuations in the transatlantic relationship over the past 50 years. Besides the many areas of cooperation, there are many areas of clashing attitudes especially about political and strategic issues. One of the recent issues that caused conflict between EU and US was the unilateral decision of US to wage out war on terror on the basis of former US President Bush's polarizing neoconservative doctrine of "*prevention, preemption, preeminence.*"⁴ The policies of Bush administration like high reliance on US military power, US perception of axis of evil (actually the President Bush's perception) which led to invasion of Iraq and also the perfunctory and simplistic policies of US administration towards the complicated situation of Middle East are the policies that created tensions on the relationship between EU-US.

The unilateral decision of US in Iraq led to divisions among the Europeans. Division between the one who is willing to act with US, and the other one who is refusing to join in an action with US. Because of this division, American neoconservatives promoted an agenda which defines these divisions as "*those who are with us and those who are against us.*"⁴

One can analyze EU's transatlantic relations in three broad phases as Burghardt did in his diplomacy paper. These phases are mainly;

- 1- From the early beginnings in late 1940's to the end of Cold War in 1989
- 2- From 1989 to 9/11 in 2001
- 3- From 9/11 to the era of new realism⁵

In addition to these three phases of Burghardt, as fourth phase President Obama and his administration's attitudes towards EU will be examined in the following.

² Gunter Burghardt, "The European Union's Transatlantic Relationship", **College of Europe EU Diplomacy Papers**, No.2, 2006, p.2-25.

³ Cameron Fraser, **Introduction European Foreign Policy**, New York, Routledge, 2007, p.90-106.

⁴ Gunter Burghardt, **op.cit.**, p.5.

⁵ **Ibid.**, p.6.

From the Early Beginnings in Late 1940's to the End of Cold War in 1989

In the post second world war era, European powers came together and created a project for replacing failed system of national sovereignty with a community of nation states in which nation states pool their sovereignty through some rules and institutions to the community. This project was also highly supported by US. *“During this period US assumed the role of an active, protecting power as a mediator in Europe without being a European power.”*⁶

In the Cold War era, the most significant issue for US was the reconstruction and stabilization of Western Europe became the backbone of US doctrine of containment. In this period all US presidents had been influential in supporting the concept of an organized transatlantic relationship based on a military alliance which refers to NATO with US as the dominant member and also transatlantic relationship based on European Community and US partnership. For this purpose in 1947, Marshall Plan was applied for helping the devastated European economies to recover.

In 1953 during the Eisenhower administration, the first full diplomatic representative, a US ambassador was accredited to European institutions. After the implementation of Paris and Rome Treaties, cooperation between European Community and US rapidly increased. Deliberations were held with US administration by the Commission.

From early 1980's to single European Act of 1985 and till the Maastricht Treaty (1992), president of US and European Community kept in touch regularly. In 1989, US President Bush uttered his feelings about Europe's future by saying that *“the fall of Berlin wall and dissolution of Soviet Union opened the prospect of a Europe whole and free.”*⁷

From 1989 to 9/11

The fall of Berlin Wall and dissolution of Soviet Union could be considered as a turning point for Europe's future and it symbolized the greatest common achievement of US and Europe. Both parties were influential in this process. US was influential with its determination which was highly based on military power. Europe was also influential with its model of European integration which had attracted the people living under communist regime. Hence, post 1989 Europe which is whole and free at peace with itself, would not be possible with the US or Europe acting alone.

In the post 1989 era, relationship between US and EC/EU had much more strong. They shared the common security threats; such as international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, regional conflicts, the first Gulf war and the Balkan wars. These common threats led to more rapprochements between the parties.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9

In 1990 Transatlantic Declaration signed between the US and EU which enabled regular political deliberations at all levels. The transatlantic declaration also strengthened their partnership in order to support democracy to promote the rule of law and respect for human rights, individual liberty, and international security also by cooperating other nations fight against aggression, coercion and prevent conflicts that would lead to war in the world.⁸

In 1995, EU and US went beyond transatlantic declaration and they signed New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA). By this agenda there had been achieved more progress in transatlantic relations. NTA embodies the constitutional basis of US-EU relations and also regular meetings at presidential and ministerial levels. NTA mainly has four objectives as *“promoting peace, stability democracy and development; expanding world trade and economic growth, meeting global challenges and building ties between EU and US representatives from business, academic, consumer, labor, environment and government circles.”*⁹

Relative to the adoption of NTA, a joint EU-US Action Plan was also prepared which directed the EU and US to large number of measures within the overall areas of cooperation. Furthermore, in 1998 London Summit parties reached an agreement which provided cooperation in the area of trade and it is called Transatlantic Economic Partnership (TEP). A great deal of economic cooperation takes place between EU and US in the forms of international multilateral economic forums such as G7/8, the WTO, IMF and WB.

