



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# The EU's "Eastern Dimension" – An Opportunity for or *Idée Fixe* of Poland's Policy?

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Warsaw 2002

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**This publication is an outcome of the "EU's  
Eastern Dimension" Project implemented in  
association with the Konrad Adenauer  
Foundation**

ISBN: 83-88216-23-6

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## Poland and the EU's "Eastern Dimension"

### ***Introduction***

The EU's "Eastern Dimension" has not come into effect so far and one cannot definitively say if it ever comes to be. And even if it does, then to what extent will it respond to our expectations? The question is all the more valid as the exact design and implementation of the "eastern dimension" depend on a number of factors in international politics that today are hardly predictable. So why is it worth at all to deal with this problem? First of all, because the pursuit of a consistent policy towards the East will be, after the EU's forthcoming enlargement, one of the obvious determinants of the common national interests of Poland and of the EU as a community of European nations. The debate about the EU's "eastern dimension" is also prompted by the experiences of the EU's northern dimension. However, it should be admitted that, given the obvious differences between the present northern dimension and the potential "eastern dimension", the latter would be much more than the former a factor of the EU's common foreign policy.

### ***Discussion about the "eastern dimension"***

First, it is worth defining some general assumptions that should delineate the EU's "eastern dimension" at least to the extent that would make a discussion on its shape subject to certain rigours and discipline, so that it does not snowball into a general debate about the situation in the east of Europe, or becomes a simple summary of Poland's eastern policy over the recent decade. The criteria that we propose are as follows:

- a) restriction of the territorial and problem area of this concept for the benefit of its specificity, so that it is not merely an understated idea, but a concrete action programme,
- b) giving up the aspiration to accommodate within this concept the entire shape of the EU's relations with the neighbour states in the east after the enlargement. Instead, the focus should be on cooperation and coordination of actions by those of EU member states that have an interest in the "eastern dimension".
- c) Allowing for the interests and possibilities of both individual states and regional structures, as well as other members of the enlarged EU (Visegrad Group, Baltic States' Group).

## ***The EU's "eastern dimension" and Poland's eastern policy***

A proposed discussion about the principles of the EU's common foreign policy in the east of Europe in the post-enlargement future, should not leave aside the Polish experience of the recent decade. After 1989, Poland was pursuing on the CEE scale an active policy towards its neighbours in the east. The new elites that came to power in Poland were under a big influence of our traditional thinking about Poland's eastern neighbours and their independence as the guarantee of our international security. A number of arguments ranging from sentimental to cultural to pragmatic were advanced in favour of an active eastern policy. They all centred on the will to ensure an enduring international security or potential economic benefits to Poland by strengthening its ties with the East. The political programme of the Paris-based "Kultura", which was most often quoted to justify Poland's eastern policy, clearly stated that a policy in support of the sovereignty, independence and national rebirth of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus and a policy of building good relations with Russia should in the future constitute one of the pillars of Poland's foreign policy.

It thus happened that the eastern policy, next to the postulate of Poland's accession to NATO and the EU, has been an immutable feature of the policies pursued by successive Polish government descended from various political parties. There is no room here to draw up a balance-sheet of the to-date Polish eastern policy, all the less so as, in contrast to the accession to NATO and the EU, it would be hard to refer in this case to any specific verifiable evidence of a failure or a success. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the evaluation of the Polish eastern policy in the recent decade will be a subject of heated political polemics in Poland yet for a long time to come.

Hence, it should be made clear at the outset that one cannot expect Poland to come up with an "eastern dimension" concept that would emulate the northern dimension. Neither would it be possible to expect an automatic recognition and adoption of Poland's to-date eastern policy by the European states as the eastern policy of the European Union. Such an approach to building an "eastern dimension" would doom the project to failure already at the stage of soliciting support for it in the European capitals.

A reasonable proposal for an "eastern dimension" is conditioned on the re-thinking of Poland's role and on a concept formula growing from the track-record of relations of individual European states with the East (including the track-record of Polish eastern policy). The key, however, is to devise a new, one would like to say "fresh", political concept for a practical implementation.

## ***Chances for real upgrading of Poland's eastern policy***

The aims and means of the eastern policy that Poland has pursued so far are clearly running out. There is a need for a fresh impulse, which, on one hand, would allow for the outcomes of Russia's recent relations with the United States and the European Union, while, on the other hand, responding to Poland's redefined interests as a new member of the EU in the Central European region. Thus, the "eastern dimension" is above all an opportunity for the real upgrading of Poland's eastern policy. It may compel the Poles to reconsider which political, economic and social objectives they can pursue independently and to what extent they will have to make recourse to the EU's common action instruments or to look for allies interested in special projects within the framework of so-called deepened cooperation. Poland's actions within the "eastern dimension" will perforce be cut to the size of the EU policy framework (unlike Poland's relations with the United States), which means that they will have to be in adequate proportion to the EU's regional policy.

Why, in the run-up to Poland's membership in the European Union, does it seem at all necessary to define the degree to which Poland's eastern policy has a chance to continue, but also the extent to which Poland could co-determine the EU's foreign policy in the east. The concept of the "eastern dimension" and the ensuing discussion involving Poland should answer the following key questions:

- a) Which states acting on behalf of the European Union are responsible for the formulation and implementation of the EU's "eastern dimension"?
- b) Who is this dimension specifically addressed to?
- c) What should be the role of Poland and other CEE states in preparing and implementing this dimension?
- d) What areas should it embrace?
- e) What should be the time horizon for implementing the EU's "eastern dimension"?

From Poland's viewpoint, the key question it is not so much if but to what extent Poland should participate in creating the "eastern dimension".

## ***Who should the EU's "eastern dimension" be addressed to?***

The EU's "eastern dimension" should take on the form of a package of concerted proposals for economic, social and political measures that the European Union and its member states would address to select states bordering on the enlarged Union in the east. Addressing the "eastern dimension" offer to

a bigger number of states in the east or even to whole regions (Caucasus, Central Asia, etc.) would blunt the chances of any meaningful impact. In such a scenario, the EU's offer could prove at best to have only superficial attraction to its recipients and the obvious weaknesses in its real implementation would be swiftly exposed. It appears that the EU's "eastern dimension" should primarily focus on only two countries – Belarus and Ukraine, the two states that after the enlargement will be the EU's nearest neighbours in the east. And neither Belarus nor Ukraine stand any chances of membership of the European Union in the foreseeable future.

Standing in the way of their accession prospects is a number of economic and social, but also political obstacles. Particularly in relations with Belarus, we deal with a country that is political unstable, deep in economic doldrums and extremely low on democratic standards – freedom of association and demonstration of political opinions, freedom of conscience, access to information or the freedom of the press. The situation in Ukraine is slightly better, but still a far cry from the standards accepted in Europe, as evidenced at least by last year's kidnapping and murder of Gongadze or the ongoing political conflict between the opposition and president Kuchma.

However, one has to concede that both Belarus and Ukraine, in view of their potentials, geographic location, cultural and demographic positions, can expect that an absolutely unreal for now postulate of their accession to the European Union will figure on the agenda of European politics in the future. One can hardly imagine the European Union, or Poland for that matter, to fail to pursue an active policy in support of appropriate political changes in both of these countries. The pursuit of such a policy should firmly be among the main political goals of the EU's "eastern dimension".

There are similar considerations concerning Moldova, whose political and economic modalities are now in many respects reminiscent of the afore-said conditionalities related to Belarus and Ukraine. Moldova, too, has potential possibilities for closer cooperation with the European Union. Given a stronger involvement of the EU member states, there are chances for this potential to evolve faster in the future.

Except for the countries mentioned so far, the EU's "eastern dimension" should not encompass any other post-Soviet countries in Southern Caucasus or Central Asia. The EU should develop a different mechanism of cooperation with those countries mainly in the area of security and the energy sector.

## ***Russia and the EU's "eastern dimension"***

Relations with Russia will certainly pose the greatest challenge to the EU's "eastern dimension". Western politicians, among them European leaders who wish Russia well, often forget that Russia surpasses the EU already in terms of its territorial potential, and it is at least for this fact that one can hardly contemplate its membership in the EU. It is equally hard to treat Russia on a par with Belarus and Ukraine. However, Putin's presidency demonstrates that a dynamically changing Russia may become one of the EU's key political partners in global politics. Allowing for all possible modalities, one can discern two models for Russia's role in the proposed EU's "eastern dimension" concept.