The years from the end of Cold War till the election of President Bush can be defined as one of the most intense period of transatlantic integration. However, with the election of Bush as president the direction of the relations had changed. Because of the President Bush's attitudes in number of important international commitments, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court Treaty. Also, US bilaterally decided to reduce the number of meetings with the EU to one per year which furthered the confrontations between the EU and US. When the first annual EU-US Summit took place in June 2001 in Sweden, members of European Union harshly criticized US president. These developments led to tensions between EU and US during the first eight months preceding 9/11.

From 9/11 to New Realism

On 9th of September 2001, traditional sense of America's invulnerability and security at home all of a sudden was entirely changed by the unprecedented terrorist attacks on US. Terrorist attack of 9/11 was a turning point in American foreign and security policy. After the attacks President Bush waged war on terrorism and this decision of US led divisions in the European Union. EU split into those who decided to support US and those who opposed the US action and preferred more comprehensive, internationally legitimized approach against terrorism. They preferred to use the term of

⁸ Cameron Fraser, *op cit.*, p.92

⁹ Gunter Burghardt, *op cit.*, p.13

fight against terrorism as opposed to Bush administration's policy of war against terrorism.

However these disagreements did not prevent EU-US to take number of common measures about homeland security and counter terrorism also they continue to cooperate in Afghanistan. But the tension between EU and US rapidly increased by the President Bush unilateral decision of invasion of Iraq. In general EU-US relations can be defined as uneasy and combative during 2002 and 2003.

In 2004 with a newly elected European Parliament (Barroso Commission) and with the reelection of Bush as president provided an opportunity to revise the transatlantic agenda. The progress in transatlantic relations started to increase with the EU-US Summit in 2006, in Vienna. President Bush in his speech told that "*what is past is past, what is ahead of US is a hopeful democracy in Middle East*", confronting global challenges, energy security, economic and trade issues were dealt with constructively. At the end of the summit President Bush said that "*we disagreed in an agreeable way*" about the consultation between EU and US.¹⁰ As President Bush mentioned, yes there is progress in transatlantic relations, however there still remains disagreements between parties.

Transatlantic relations had profoundly started to change with the election of Obama as US President. The election of Obama ushered a new era in relations with EU.

The New Administration of President Obama and EU

Robert Kagan argues that "*on major strategic and international questions, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: they agree on little and understand one another less and less.*" When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, and fashioning foreign and defense policies, Kagan claims that "*the United States and Europe had irrevocably parted ways.*"¹¹

However this understanding of EU-US relations started to change with the new US president. The new administration in US under President Obama started to seek for closer relations with EU in many areas. As opposed to former President Bush's unilateral acts in international relations, Obama preferred to act multilaterally and he mentioned that he gave importance to cooperation with European states in case of global threats; such as, terrorism, climate change, global financial crisis, stabilizing Afghanistan, the rise of China and India also proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Obama administration clearly declared that dialogue and cooperation between EU and US will increase to promote peace, stability and democracy. Hence one can clearly say that EU-US relations had a positive, fresh start under the new administration of

¹⁰ George W. Bush, Vienna, 21 June 2006, Press Release.

¹¹ Robert Kagan, "Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order", New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003, p.50.

President Obama and the attitudes of Europeans towards US started to change extensively in a positive way with the elected new president.

France-US Relations

France and US relations has a long history which is deeply embedded in the world war years and especially in the past war years. In the post war years, initially there was cooperation between two nations specifically in the economic field. US helped France via Marshall Plan (1947) for recovering French economy. Later on cooperation between two nations went beyond the economic field and France became formal ally for US through North Atlantic treaty by this way there had been achieved also political cooperation.

Although both countries were against Soviet Union's aggression during the cold war, they went through a crisis in Suez (1956) which gave rise to emerge distrust between two. In general despite of some occasional tensions and conflicts between two nations, during the period of 1950's France had a positive opinion about US. The situation was drastically changed when Charles de Gaulle became the president of France and wanted to build its own nuclear weapons. These tensions between US and France reached to the peak in 1966, and De Gaulle decided to withdraw French forces from military structure of NATO. De Gaulle's ambition was to make France a leading power with a large following among non-aligned Third countries especially Africa and Middle East.

The tension between France and US also continued during the Vietnam War and with the Algerian War of Independence, French view of US further on worsened and it became to be seen as an imperialist power.

France which is one of the founder countries of EU has seen EU as a mean for counter balancing American power. Hence France supported EU initiatives of currency of Euro which challenged US currency dollar in global trade and also France support European defense initiatives as an alternative to NATO for challenging American power.

In the post 9/11 era, France cooperated with US for fighting against terrorism by creating alliance between US and France intelligence service. French opposition to American power strengthened during the time of Iraq war. France along with other European countries and with Russia was against UN resolution which permits US invasion of Iraq in 2003. France severely criticized George Bush administration policies in Iraq.

Later on issues like Hezbollah power in Lebanon, Iran's nuclear program and Israel Palestinian peace process gave rise to world leaders including France and US to fight against extremism in 2006. This decision was followed by strong France and US cooperation in UN during the Cedar Revolution and also two nations had an important role on UN resolution which aimed to bring a ceasefire in 2006 in Israel-Lebanon conflict.

Relations between France and US became much friendly when pro American politician Nicolas Sarkozy elected as president in France in 2007.¹² Sarkozy gave a speech before US Congress when he became president and he emphasized strong American French friendship. This close and friendly relations with US had some reflections also in EU. Especially in the time of French EU Presidency which was held by Nicolas Sarkozy in second half of 2008.

French EU Presidency and Transatlantic Relations

French EU Presidency started with serious challenges. The first challenge that French EU Presidency faced was the rejection of Lisbon Treaty (2007) by the Ireland. Ireland was the only member of EU that left the ratification process in the hands of its citizens by holding a referendum on the proposal of Lisbon Treaty. Irish voters basically opposed to provisions of the treaty. Because they believe that Lisbon Treaty would defeat the rights of smaller member states to make their own laws and decide their own future. This development also had severe impacts on Czech Republic's decision because Czech Republic was also opposed Lisbon Treaty and haven't ratified it yet. EU Presidency took some measures (like offering guarantees on national sovereignty and each country continue to have a commissioner) to remove obstacles before the Lisbon Treaty and achieved to convince Ireland for having a second referendum. In this sense one could claim that French EU Presidency was successful about further integration within the union.

Another serious challenge that almost immediately after France took presidency was the war which broke out between Georgia and Russia because of the Georgian attacks on South Ossetia in 2008. EU cannot be considered totally unsuccessful in case of managing crisis in South Ossetia, actually EU succeeded in securing ceasefire while US diplomacy was nowhere to be found. When Washington was grouching against Russia's aggression, Sarkozy and his European colleagues were able to see that Georgia in fact was not that much blameless and Saakashvili made a huge mistake by attacking South Ossetia. *"While mindful of the need to preserve a working relationship Moscow, Sarkozy is no apologist for Russia, but sees the country through the realist lens that is too often observed by ideological blinders on the other side of Atlantic."*¹³

The final biggest challenge that French EU Presidency encountered was the global financial crisis which started with the bankruptcy of famous US firms and spread all around the world. When financial crisis arose in US, Sarkozy took the initiative and convinced world leaders of all big economies and discussed possible resolutions for fighting against global crisis in G20 meeting in Washington.

¹² France Diplomatie, Country Files, United States, 21 July 2009, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/united-states_425/index.html>, (12 December 2009).

¹³ Federiga Bindi and Charles Kupchan, "Sarkozy's Europe is Good For Obama", **The New York Times**, 14 January 2009.

Besides these challenges, to make an overall assessment of French EU Presidency and transatlantic relations, one should mention the areas that EU Presidency acted in a pro American way and the areas that presidency acted against America.

The election of Sarkozy as president in France was benchmark in case of France, EU and transatlantic relations because Sarkozy gave up 40 year old Gaullist, (anti American) tradition. By Sarkozy's friendly attitude towards US, there existed rapprochement between EU-US during his presidency. France returned back military structure of NATO in 2009 also Sarkozy aroused EU to reinforce strategic partnership with NATO and cooperate in missions like Kosovo and Afghanistan.¹⁴

Although these close relations and cooperation between EU-US, there were still areas of conflict between two. Especially the climate change which is one of the priorities of French EU Presidency was a source of conflict between US and EU also the Iraq war in 2003 still existed as a thorn in their relationships. In addition to that Sarkozy blames US for not combating financial crisis efficiently enough. Another conflict between EU-US was in the field of military. Despite France bless to NATO, still wanted to a developing European Defense and Security Policy.¹⁵ Hence Sarkozy wanted US recognition of European Defense and Security Policy (ESDP) in exchange for France rejoining NATO's military structure in April 2008.