- A. Extension of the EU's "eastern dimension" to only the Kaliningrad District and possibly also north-eastern areas of the Russian Federation. The advantage of such a solution would be the full inclusion in that dimension of a fundamental Kaliningrad question, and making the Polish-Lithuanian-Russian activities in favour of that enclave part of the European policy system to a greater extent than so far. Furthermore, such a restricted role of Russia in the "eastern dimension" would certainly facilitate the related planning and implementation of dimension measures.
- B. Giving the entire Russian Federation a special status of relations with the EU, i.e. relations clearly targeting the issues ensuing from two areas – energy and security. Such a solution would obviously also make room for a number of additional proposals concerning the Kaliningrad District. They could be based on principles similar to those underlying the proposals for Belarus and Ukraine. This solution would also steer clear of any potential similarity to the northern dimension and hence could not be called a mere duplication of the latter. It would give Russia a special status in relations with the EU and would involve more strongly the biggest EU member states in the implementation of the EU's "eastern dimension" which would thereby lose its distinctively regional nature.

It is indeed difficult to envision the EU's "eastern dimension" without Russia, but the form and scope of Russia's participation in such a project remains an open issue. It can be clearly seen that there are no foregone conclusions and that the most reasonable approach for the benefit of this analysis is to hold out the issue of Russia's role as the most important point of a continuing debate.

## ***Objectives of the EU's "eastern dimension"***

The main objective of the proposals and activities within the EU's "eastern dimension" should be to support and encourage economic, social and political processes that will promote the EU-like standards in the countries lying east of the enlarged EU.

This objective should be pursued not only in respect of the European Union's fundamental values and ideas, notably the idea of overcoming the divides in Europe, but also in view of highly pragmatic security and economic interests. Excessive and steadily widening civilisational divides between the enlarged EU and its immediate neighbours would produce a very bad to perilous situation in the long run. Only a zone of stability and EU-like socio-economic standards in the immediate vicinity of the EU can safeguard the EU against adverse developments and provide new prospects for regional cooperation. Such objectives already apply to all existing dimensions (southern and northern) in the EU's external policy. It appears, however, that within the EU's "eastern dimension", where only land borders (with no expanse of sea) are involved, the security aspect is of special significance.

### ***"Eastern dimension" in the EU's external policy***

The EU's external policy, which by all available sources, does not represent a coherent concept at present, should incorporate three components:

- a) policy towards states (not applying for the EU membership) and regions of immediate neighbourhood: to the east – the European part of ex-USSR (not counting the Baltics); in the Balkans – ex-Yugoslavia (not counting Slovenia), Albania and Macedonia; to the south – countries in the southern and eastern parts of the Mediterranean basin;
- b) Euro-Atlantic relations, policy towards the USA, including relations within NATO;
- c) Policy towards other states and regions important to the EU interests, for example Caucasus and Central Asia, Middle East, Japan, China, South-East Asia.

The EU's "eastern dimension" would be part of the first component, together with the EU's southern dimension and policy towards the Balkans (Stability Pact).

An issue requiring an additional qualification would be the positioning of "eastern dimension"

vis-à-vis the existing northern dimension. Decisions to this effect should be preceded by an accurate analysis. It appears that the likely results of this analysis would be indicative of a quite clear "over-advertisement" of the northern dimension achievements. On one hand, the main by-product of the northern dimension seems to be the turning of the EU member states' attention to the issue of the common foreign policy in the East (at least in the regional terms), but, on the other hand, there is clear shortage of the means to implement specific projects. Particularly in view of the fact that the funding of the EU's common foreign policy objectives is still indefinable and is in practice shouldered by individual member states, one should primarily focus on identifying a place for the "eastern dimension" in relation to the other dimensions of the Union. As it were, one should avoid a negative competition that may emerge among the member states in the context of their interests to support the EU's activities within different dimensions.

Here, any political competition between the northern and the eastern dimension would be highly disadvantageous for Poland. It means that in drafting the assumptions for the "eastern dimension" it is necessary to conduct a very intensive political dialogue with the Nordic states, mainly Finland and Sweden, to pave the way for a mutually complementary development of the two dimensions. This is of tremendous importance for preserving cohesion of the European Union's future eastern policy.

Within the policy towards the EU's immediate neighbours (not applying for EU membership) and regions of immediate neighbourhood, it would be worthwhile to consider the drafting of a coherent concept for the so-called EU's neighbour state (the related British proposals so far represent a very rough outline). This concept should be comprised of:

- a) a list of criteria that a given country would have to meet to acquire the status of a EU's neighbour state: economic, social and political adjustments to the EU standards (possibly including the migration issues),
- b) a list of privileged relations with the EU, to which a country with that status would be entitled,
- c) a set of measures and instruments that the EU would be willing to bring forth to assist a given country in obtaining the EU's neighbour state status, parallel to the efforts that that country would be making to adapt to the listed criteria.

The EU's neighbour state concept could be a lot more helpful, than a distant or unlikely prospect of EU membership, in realistically motivating the elites



and societies of the neighbour countries for addressing internal reforms and adapting to EU standards. Moreover, it could be helpful in staking out the areas on which the EU's "eastern dimension" policy should focus its specific activities and projects and, finally, in delineating the other dimensions making up that first component of the EU's external policy.

### ***What areas should the EU's "eastern dimension" embrace?***

The "eastern dimension" concept being considered here would require a relatively precise definition of the areas of life that the EU's "eastern dimension" should cover. It seems that whatever other walks of life would eventually come into place, the "dimension" would first have to embrace the following four spheres:

- a) **ECONOMIC.** Very important to ensuring the right functioning of the enlarged EU along its eastern borders and to a gradual synchronization of the economic systems of states that could qualify for the "eastern dimension". It would necessitate reforms of economic legislation in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, modernization and reforms of individual economic sectors, upgrades of infrastructure, increasingly good relations between these states and the EU and its member states, etc. All of these issues should become essential ingredients of the EU's "eastern dimension".
- b) **SOCIAL.** A diagnosis of the social situation in the "Eastern dimension" countries is based on the assumption that an accelerated development of nongovernmental and self-governmental sectors is indispensable to the appropriate growth of these neighbour states in the longer and medium term. An insufficiently developed self-government bereft of major competence and autonomy vis-à-vis the state administration is one of the key barriers to the development of the EU's immediate neighbour states in the east. Cooperation in the social field should as much as possible include the broad sharing of know-how and sectorial experiences in the form of training projects, internships, scholarships, educational curricula, etc. As distinct from the to date cooperation in such areas, the future interaction should be broader in scope and subject to closer coordination (many failures of aid initiatives have been attributable to bad coordination or inaccurate identification of the actual needs of partners and beneficiaries, or their paternalistic and instrumental treatment).

- c) **POLITICAL.** The link of this sphere with the social sphere goes without saying. It is only too true that the region's specificity, its historical and cultural backlogs (firstly in overcoming the aftermath of long-embedded communism) make of democratisation, respect for religious and minority rights, development of free media, etc. the prerequisites of the growth of such countries as Belarus, Ukraine, Russia or Moldova. There is no room here to provide the situational backgrounds for each of those countries, but it is obvious that without marked progress in these areas, there can be virtually no talk of any serious deepening of their integration with the Western countries, notably the EU.
- d) **SECURITY.** The challenges that the EU's "eastern dimension" will be facing in this respect include the assurance of stability and predictable security in the region. The related expectations addressed to each of the four states concerned are certainly different. Russia, even though it does not enjoy a global super-power status at the moment, still commands a huge capability and is seen among the foremost partners to the United States and the EU. By comparison, the roles of Belarus and Moldova in the broader context of international relations are insignificant, and Ukraine's situation is presently hard to define precisely, although its international significance as a partner to the USA, EU and major European states has been steadily waning in the recent few years. Serious security challenges that the "eastern dimension" is bound to face include border protection, fight against illegal immigration and against the trafficking in narcotics and weapons, etc.

### ***Place of the EU's "eastern dimension" in the European states' foreign policy***

A serious and well thought-over decision to prepare and implement the EU's "eastern dimension" will be pregnant with a series of consequences for the to-date shape of European policy. That is why we will certainly come to face the dilemma to what extent the "eastern dimension" should be incorporated in the to-date network of the EU's political initiatives. It seems that one should think of the EU's "eastern dimension" as being:

- a) **ALL-UNION.** One should consider incorporating this dimension in the EU's external policy concept. An important role should be played by at least partial adaptation to its requirements of already running and forthcoming, even if small,

EU programmes (the like of TACIS, INTERREG, transborder cooperation projects, etc.), designed to support concrete initiatives within the “eastern dimension”.

- b) **INTERNAIONAL** – as part of multilateral political initiatives in the east and north of Europe and as part of bilateral relations between the individual EU member states. Another key matter is the far-reaching coordination of activities by those EU member states that have a particular interest in the “eastern dimension”. Practice shows that initiatives built on some general declarations of political coordination usually fail to be translated into tangible actions and their effectiveness is ultimately measured with only a bigger or smaller propaganda effect. The only way out of such a scenario would be to come up with however small, but precisely defined initiatives that hold out chances of being implemented. Since Poland will certainly have a special interest in the implementation of the EU’s “eastern dimension”, our active role appears to be particularly advisable in this respect. Corresponding initiatives in support of the “eastern dimension” should appear on the agenda of projected undertakings within the multilateral agreements and initiatives where Poland is particularly active: the Visegrad Group and the Baltic Sea States Council. Implementation of the “eastern dimension” seems to be also one of the potential areas of Poland’s close cooperation with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (assuming an especially close interest of the first two countries), whose positions as candidates and young members of the EU could, owing to such initiative, get stronger in the future. Some initiatives in support of the “eastern dimension” could also be incorporated as “boosters” into the action programme of the Weimar Triangle.

An issue of importance to the effectiveness of the “eastern dimension” is the possibility of Poland’s winning strong allies among the remaining member states of the Union. It would be of particular significance to enlist support of those countries, which, like Germany or France, are interested in the development and strengthening of the EU’s Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy (CFSDP). That is why it is worth presenting the “eastern dimension” as an element of strengthening the political character of the Union. Notably Germany, in view of its special interest in the CEE region, appears well poised to be Poland’s potential partner in implementing the “eastern dimension”. After all, it can be a project of interest to German policy.

However, it should also be borne in mind that the “eastern dimension” may as well become an area of conflicting interests in the EU, to mention, for one, the Polish and German economic policy interests. It is still not clear, either, to what extent after the enlargement will Poland be able to participate actively in creating the EU-Russia relations (so that Poland is not relegated to a sole involvement in the Ukraine case) and how much will Poland be able to resist a possible adverse tendency to keep Poland off the EU-Russian affairs.

### ***Poland’s potential action room within the EU’s “eastern dimension”***

Warsaw’s political ambitions will not suffice to have Poland co-create the “eastern dimension”. Poland will still have a major homework to do in many spheres that the “eastern dimension” should encompass. In order for Poland to play a meaningful role in the EU’s “eastern dimension”, Poland will still need to make legislative changes in many areas (fortunately they are on the way in step with the run-up to Poland’s accession, so let us be optimistic). Poland’s serious role in the EU’s common foreign policy in the East, as we would like to see it, will require an adequate preparation of Poland’s government, self-governmental and nongovernmental human resources. If we now evaluate this progress in the context of Poland’s broadest possible role in the EU’s “eastern dimension”, we see that it is not satisfactory. Particularly important, in our view, is the postulate to train a big number of personnel in the in-depth knowledge of the East as well as the European Union affairs. Having such quality staff to fall back on would be a particularly important expression of our “eastern dimension concept”.

An important asset of Poland as a creative hopeful for the “eastern dimension” should be Poland’s leverage to pursue a regional policy in the east and northeast of Europe, to animate and to creatively participate in the respective regional agreements and political alliances and, especially, to come up with fresh initiatives, which should be calculated for at least a minimum political effect. They will also represent a valid passport for Poland’s ideas and support of projects weighing as much as the EU’s “eastern dimension”. It appears that the Polish diplomacy’s activity over the recent decade within multilateral and bilateral agreements (V-4 Group, Weimar Triangle, Baltic Sea States Council, relations with the Baltic States, particularly Lithuania, Polish-Slovak relations) has furnished adequate grounds for devising political visions on a broader scale. Of key importance in the EU’s “eastern dimension” context can be Poland’s partnership with Lithuania (perhaps



the EU's "eastern dimension" initiatives should be sponsored jointly by Poland and Lithuania) and good relations with Slovakia, where the internal situation now seems to be developing in a promising direction.

It is already evident that because of its modest assets and weak instruments of influence in the security area of relations with Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, Poland should within the EU's "eastern dimension" rather focus on actions in the social sphere, with the political sphere remaining a possibility. Such an approach should become Poland's specialty and an area of particularly strong activity in the EU forum, internationally and domestically.

It could be worth considering and suggesting to the international community that it should prospectively establish in Poland special institutions (secretariats) with the task of coordinating "eastern dimension" activities by NGOs and self-governments in Poland and other interested member states of the EU. Poland would be destined to play such a role on the strength of its comparably big involvement in the aid projects in the East in the recent years, its experience in know-how transfers and the fact that Poland's NGOs active in this area have in recent years not limited themselves to spending the money from foreign sources, but that the Polish state budget and business sector have also set aside a relatively big financial aid to this end.

In economy, Poland should concentrate its efforts on infrastructure projects, particularly in East-West transport and energy supply.

Despite its objectively limited possibilities to initiate specific actions, Poland should nevertheless be actively involved in the working out of action concepts, plans and projects across all of the aforesaid spheres of the EU's "eastern dimension".

## ***Conclusion***

In the context of Poland's forthcoming membership in the European Union, it is high time for Poland to responsibly speak out on its potentials to co-author the EU's common foreign policy after the enlargement, particularly towards Poland's immediate neighbours in the east.

But Poland also must prepare for its participation in such projects. If Poland's systemic transformation and EU membership progress successfully, Poland will be in a position in the years ahead to fulfil its role as a co-architect of the EU's "eastern dimension".

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## **Poland's Eastern Policy and Membership in the European Union**

The Polish foreign policy of the 1990s evinces a basic continuity, a common strategy towards the eastern neighbours. In this respect we are markedly different from our other Central European partners, particularly in the Visegrad Group, where the prevalent intent after 1989 was to turn away as soon as possible from the ex-cohabitants of the Soviet bloc and to entirely focus the national security thinking on the deepening of relations with NATO and the European Union. Only Slovakia under the Meciar government deviated from that pattern, but in stark contrast to Poland. That turn-away from East paradoxically helped to ease conflicts and strains in relations with Russia at a time when such tension also grew between Warsaw and Moscow. It probably also helped in maintaining relatively good economic relations with Russia.

While declaring its will to head West from the very onset of the transition, Poland did not turn its back on the East. All political forces stayed aware of a big weight of Poland's eastern neighbours in the context of national security, political and economic interests, but also history and culture. Some circles often overrated the significance of the fact that Poland was the first to recognise Ukraine's independence, while not acting as speedily to recognise Lithuania's independence. Such discussions were indeed relevant to the respective places that the two countries held in our politics and imagination.

Why are relations with our eastern neighbours of such great importance for us?

An answer could open with the issue of national identity. Both the history and myth of the Polish Commonwealth of before the Partitions continue to somehow linger in the minds and imagination of the Polish people. They thus engender a sense of contiguity that we feel for our neighbours. This thesis does not in the least contradict the unabated eagerness to flaunt the Polish "Westernness" and to build a progressive vision of Poland in alliance with the Euro-Atlantic community and the European Union. One good illustration of this complex Polish attitude to East and West is a particularly numerous group of young Polish experts in East European affairs against a firmly smaller number of policy experts in the affairs of, for example, France, Italy or the United Kingdom. It is not a mere coincidence. Fascination with the East must play a particular role in Poland.

This brunt of focus on the East also has its sources in what the 19th century language, now quite out of place, called a sense of "Poland's civilisational mission". Hundreds of experts went East for the Polish and Western money in order to analyse, evaluate and advise. That sense of mission expressed itself in what by that time was already a weakening belief that Poland was for its neighbours the trailblazer for post-

Communist transition in many fundamental walks of life. Also Poland's swing to the West, efforts to join NATO or see an enlargement of the European Union were advertised as trailblazing models.

An important factor explaining the intensity of our interests in eastern neighbours is the traditional thinking about Poland's geopolitics. Russia, sapped by the collapse of the USSR in 1991, is still being seen as a potential source of risk if not to the integrity then to the interests of Poland and the whole region. Zbigniew Brzezinski at one time quipped, referring to the dilemma facing both Russia and its neighbours: Russia with Ukraine is an empire; Russia will not be one without Ukraine. On this assumption, Poland has had and still has an obvious interest in supporting the sovereignty, stability and strength of Ukraine, but also of other countries situated between Poland and Russia.