If one wants to make an overall assessment about EU-US relations during French EU Presidency, one can say that it was one of the most proactive presidencies of its history and close relations with US thanks to giving up Gaullist tradition. However, in some areas France still stick to the old Europe tradition and in that areas there are still tensions.

Czech Republic- US Relations

Historically there has been close relationship between Americans and Czechs. A large proportion of the population in US has acute cultural familial ties with Czechs. In the post world war era US President Woodrow Wilson and US played significant role in the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Wilson's 14 points which includes right of self determination for any ethnic groups were effective for the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

In addition to that in the process of forming the basis of new state, Czech president got help from US officials more specifically Czechoslovakia took US Constitution as a sample in preparing its own constitution. After Second World War, normal relation between US and Czechoslovakia continued until 1948. In 1948 communists took the power in Czechoslovakia and relations with US started to cool swiftly. Later in 1968 Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia and it caused a complete rupture in relations with US. US took some steps removing invasion of Czechoslovakia by urging United

¹⁴ Ceren Mutus, "An Overall Assesment of the French EU Presidency", 8 January 2009, <<http://www.usak.org.tr/EN/makale.asp?id=817>> (19 December 2009).

¹⁵ **Ibid.**

Nations Security Council (UNSC) about the violation of UN Charter. However no action was taken against Soviet Union.

Since the Velvet Revolution of 1989, bilateral relation between US – Czechoslovakia improved rapidly. In 1990, US declared its obvious support for building democratic Czechoslovakia and US government strongly encouraged economic and political transformation in Czechoslovakia.¹⁶

Although US government initially was against the idea of forming two separate states because separation may create regional political tensions, US recognized both Slovakia and Czech Republic and from that time on US Czech relation stayed strong economically, culturally politically.

In recent years relations between two countries improved more and they actually became strong ally of each other. Especially in 2003 Czech Republic gave support US led invasion of Iraq by sending chemical weapon warfare experts to Kuwait. Although there was strong governmental support for war, the majority of the Czech population was against the Iraq war according to the public opinion polls. But this opposition did not led big demonstrations against war in Czech Republic.

Another current event that affected public opinion against US was about missile defense system. In 2008, Czech Security Information Service declared that Russian secret agents highly have been affecting public opinion against the forming of US radar in Czech Republic. In addition to that Stritecky claims that “*the reaction of Czech government to Georgian crisis in 2008 suggested that the US presence in European security setup is still welcome also it serves as a balancer to growing Russian influence and mitigates the position of some European powers, which are often viewed as too pragmatic in relation to Russia.*”¹⁷

Czech EU Presidency and Transatlantic Relations

In the first half of the 2009, Czech Republic took EU Presidency from France. Czech EU Presidency declared their priorities as economy, energy and EU in the world, also its motto is a “*Europe without barriers.*”¹⁸ If one would like to evaluate Czech EU Presidency in terms of transatlantic relations especially relations with US, it should be mentioned that the transatlantic relations was the top foreign policy priorities of Czech EU Presidency.

Dialogue between the new US administration under Obama and EU under Czech Presidency was successfully established. In February 2009 an informal meeting of EU and US took place in Prague. The content of the meeting was issues of cooperation

¹⁶ Embassy of the United States Czech Republic, Ambassador Remarks, 8 June 2007 <http://prague.usembassy.gov/sp070608_uscz.html> (23 December 2009).

¹⁷ Vit Stritecky, “Transatlantic relations 2009: European Expectations for the Post-Bush Era, Czech Republic”, **European Policy Institutes Network**, No.20, 2008, p.4.

¹⁸ Czech Presidency of the European Union, Presidency Motto, 23 December 2008, <<http://www.eu2009.cz/en/czech-presidency/presidency-motto/presidency-motto-482/>> (15 December 2009).

between EU-US and also the objective of the meeting was to make preparation for the EU-US Troika meeting.