An important factor of Poland's geopolitical thinking with an impact on our eastern policy is the 'Rapallo' myth, a fear of Russia's logrolling with the West at our expense. After 1989 such fears were associated with, among other things, 1997 bids to establish special NATO-Russia relations in connection with the then forthcoming enlargement of the Alliance by Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. More recently, they emerged in the wake of the outcome of Putin's response to September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, and the plan to go ahead with the second wave of NATO's enlargement. Gradually, the dissenting voices to Russia's new status in the Alliance died out. But it is worth recalling at this point the Washington Post's interview with Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz when he firmly objected to what virtually looked like the award to Russia of the right of veto in NATO's internal affairs, following some suggestions to this effect by Lord Robertson and the British Government acting in consultation with Washington. Cimoszewicz argued that had Russia been in NATO, the Alliance's operations in Bosnia or Kosovo would have been impossible.

Another instance of the "Rapallo" myth in action was the touted gas pipeline case and the widespread belief in Poland that the EU was dealing with Russia over the heads of Poland and Ukraine. Then came similar fears in the context of the talks on Kaliningrad. For a long time to come, the history and the memory of generations are fated to nurture in the Poles' conscious or subconscious this sense of the Russian threat, projecting on our attitude to the other states east of Poland.

Finally, let us mention one other relevant factor, namely the interest and place that our foreign policy assigns to the countries east of Poland. Over-simplifying, it is possible to group countries in terms of their role and place in history. There are countries

that naturally conceive of themselves as architects of history. Thus, by setting a course for history, they expect the other peoples to fall in line more or less passively. This "authorial" group certainly includes great nations, some of which with an imperial or colonial past.

There also are many states – mostly small or with short histories of independence – that perceive flexible adjustment to the external conditionalities that others have created as a major challenge to their foreign policies. There are in the Polish mind strong currents of that former attitude, which can also partly explain the histories of Polish uprisings and massive resistance even against overwhelming odds.

Poland needs a sense of adequate place in Europe. It will certainly depend on demography, economic strength or the vitality of Polish culture and science. Politically, our role and place in Europe will be largely contingent on the nature of our ties with the countries east of the Bug River, on how effectively can Poland influence the policies of the European Union and the United States in this region. This is where our ability to co-design the history of Europe rather than to follow the scripts written by others can indeed manifest itself.

A whole set of factors behind Poland's attitude to its eastern neighbours provokes mistrust if not hostility of Moscow's influential opinion-giving and political circles. They have often interpreted Poland's active eastern policy as a manifestation of an expansive anti-Russian activity, harking back to the distant past when Poland was a formidable regional competitor to Russia.

They also see Poland's mistrust, if not hostility, as an impediment to Russia's rapprochement with the West. Paradoxically, a look from that angle can help in the understanding of the motives behind President Vladimir Putin's visit to Poland in the early 2002. That visit undoubtedly evidenced that Moscow was beginning to see in Poland an essential and positive factor of international politics, European politics. But some Western commentators argued that the visit was primarily orchestrated to "neutralize" Poland through improved relations, and reflected a new awareness of the fact that Poland commanded a certain negative potential to prejudice Moscow's interests in a drive to get closer to the European Union and NATO.

For our analysis, Poland's role on the international arena and, particularly, how the Poles and the others see it, is important. In the latter half of the 1990s our country achieved quite an exceptional position. Let us recall the economic successes in the wake of the Balcerowicz reforms. They were particularly impressive in view of the start-up conditions that had been much worse here than in Hungary or the ex-Czechoslovakia. About the same

time, the myth of the Vaclav Klaus reforms in the Czech Republic splintered, while the Hungarian reforms proved in fact less spectacular (with Hungary's condition superior to Poland's) and could not set a model for less developed countries. But in Poland, administrative and systemic-legal reforms all reinforced the image of a rapidly progressing nation.

Poland's foreign policy clout was shored up by its potential, by the strength of its governing elites descended from the "Solidarność" camp and by its resolute pro-Western concepts, which were also eagerly jumped at by formations descended from People's (communist) Poland (PRL). A "two-track" policy that Poland had pursued when the USSR was in its death throes earned Poland quite a notability in the West, which right then was searching for a formula of coexistence with the disintegrating empire.

Poland proved able to put effective pressure on the NATO countries, notably the United States, when those countries looked for a substitute to the enlargement in the form of Partnership for Peace (PfP). A symbolic added value for Poland was the somewhat forgotten "Weimar Triangle" where Poland sat together with Germany and France. Poland was turning into a regional partner of the United States in policies towards Ukraine and other countries of the region. In the American perspective, Poland's significance appeared to grow not only in view of our role in the East, but also the processes within the EU that presaged a deepening of the differences between the partners across the Atlantic. Washington was eyeing Poland as a true ally, whereas certain European politicians (not just in France) as a "Trojan Horse". Poland's position in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) was also affected by the special nature of our relations with Germany under the chancellorship of Helmut Kohl. Poland's stabilisation, growth and integration with the West were among the front-running objectives of German policy, partly in response to the security concerns, partly as an expression of the feeling that after the normalisation of Germany's relations with France and Israel, Poland lingered on as the key unsettled heritage in bilateral relations after World War II.

All of those facts contributed to Poland's quite an exceptional position in the region. Many capitals perceived Poland as a "regional power", a state that the others should turn to in the first place. The heads of states so diverse as Romania, Lithuania, Ukraine or Bulgaria believed it only natural that their first foreign trips should take them to Warsaw. The then Czech foreign minister spoke of Poland's special, mediatory role in the region. Warsaw was where, among others, the presidential hopefuls of Slovakia and Bulgaria came to receive their unction. Certainly, Poland's demonstrably strong interest in the region

instead of a turn-away from it fuelled that "regional power" myth.

The rhetoric of a country that had achieved both an internal and external success and that wanted to and could help its neighbours, and, finally, that could act as their spokesman and advocate (the role that the Poles had erstwhile given to Germany), has substantially subsided over the recent years following changes in the international and internal situation. Poland certainly continues in the lead of the region's nations, but is no longer tendered as a trailblazer. All too many internal problems (not just economic) have cropped up in Poland to mention them all. Our negotiations with the European Union ranked among the toughest because of Poland's size, complex demography and regional structures, but above all agriculture.

Our very special role in the regional policy has also diminished. Poland's success with NATO has lost its exceptionality now when at the Alliance's gates we see a big group of follow-up candidates who need neither Polish good offices nor any Polish lobbying clout. This is, among other things, an effect of a sweeping, albeit implicit, redefinition of NATO's role after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. Accession to NATO has become easier, because NATO's value has dwindled. The Alliance is evolving from a classic defence pact towards a hybrid form with a predominate political dimension, a forum poised to be bringing together the old and the new members as well as Russia and perhaps some other countries, like Ukraine, from the post-Soviet space.

Likewise, in relations with the European Union, our role of an advocate or mediator has lost much of its former significance. We are in the rank and file of many applicants and we are rather in a more difficult position than many others. The debate on the Schengen borders shows how slim can our influence be on the EU's policy in matters important to our neighbours and ourselves. Also, the much-debated status of Kaliningrad after the EU's enlargement by Poland and Lithuania reveals the true workings of the EU's political decision-making mechanism, which Poland can hardly affect even if Poland's immediate interest is at stake. Our relations with the neighbouring countries no longer follow the parlance of "strategic relations", a rhetoric so vogueish in underscoring the special role assigned to Poland a few years ago.

Let us dwell for a while on the after-effects of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 for our regional role and its prospects. We now know for sure that NATO is not going to be an alliance of our dreams like the one we believed we joined in 1999. We had been dreaming about a "cold-war-like" alliance with an unambiguous mission and a sharp anti-Soviet edge. And like the

West we have belatedly realised that Russia is no longer a Soviet Union – not only because its military, economic and demographic muscle collapsed into pieces. Moscow's firm siding with Washington in the fight against terrorism brought to light a fundamental change on the geostrategic map at the dawning of the new century: Russia has become one of America's foremost allies, whereas the traditional allies of the United States have been relegated further down the list of Washington's priorities. As one avid watcher in Washington D.C. has put it: Europe's present-day map in Washington D.C. essentially features only three countries: the United Kingdom, Turkey and Russia.

Russia has a 300-million-strong Muslim population at its southern border, is beset with the Chechen problem and is at a greater risk of international terrorism than most other states. Certainly, Russia's nuclear capability is beefing up its status, also in view of a potential uncontrolled "leakage" of weapons to the "rogue states" or terrorist gangs, because Russia has poor safeguards for its military arsenal. Finally, Russia commands very substantial power raw material resources that can help America and Europe become partly independent of supplies from the Middle East. And Russia demonstrates its readiness to assist in overcoming the OPEC's monopoly position. Coming after years of exclusion, all of these factors make of Russia one of the main actors in international relations. This poses a relevant and quite unprecedented problem before Poland's foreign policy.

Poland, once it is both in the European Union and NATO and still willing to advocate the interests of its eastern neighbours, must not forget that for the entire West, Russia is and will be – in view of the aforesaid factors and its huge potential – a very significant if not crucial partner, one of much greater significance than the countries lying between Poland and Russia.

Furthermore, shaping up in the EU are concepts that envision in the long-haul Russia's membership in the European Union. Today, it is hard to define the weight of Russia's forthcoming position at NATO. A changeover of the West's approach to Russia will present a very complicated problem for Poland. Once Poland has become a new member of the European Union, it will forfeit some of its to-date trump cards (such as, for instance, no Schengen obligations on the eastern border), while its room for influencing the EU's policy will be strongly curtailed. Poland will have to focus on challenging integration issues and will in fact have to pour all of its élan vital into uniting with the Union. It will be a process of historic significance for Poland, but for many years to come it will be also generating highly traumatic social effects. As a new member state, Poland will have little

assets to bring to bear on the process of shaping the EU's policy. We also should bear in mind that the veto option available to the individual member states will be further and radically restricted, unlike the past when, for example, a weak Greece could invoke the veto power to protect its own interests against Turkey.

Our position as a "champion", "advocate" of the East's interests will be further compounded by the current populist anti-immigration tide in the EU. It reflects a sense of threat heightening after September 11<sup>th</sup>, but also a difficult situation on the European labour market. The fear of Muslim countries and Islam is seldom demonstrated in public, except for the extreme political parties, but the problem of proliferating xenophobic movements will not disappear. It will also be consequential for Poland and our neighbours in the form of, among other things, inflexibility on the right to employment on the EU market. Such symptoms will have an even stronger negative impact on the prospects of liberalization of border crossing procedures and hence the policy towards our eastern neighbours.

Poland's interests associated with neighbours to the east can, and, in certain circumstances, are bound to conflict with Russia's policy, although we should not be guided by any anti-Russian motives. Our natural goal is the strengthening of independence of those countries and their links to the West. A conflict with Russia over this should by no means be our goal. In view of Poland's foreign interests within the present post September 11<sup>th</sup> political cycle, one should follow the assumption that if the foreshadowed course of Russia's external and partly internal policy gets stronger, then Poland should be generating a climate of support and promotion for the interests of Ukraine and Belarus, but without an anti-Russian tenor. It is in Poland's interest to mobilise for the benefit of those countries the interest and aid capability of the United States and increasingly of the European Union. But, equally, we should increasingly think of finding within Russia itself the supporters of independence, democracy and development of Belarus and Ukraine.

That Russia is getting closer to the West is for us a most positive thing. The choice of this road by Russia, if definitive, will reduce the risk of Russia's destabilising role in the world and in our region. But this overall positive, long-term trend harbours for us at present a number of dangerously negative after-effects. After September 11<sup>th</sup> the United States and Western Europe showed a marked decline of their interest in Ukraine. This is understandable, even though the main argument heard in Washington D.C. touched upon the ways in which president Kuchma and his entourage exercised their power, on symptoms of corruption, banditry, economic and administrative



anarchy, and on weaponry sales to enemies of the United States.

However, there are grounds to believe that the issue is essentially about a downslide of Ukraine's strategic significance at a time when Moscow's role and value have been going up on the global "stock" market. One should entertain no illusions: the same /as for Ukraine/ goes true for Poland although appearances would indicate something different. And it goes without saying that Poland's situation is a far cry from Ukraine's. Poland's importance to the American policy mainly stemmed from Poland's stabilising role in the region and fractional tipping of the scales against Russia's ambitions. In the present constellation, these roles are dimming. The fact that president Aleksander Kwaśniewski was hosted in Washington D.C. with extreme cordiality was manifest of the other role that America has assigned to Poland – that of an essential pro-American factor in the new European configuration, a role that will grow once Poland has joined the EU.

Since right on the heels of the /terrorist/ attacks on New York City and Washington D.C., Poland has been holding a staunchly pro-American position, thus distancing itself from multiplying criticisms of America by European capitals, not only by France. The fiercest attack against the US-sponsored forthcoming operation in Iraq came from Berlin. All Europe is critical of Washington's failure to sign the Kyoto Protocol and a convention to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague. Meanwhile, the Polish authorities attempt to phrase their position so as to steer clear of a dramatic clash with America or the Union's Europe.

Under the official Polish international policy doctrine effective since the early 1990s, there is no need to choose between the USA and the European Union. In fact, however, the issue is far more complicated and the enthusiastic welcome (of Kwaśniewski) in Washington D.C. was manifest of it. Some Polish columnists and politicians got as euphoric as to again speak of Poland as a "regional power". But this time as America's nominee.

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*Leszek Jesień*

## **The EU's "Eastern Dimension from the Union's Perspective – a critical analysis**

The notion of the EU's "eastern dimension" often comes up in discussions as something where Poland as the EU's future member will have a bigger say or may even specialise in. This aspiration usually comes up in the context of complaints about a weak condition of the Polish state (both economic and political, not to mention military). And thus we deal with a sort of a myth that goes like this: Although after our accession to the EU we will be relegated to only a supporting player in economic and most political projects (due to the political weakness of our state), but the "eastern dimension" may propel us back to pride in our state. As it were, the Poles – and quite rightly – want to take pride in their state, but for now they believe that they cannot, which sometimes surprises our foreign interlocutors (but that is part of a different story).

The need to play a meaningful role in European politics and the belief (not always explicit) that Poland's eastern policy after 1989 was original and effective (with apparent grounds for pride), trigger the Polish urge to repeat that success but this time on an even bigger scale and with the use of instruments held by the EU. Oversimplifying, we could say that the "eastern dimension" works like a dream of a strong (Jagiellonian-vintage) state that employs the EU's instrumentation (in the absence of its own).

To verify whether these dreams stand any chances to materialize and under what conditions, it is necessary to make an approximate description of what the EU's future eastern policy could be like. In order to rate the capabilities of that future policy, we have to take a closer look at the Union's similar pattern-setting policies that at times come to be called dimensions of the European Union. Let us first take two examples: the policy in the Mediterranean basin (so-called Barcelona process) and the northern dimension, with emphasis on elements of relevance to our analysis.

- Both policies had their drivers in the immediately adjacent countries, sharing their borders and interests in areas encompassed by these dimensions. The lead promoters of the Mediterranean policy were Spain, France, Portugal and Italy. The main drivers of the northern dimension were Finland and Sweden.
- Both policies are about an area that is geographically close to the European Union and one that is a source of concern in view of the migration pressures and a potential for or actual regional instability.
- Both policies rely on largely economic instruments for planned or implemented projects. On the other hand, they are short of political instruments that would shore up the hopes for a more tangible stabilisation of the two areas.

The northern dimension appeared in the Union parlance with the accession of Finland and Sweden, and the European Council at Luxembourg adopted the first high-level document relating to that subject in December 1997. This is a very ambitious dimension. Part of it are projects covering telecommunications, transport, energy and environmental infrastructure, including the nuclear power issues. Furthermore, it is aimed at cooperation within what the EU defines as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pillar, which stands for internal security. All of these are expensive undertakings that make this dimension also financially ambitious. Meanwhile, if we analyse its pure financial aspect, we will see that no big financial allocations have been envisaged here and we are bound to conclude that no “new” money is involved. Projects within the external aspects of the northern are financially supported from INTERREG, PHARE and TACIS, and, more recently, ISPA and SAPARD as well. Thus, one should accept that a specific feature of this dimension is the linkage between its external aspects (cooperation mainly with Russia, but also Norway and Iceland) and its internal aspects (cooperation between EU member states), with the present candidates joining soon.

The Mediterranean dimension is markedly external. Its primary goal is to stabilise that region by promoting the principles of democracy and human rights (states can join if they sign the so-called Barcelona Declaration, which ushered in the so-called Barcelona process in 1995), human and economic relations, and by gradually building a free trade zone. One of the few significant successes of this dimension is that the EU’s southern states have succeeded in persuading the entire Union to make some new financial allocations within the framework of the MEDA programme.