In 5th of April EU-US summit was held in Prague. President Obama said that in his speech *“We are here today because twenty years ago, the people of this city took the streets to claim the promise of a new day, and fundamental human rights that had been denied to them for too long. The Velvet Revolution taught us many things. It shows us that small countries can play a pivotal role in world events, and that young people can lead the way in overcoming old conflicts and it proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon.”*¹⁹ This part of the speech shows the historically close relations between Czechs and Americans also gives the opportunity of building closer cooperation between US and EU under Czech Presidency. In the summit both parties addressed the issues such as transatlantic relations, global financial crisis, cooperation on energy, security, climate change and international affairs. According to Turkish Weekly Journal this meeting was important because the meeting provided another opportunity for leaders across the Atlantic to listen to each other following the G20 financial summit in London.

Finally US-EU Ministerial Troika was held in 28th of April in Prague during the Czech EU Presidency. Many important topics were addressed by the parties, these were mainly new transatlantic relations, fight against terrorism, border protection, protection of children and exchange of data. In the meeting EU accepted the significance of US as a strategic partner in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs.

In general when evaluating about the Czech EU Presidency and its transatlantic relations, specifically relations with US, it is obvious that there were close relations and cooperation between the parties. In this cooperation, of course historically the relations of Czechs and US played an important role. Czech Republic as a member of new Europe had always good relations with US and Czechs feel much more secure under the US protective umbrella against Russia. Hence EU's transatlantic relations under Czech Presidency was one of the top foreign policy priorities which was maintained successfully.

Sweden-US Relations

Sweden and US have strong ties since 18th century. Sweden was the first country which did not involve American Revolutionary War and recognized the newly established American Republic. From 1968 to 1976, relations between US and Sweden cooled mainly because of the strong opposition of Swedish government to US led Vietnam War. In 1972 diplomatic relations completely frozen due to speech of Swedish Prime Minister in the national radio in which he called US bombings in Vietnam as one of the biggest atrocities committed by Nazis.²⁰

¹⁹ Embassy of The United States Czech Republic, Remarks of President Obama, **Ibid.**

²⁰ US Department of State, Background Note: Sweden, March 2009, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2880.html>> (20 January 2010).

After 1966 due to the change of Swedish Prime Minister, relations between Sweden and US started to improve rapidly. Many diplomatic visits had taken place between two countries at governmental level. In the last decade, relations furthered especially after 9/11 attacks, Swedish government expressed its boost to US and encouraged US led invasion of Afghanistan. Whereas Sweden completely opposed the invasion of Iraq on 2003, like many other European states due to the fact that the invasion was a breach of international law.

In 2006 in Sweden a new center right Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt seized in power and his party –Moderate Party- is more pro-American according to social democrats. They supported US invasion of Iraq and also supported the accession of Sweden into NATO membership. When Fredrik Reinfeldt became Prime Minister, he declared that they will work for strong transatlantic relations.

Besides the Swedish opposition to Iraq War, there are other areas of disagreement such as American detention policy at Guantanamo Bay and more significantly US opposition to sign Kyoto Protocol and the practices of death penalty.

Swedish EU Presidency and Transatlantic Relations

In the second half of the 2009 beginning with July, Sweden started to hold EU Presidency. The main objective of Swedish EU Presidency is to establish strong and effective Europe by sharing common responsibility for resisting the challenges of today and tomorrow. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt expresses EU Presidency's priorities by saying "*The EU is facing a crucial period. Together we must deal with the economic crisis and unemployment, but also unite the world to tackle climate change. The Swedish Presidency is ready to take on the challenge.*"²¹

Swedish EU Presidency priorities such as dealing with climate change and global financial crisis are important in case of EU and transatlantic relations. In the current EU agenda, Presidency mentions that EU will try to find new prospects for deeper transatlantic dialogue and also believes that EU's role in Middle East should be developed. In this respect the most recent event that took place between US and EU was EU-US Summit on 4th of November in Washington. With the new Obama administration, there are attempts by the EU toward US to restart transatlantic relations. This summit was the first official EU-US summit since president Obama took the office.

The President of European Council, the Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt together with the president of European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso and the high representative of European Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana went Washington to discuss solutions for fighting climate change with Obama. Also EU representatives visited US to submit their new Plan for Action in Afghanistan. However EU representatives could not achieve their ambitions and the summit ended

²¹ Swedish Presidency of The European Union, The Presidency, 12 September 2009, <<http://www.se2009.eu>>, (23 November 2009).

with a 15 page declaration which involves a review of all transatlantic initiatives and common action.²²

On the most important and urgent topic of the summit climate change, EU failed to get any concessions from US. However after the summit Barroso said that “*Regarding climate change, I want to say that I’m more confident now than I was some days before.*” And he added that “*as I said earlier President Obama changed the climate on the climate change negotiations because with the strong leadership of US we can indeed reach an agreement.*”²³

Ahto Lobjakas says in his article called –Lackluster EU-US Summit Highlights Lack of Strategic Depth in Relationship- that actually on the same day of the summit EU had disappointed because democratic majority decided to bind discussions about climate change bill for 5 weeks. Hence this event caused EU representative to lose their last hope about reaching a global binding agreement about reducing greenhouse gas emissions at Copenhagen Summit in 7th of December in 2009.