However, there is within the action sphere of the European Union one other dimension that has proved very successful. It is the EU’s enlargement policy. The process of admission to the EU of countries from Central and Eastern Europe is certainly not progressing at a pace and in a way that we would wish for. Nonetheless, if we consider its assumptions, as well as the intentions and aspirations of the European Union, it turns out to be a great success for the EU. Europe’s serious concern after 1989 was that its eastern part would after its initial liberation again degenerate into a destiny similar to the one right after the first world war, i.e. into an explosive process of border changes and emergence of new states. That apocalyptic scenario proved partly true in the case of former Yugoslavia. But the rest of the region – stabilised with the PHARE programme and Europe Agreements – has not gone that way.

It would certainly be a great mistake if we attributed all of the credit for post-1989 peace and

stability in our region to the European Union alone. We ourselves have done a great deal. But if we now take another look at our region through Western Europe’s eyes, we will notice an interesting phenomenon. Namely, the instruments that the EU is applying in its relations with the countries at the threshold of EU membership are strikingly similar to the instruments employed in its relations within the Mediterranean dimension and, to some degree, within the junior and hence less advanced northern dimension. These instruments include the prevalence of economic measures and some fundamental roles by those EU member states that share their borders with a region of geographic proximity. Well known, after all, is Germany’s important role in promoting the EU’s enlargement, particularly with a view to Poland. A similar role is being played by the Nordic states with the difference that Finland and Sweden are for Estonia what Germany is for Poland. The predominance of economic instruments in all of the cases is evident: financial allocations from the EU budget are reinforced with financial means originating with the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. These funds are channelled into similar objectives (also because the target countries, though being less-off, have similar needs), such as development of infrastructure, environment protection, consultancy, support for institution building in public administration, etc., etc. Finally, there is a similar weakness of political instruments designed for the applicant countries. The highest forms of such instruments, i.e. the structural dialogue or invitations of candidate countries’ leaders to kowtows over lunches and dinners during the European Council sessions, fail to fulfil the need for a serious political rapport.

So how different those dimensions are, leaving aside the good will of the countries concerned, that it is possible to acclaim some of them as effective (Central-European dimension) and some others as limping at best?

Firstly, Central and Eastern Europe re-found quite early its *vocation européenne*, namely that the accession to the EU was possible. What evolved in its wake was a sui generis myth of a Europe towards which it was worth and possible to aspire. This condition cannot be fulfilled in the Mediterranean dimension, which addresses the countries that cannot join the EU in the foreseeable time horizon. Likewise, in case of the northern dimension, with Russia as the key partner, it would be hard to talk of such room for influence. Obviously, that belief was not present in the ex-Yugoslavia (or was too weak to avert an outbreak of nationalist-communist resentments). Consequently, one of the key prerequisites of the EU’s influence on its external environment was an offer of member-

ship in prospect, one credible enough to affect the public opinion and ruling elites. Once adopted by public opinion, the perspective of an “accession to Europe” makes of European political and social standards (however ill-defined) a sort of a cushion for the political life in a given country. Owing to this cushioning effect, any erratic moves or crazy ideas born in the minds of political leaders become politically impossible to carry through.

At one time in the past (who did it and why is another question) the European Union made a decision to enlarge itself by Central and Eastern Europe. That decision germinated into a myth that had a tremendous impact on relations among the states in this region.

Secondly, the Central-European dimension over time turned from a policy designed to influence an external area into a *sui generis* internal policy of the EU. This evolution was also observable in the changes that were taking place in the European Commission and the European Parliament. Both institutions established new units that took over the contacts with the applicants from the departments that originally were in charge of external relations with the whole outside world.

Thirdly, the northern dimension is specific in that it represents to a degree an internal policy of the EU. Although it also is addressing external partners – candidates to membership, including Poland, as well as Russia, Norway and Iceland, but one of its leitmotifs is cooperation between the EU’s northern member states themselves. This specificity will become even more pronounced once the EU has been joined by Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In this way, the Baltic will become a landlocked sea of the European Union and a central point of reference to the northern dimension.

In summary, the EU’s future “eastern dimension”, as we see (or rather envision) it has quite an essential flaw. It is presumably supposed to embrace Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, and sometimes mention is made in this context even of Moldova, Caucasian states or even Central Asia. Three of all those states can at least in theory become members of the EU in some distant future. They are Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, on the condition that they meet the prerequisites. But however long this perspective is, the presently considered eastern policy of the future should be subdivided into two policies – one for the future candidates and the other for Russia. Or, it should be a sort of an external policy mix that would in time grow into an internal policy with a clearly defined external aspect. The decision on strategic objectives of such a dimension would have to be made by the EU itself and this may prove to be most difficult for the “eastern dimension” idea. The Union is a com-

plex political system, which finds it fundamentally hard to define and implement its strategic interests. (This does not apply to the individual member states irrespective of their relative strength). Short of such a strategic decision by the EU, any future eastern policy will be drifting aimlessly with only a negligible change of that drift by EU officials as oarsmen. It will be a hardly effective policy and even if it produces some effect it will be by piecemeal cooperation on a small scale, with NGOs and corporate relations playing perhaps the biggest part.

The existing EU dimensions give us certain pointers to follow in a possible fine-tuning of the “eastern dimension” concept (if it is indeed bereft of a strategic aspect). Firstly, any hopes associated with such a policy should be modest and the project should be intended for many years to come. Secondly, it appears advisable to exploit the experience of the northern dimension for the benefit of interlinking what for the EU is external with what is internal in the area of cooperation in transport, energy and environment. Thirdly, the EU will indispensably have to generate additional funds for implementation of such a policy. Fourthly, this policy – patterned on the Barcelona process – should have embedded in it a political conditionality – observance of the rules of democracy and human rights.

Fifthly and lastly, one can hope for a major eastern policy based on strategic premises only when the EU becomes a more cohesive political structure, sometimes also called more federalist, because it is only then that it will be able to more precisely define its own interest as a whole.

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Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz

## Russia, a Top Neighbour to the European Union

Russia is and will in the future be a country of special importance to the European Union. One could even risk the view that after the EU's enlargement, the Russian Federation will become the EU's most important neighbour, whose condition and policy will be of major significance to both the intra-EU situation and the EU's relations with the other eastern neighbours.

Russia is destined to play such a special role on the strength of its following attributes:

- geographic potential;
- population potential; Russia's population (of 146 million) is the strongest of all European nations; it is worth noting that this potential is not only quantitative, but also qualitative, as reflected in a good standard of Russian society's education and many highly-qualified Russian experts;
- tremendously large natural resources; Russia has the world's largest natural gas deposits and is second only to Saudi Arabia in crude oil production; about 20% of the gas and 12-15% of the crude now used by the European Union originates in Russia;
- military capability; in spite of a critical condition of the Russian armed forces, Russia remains the biggest nuclear arms power and weapons exporter on the continent;
- meaningful influences that the Russian Federation exerts on the post-Soviet countries.

Although Moscow's power of influence on the region's countries has substantially diminished over the recent decade, Russia continues as one of the main (if not the main) trading partners to most of these states. Many of them depend entirely on Russian supplies of power raw materials. The Russian Federation also is an important transit country and, no doubt, the main military power in the region, and the attitude that it takes may determine the future of some currently "frozen" armed conflicts.

The special role that Russia is playing on the continent should unquestionably find its reflection in the EU's policy towards that country. It seems that Russia should not be treated as simply one of many partners within the EU's "eastern dimension". Alongside Russia's participation in possible projects springing from this dimension, it would also be advisable to develop a package of specific measures targeting the Russian Federation. Such a policy would be nothing new, because the idea of a special treatment of Russia has been quite pronounced in the EU's policies over the past decade.

Though a "privileged" treatment of Russia is justified by a number of objective factors, it, however, should be subject to some limitations. First of all, such a policy towards the largest neighbour should not

wholly dominate the Union's eastern policy at the expense of countries such as Ukraine, Moldova or Belarus. It would be equally not advisable if the Union "aligned" its policies towards those countries with Moscow's expectations for the sake of maintaining correct relations with the Russian Federation. In such a development, the EU's relations with the other eastern neighbours would be merely a derivative product of the Union's relations with Russia, a circumstance that could significantly obstruct the process of those other countries' rapprochement to the Community.

Although the European Union's active policy towards Russia appears to be extremely important, it should be borne in mind that the nature of these bilateral relations will largely hinge on the situation within the Russian Federation. At present, one can believe that Russia is a relatively stable country. But over the past decade Russia has failed to define its post-imperial identity either on the international or domestic scene. Nor has there come any unambiguous definition of a political-economic system model that would be the target for the Russian Federation. It looks like the process of "crystallisation" of the Russian State's identity and polity will be of evolutionary and long-lasting nature. In the meantime, Russia will be there as a not wholly predictable country and hence not a wholly credible partner in international relations.

Despite those limitations, it is possible already now to specify the basic spheres on which the EU's relations with Russia should focus in the years ahead. The are:

- Democratisation in Russia – above all the issues related to the observance of human rights and civil freedoms, as well as the inspiration for the growth of civil society in the Russian Federation;
- "Soft security" issues as mainly related to the effective border protection, visa regime in the traffic between Russia and the EU (with the transit to Kaliningrad across the EU territory as a special case), questions connected with illegal migration, smuggling, etc.;
- "Hard security" issues, a sphere that will grow in importance in step with the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Russia and the EU will have to consider an eventual two-way cooperation model for crisis management, peacekeeping missions, etc. One of the main problems to be taken on board in the future will be the EU's readiness for engagement in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Russia's propensity to accept and work together with the EU in solving conflicts in that region;
- Economic cooperation. One of the principal issues within this sphere is the idea of the Com-

mon European Economic Space (CEES). However, the implementation of this concept should be examined solely in the long-term perspective, because the creation of CEES would require far-reaching amendments in the Russian legislation. The energy sector is another key sphere in the EU-Russia economic relations. Here, cooperation could focus on such challenges as transport pathways (construction of new gas pipelines and co-participation in upgrading the existing ones, mainly those running across Ukraine), EU corporate investments in Russia's energy sector and the rules of access of the Russian gas to the EU market.

All of the aforesaid areas of cooperation are important to both Russia and the European Union. Thus, one should expect both sides to demonstrate an interest in dialogue and getting closer together within these spheres. At the same time, one needs to realize that the systemic differences between the EU and Russia, as well as the economic and social distances between them, often make for different perspectives of Brussels and Moscow in their perception of these problems. Hence the objectives that each of the two sides is striving for may prove to be quite different. A particularly telling example of this can be the problem of the border regime between the EU and Russia. The Union would like the border to be absolutely tight against illegal migrants, contraband and other pathological phenomena. On the other hand, Russia has an interest in keeping the border open in order to ease its citizens' contacts with the EU countries and to simplify the transit procedures for the traffic to and from the Kaliningrad enclave.

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## **Before the “Eastern Dimension” Comes to Be**

The nearer we get to the integration with the European Union, the more often we hear in Poland about the so-called “eastern dimension” of Brussels’ foreign policy, a dimension which is becoming an increasingly significant political project in view of the EU’s forthcoming common border with Eastern Europe. This affords both new possibilities and problems, as is best evidenced, for one, by the issue of the Kaliningrad District.

What chances, if any, are available to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland to play in that “eastern dimension” a role similar to the one now being played by Finland, a EU member bordering on the Russian Federation, in the shaping of the so-called northern dimension of the European policy? Certainly, one should not overestimate Poland’s potential role, although it is quite a sizeable country and a kind of a geographic lynchpin between East and West. But Poland is also too weak to exert a really meaningful influence on the international diplomatic games. True enough, Warsaw does not conceal its ambitions in creating the “eastern dimension” as attested to at least by the public pronouncements of the Polish foreign minister, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz. Brussels, too, seems to be appreciative of the Polish experiences, one evidence being its request to the Poles to give a hand in the development of the Union’s programme for Kaliningrad. And Kaliningrad looks like the best indicator of what Poland’s position in the Union’s rank-and-file is expected to be: a low-key consultative voice and high-profile compliance with the Union’s decisions, at least as far as relations with Moscow are concerned.

### ***A start needs to be made***

Poland’s situation is more difficult than Finland’s to the extent that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland is bordering on not only Russia, but also Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Moreover, Poland’s active support for the pro-Western aspirations of those states has many a time triggered strains between Warsaw and Moscow. Under the circumstances, it would be perhaps more appropriate to pursue a sort of two-track policy: as I indicated above, in relations with Russia, the Polish policy should be a derivative product of Brussels’ actions rather than a purely independent Polish overture. On the other hand, in relations with the other eastern neighbours, particularly Ukraine, Poland could afford to demonstrate more independence. It is not only about the support for Kiev’s pro-Western aspirations on the international scene. Ukraine becomes increasingly important as a transit country crisscrossed now and in the future by



important fuel transport routes. It is across Ukraine and possibly also across Poland that the Caspian oil and gas may flow into Europe. Europe is in no need of them at the moment, but in view of the unstable situation in the Middle East and a slow but steady depletion of the Russian resources, the Caspian power raw materials and their transport routes are gaining on significance. Granted that, Poland's involvement in that region – not necessarily single-handed, but, for instance in association with the United States – may not only bring tangible benefits to Warsaw (such as diversification of power input supplies, almost all of which are now coming from Russia, or transit revenues) but also strengthen Warsaw's hand in the prospective creation of the “eastern dimension” of the European policy.

### ***Nongovernmental organizations***

What I have referred to has to do with so-called big politics. But Poland commands one other extremely important instrument that requires neither big financial expenditures nor grand political decisions. This instrument is the NGOs or independent nongovernmental organizations that provide assistance to the post-Soviet nations. Poland has a multitude of them, including a few dozen weighty ones that have accumulated experiences in cooperation with the East. Their activities range over almost all areas – from help in setting up similar independent foundations (particularly significant in Belarus, where the growth of a civil society seems to be the only effective rebuff to Alyaksandr Lukashenka's dictate) to special projects for journalists, lawyers or farmers from nearly all ex-USSR countries.

That is not all. It is also worth recalling that the independent Eastern Institute (Instytut Wschodni) for a dozen years has organized the Eastern Europe Economic Forum in Krynica, south-eastern Poland. Dubbed an “East-European Davos”, the event annually brings together economists and politicians from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. International conferences and symposia on the most pressing problems in this part of the world are organized by such independent institutions in Poland as the Stefan Batory Foundation, Centre for International Relations, Centre for Social-Economic Analyses (CASE) or the Institute of Public Affairs. The fact that no other European state can boast of so many effective independent organizations bringing aid to the ex-USSR countries is Poland's unquestionable trump card that the Polish authorities have not been fully playing up yet.

### ***What follows from this?***

When they shoe a horse, a frog raises its leg – is how a malicious columnist once quipped on the Polish aspirations in the area of co-authoring big international politics. Indeed, as I have already noted, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland rather stands no chances to become a regional power, but it does have some meaningful assets that it can bring into play. It means that Poland does have a chance to influence Brussels' eastern policy and not a slim chance at that. Regrettably, Warsaw's main weakness still seems to be the lack of a coherent vision of that eastern policy, even for Warsaw's own benefit, as well as the consensus problems in this matter between Poland's key decision-makers – the president, the government and the parliament, quite irrespective of which ruling coalition runs the country at any given time. These obstacles need to be removed well before we officially declare our willingness to create the EU's “eastern dimension”.

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Stanisław Ciosek

## **Poland and Russia in the Context of Enlargement of the European Union\***

Firstly, I believe that Poland has pursued and is pursuing a wise eastern policy. Irrespective of the political orientations in power in Poland at any given time, I am convinced that to the extent that the conditions have been permitting, we have practiced, almost instinctively, quite a reasonable policy. I do not only defend this policy because I share responsibility for it. When in 1989 we opted for the Western orientation, Soviet troops were still stationing in Poland and perforce our aspirations to join NATO were not articulated yet. Ridding Poland of the foreign troops was the priority. It was not until the time turned appropriate that we began to more clearly articulate our strategic political choice, namely the North Atlantic Alliance. Thus, the Polish policy as an art of achieving the possible stemmed from the realities. The world also perceived it in that way.

I witnessed and participated in those events when the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact were dissolving themselves. At that time Russia was looking at us as at a glass wall, or rather as if through a glass wall, seeing real political partners elsewhere. Those partners were the United States, Germany, France, the great European states, while Poland went unnoticed. It was not until the moment when we expressed our will to join NATO that Russia focused back on us. It also became perceptive of Poland's different political choice. Russia had cherished the hopes that some form of "get-together" with Poland would come. A kind of romanticism prevailed in the Russian policy at that time. It did not last long. Eventually, Poland's choice began to be increasingly perceived as unfriendly to Russia. But all of that time we were trying to convince Russia that our choice was not spear-headed against it. We kept emphasizing that as far as the European integration process, stabilization and security spheres were concerned, our thinking did not come to a stop at the Bug River and that we were mindful of Belarus and Ukraine as well as Russia. Obviously a laugh was made of it and it was only years later that it turned out to be no subterfuge on Poland's part, that we were telling the truth and that such indeed our policy principles were.