Barroso himself previously mentioned that without US there will be no agreement on climate change because if US does not accept the agreement, it will be almost impossible for EU to sanctify agreement on emissions of greenhouse gases.

With regard to other top issues of summit Afghanistan which is the most urgent global priority for US, Obama appreciated EU’s effort in Afghanistan and demanded from EU to continue with its active role in the region. However none of the European countries ready to increase its military existence in the region. Barroso also made a statement about this issue and he said “*no great enthusiasm among the public in Europe to send more forces.*” As opposed to US desires about European military presence in Afghanistan, EU just before the EU-US summit seized upon a declaration which promises assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan for strengthening civilian authorities.²⁴

Besides these unresolved issues, there was something new that emerged from the summit which is a mutual EU-US Energy Council on ministerial level. The main objective of this structure is to develop energy security and by this way make contributions to achieving ambitions about climate change. Main responsibility of the Council will be to focus on diversification of energy sources and also help EU in case of how to create global energy security on the basis of stable, transparent energy markets and diversified energy sources.

²² Adelina Marini, “ An Attempt to Restart Transatlantic Relations”, 4 November 2009, <<http://www.euinside.eu/en/news/an-attempt-for-restart-of-transatlantic-relations/>> (20 November 2009).

²³ Ahto Lobjakas, “Lackluster EU-US Summit Highlights Lack of Strategic Depth in Relationship”, November 4, 2009, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Lackluster_Summit_Highlights_Lack_Of_Strategic_Depth_In_Relationship/1869548.html> (10 January 2010)

²⁴ **Ibid.**

Furthermore declaration which came out of EU-US summit involves all other issues in transatlantic agenda like Western Balkans, Caucasus countries, relations with Iran, Middle East peace process, non-proliferation and so on. But the key points of the declaration were as it had mentioned before were climate change and Afghanistan.

Adelina Marini expressed her views about the result of this summit as “*although the declaration is nothing more than a political statement of good will, indeed it is a very important signal toward the international community, because it says that the EU and US - especially US – will not approach any of the above mentioned issues unilaterally.*”²⁵

Hence one can say that EU-US relations under Swedish EU Presidency is active but still relations are dominated by US decisions especially in case of climate change issue one cannot say that EU is successful. However in case of Afghanistan EU is determined about using civilian power rather than existing as a hard power which is totally supported and desired by Obama administration.

Conclusion

This research approved the dominant perspective on rotating EU Presidencies give priority to their own national interests in the presidency agenda as it is observed in the cases of trio presidencies of France, Czech Republic and Sweden. In the cases of small states of Europe, the EU gives them the opportunity of evolving their national cultures and growing without threat under EU umbrella. For small states of EU like Czech Republic and Sweden, EU has been a way of playing a role and exercising influence that they could not otherwise able to perform. Sweden was defined itself as neutral during the Cold War. In the post war era Sweden found itself without a role in international political arena then it turned to Europe to get a role for itself. Hence EU is an opportunity for small states like Sweden to gain a role and became effective in international arena. In addition to that the historical relations of each country with US and the attitude of president of each country towards US are effective in transatlantic relations. As it is observed in France which is traditionally Gaullist but with the new French administration under President Sarkozy who is pro-American, transatlantic relations gained progress rapidly. In case of Czech Republic which can be defined as ‘new Europe’, became member in 2004 and it is famous with its historically closer relations with US, under Czech EU Presidency these historical background was effective in transatlantic relations. Finally in case of Sweden, transatlantic relations were given weight thanks to new US administration under President Obama who is much more in the favor of multilateral relations, using soft power in international conflicts and has more moderate approach in case of taking precautions against global climate change as opposed to former US President Bush’s unilateral and hard power based politics. In this respect, it is hoped that the relations between EU and US will grow rapidly in a constructive manner under Obama administration.

²⁵ Adelina Marini, **op.cit.**

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