And we fairly presented that to the Russians as an invariable Polish policy in the span of the whole decade. I practiced it without any change, first as an ambassador and then adviser to the president. Today, holding up my head, I can exactly repeat all of those things that I was saying to the Russians ten years ago. No change has come in this argumentation. Our intentions towards Russia have been invariably open and friendly. But quite several years had to elapse before Russia began to believe it and before President Putin, then fresh in power, declared in a meeting with his foreign ministry staff that political relations with Poland represented a model. Well, it is indeed so that

\* This paper was originally presented in the Centre for International Relations on 4 June 2002.

President Putin's Russia needs good political relations with Poland, considering Putin's geostrategic choice of the course for Europe. Good relations with Poland also proved to be needed for oil, gas, movement of people and the right climate in Europe's political salons.

The question of the Kaliningrad District is an important one in the present-day EU-Russia-Poland relations. Standing in the vestibule, the waiting room for the European Union, we obviously have quite limited possibilities and a relatively weak position to have our voice heard. Thus we cannot articulate our views all too categorically, but something needs to be done with the million-strong people in Kaliningrad. EU politicians insist that there have to be visas full stop. On the other side, we hear the Russians come up with crazy ideas of sealed railway cars and calls for an extraterritorial corridor. But I envision a situation when the inhabitants of Kaliningrad will have to possess, and they do not, their regular foreign travel passports and long-term multiple-entry visas that may cost a symbolic dollar. Quite unnecessarily President Putin reacted to the EU position in such categorical words, while the EU is quite unnecessarily clinging to its position. Talks with the Union are technically difficult, because the commissioner is coming from Brussels with a rigid mandate, which requires arduous intra-Union consultations. Still, I do not doubt that the European Union will find a way out for the Russians.

The next point. I believe that there is no miraculous third way for Russia, one that the Russians have persistently sought and even still seek sometimes. Russia will have no better idea for the world than the one that this world is already implementing. This is a lesson I learned in Russia. I do not believe in any third way, or any Russian-desired miraculous ways at a time of this tremendously rapid progress of globalisation. Russia, with its widespread Western management know-how, huge raw materials and somewhat worn-out but still functioning infrastructure, with a good education of its people, has to deliver results and quickly, and it is already beginning to deliver. This is already evident in Russia's economic growth. Over 80% of the assets on Russian soil are already in private hands. This will inevitably produce results, because the owners have a vested interest in owning productive and profitable assets.

Let us now go back to the specific questions put before me. The current state of Polish-Russian relations is very good in the political dimension and very bad in the economic dimension. The reason for that is simple: the Russians can do without us, because we do not have anything unique for them, anything that would give Poland a trump card. Instead of buying from us, the Russians can buy everything, and often

more cheaply, elsewhere. On the other hand, we are doomed to getting gas and oil from Russia, just as Europe is. In a short while, I hope, we will pursue a common energy policy as a member state of the European Union. The Russians are already pressing for the respective standard ratio of Russian crude on the EU market to be 50% and not 30%. The Americans have recently signed with the Russians an oil delivery accord, because the oil supplies from Russia give them more security than such supplies from the Middle East. Again, on the other hand, the story of Polish exports to Russia looks strange. It would seem that after President Putin had offered "yes, I am going to buy from you", the Poles should be showering the Russian side with commercial offerings. In reality, nothing like that has taken place. In fact, I would say that the Polish economy has failed to respond.

I would not blow out of proportion the impact of the European integration on the Polish-Russian relations. I believe that Poland will have greater room for manoeuvre in its relations with Russia when Poland is a EU member than it has now, at least in the economic domain. A number of Polish exportable products, which we do not subsidise, are more expensive than their EU counterparts. It is not that the EU will bankroll the difference for us. It simply means that we will have to find the money to fulfil the EU requirements.

Now about the multilateral cooperation between Poland, Lithuania and Russia in an era of the EU's enlargement. The Kaliningrad issue continues to be important in this context. However, there will be no particular special solutions for St. Petersburg. Just as Kaliningrad poses a problem, so St. Petersburg is neither an encouragement nor anything special.

I am firmly convinced that Poland's potential significance as an East-West transit country is an issue of key significance. But we, the Poles, are not able to exploit this to our benefit. We should be offering the Russians some incentives under the headline such as "when you transit Poland, you will find it cheaper and faster than elsewhere". Meanwhile, Poland has no transit traffic policy, for we have not yet learned what it means to be a transit country. We used to be a bulwark of the Warsaw Pact and now again we are a bulwark but this time of the European Union, so we have fallen from being one bulwark into being another one and we have not yet evolved the attributes of a country that reaps the benefits from transit. This has gone as far as to see Poland not seek an adequate amount of money for the transit of natural gas, because this has simply not occurred to any of the post-1989 Polish government teams.

In conclusion: Russia has simply opted for that model of socio-economic evolution that has generated growth for the world. Furthermore, it turned out after

11<sup>th</sup> September that there is one common enemy there. And I believe that this process of continental integration will be progressing, even if with some resistance and twists, but it will steadily move on.

Europe needs both the Russian market and Russian raw materials, including those that generate power. Europe also needs the people from this part of the continent. Thus, I find the Kaliningrad hullabaloo over visas slightly amusing. I do not quite figure it out. Concerns can really arise if the arsenals are jeopardized. But there is a way out of it, too. I am not sure if you have noticed, Ladies and Gentlemen, that faced with a real threat, the Western world and Russia respond together. When the Y2K crunch came in 2000, the computers were readjusted and nobody knew what they would do next, the Americans sent their hostage officers to the Russian command centres and the Russians did vice versa to make sure that there would be no WMD-tipped missile launch by mistake. Things have developed along similar lines after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The world has ranked the Russians as belonging to the civilization of satiated people and thus they are in the same group as we are. These processes will be going on.

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*Zdzisław Najder*

**Poland's Role in  
Ukraine's Integration  
with the EU  
and the Possibilities of  
Creating the "Eastern  
Dimension"**

What is the nature of what one calls 'Ukraine's European option'? The question is all the more valid as I have just received a policy document entitled "The European Choice" signed by President Kuchma and elaborated by his staff, and addressed to the Supreme Council or Ukraine's Parliament. It is a maiden and extensive paper – over twenty pages in packed type. I thank Ukraine's embassy for making it available.

Firstly, however, let me say a few words about the current rules of the international political game.

To wit, we have observed for the recent nine months a return to an overt domination of state interests over treaty relationships and ideological declarations. This is significantly true of big states. I do not need to elaborate on this, as everybody seems to have taken note of it. Let us take NATO as one example. It is no longer stated as before that this Alliance is resting on the common values and a substantial similarity of political institutions. The Eastern Studies Centre (OSW) in its study has tagged the relations between Presidents G.W. Bush and Vladimir Putin as a "friendship for show". On another occasion, I took the liberty of a more frivolous quip, calling it a "sit-com" policy with a recorded applause off the frame. This is what the two gentlemen actually do: they suspend their voice and right at that point someone is clapping hands.

The United States is today the only global power and the style of its international policy affects the entire environment. What I call a "sit-com" style foreign policy refers mainly to the foreign policy conduct in compliance with the internal policy exigencies. This is true of both the so-called fight against international terrorism and the clamping down of customs duties on steel, subsidies to the American farming and other moves, which infrequently remain in conflict with the earlier American declarations about the endeavour to maximize trade liberalization on the global scale. The US President's decisions can most simply be explained as nothing else but globalisation tailored to the requirements of the internal pre-election policy. The European Union, too, has been paying recently more attention to its internal requirements rather than its external influences.

Summing up this bullet-like description of the international rules of the game, one has to admit that the positions of Poland and Ukraine have deteriorated over the recent 9 months. They now are more objects than subjects in the international alignment of relations and forces. At this moment, one cannot imagine President Bush to deliver in Warsaw a speech similar to the one he made in June last year, because now one speaks a different language about different things.

The processes in Ukraine run in conflicting directions. On one hand, the economic integration

with Russia is progressing. On the other hand, Ukraine's government and particularly president stress on various occasions, including that of the 'European Choice' document, that Ukraine is politically different from Russia. However, Russia is now in many respects ahead of Ukraine in its Western overtures, notably in relations with the USA, NATO or in terms of its economic growth dynamics. Russia's relations with the United States are presently closer, while Ukraine's relations with the European Union are nondescript. At the same time we observe an upswing of pro-European attitudes in Ukraine. All public opinion surveys are indicative of that that surge and also of increased unambiguity of pro-European declarations. At present, if the call "to Europe – together with Russia", is repeated, its meaning is different. It now means "in cooperation with Russia" and not "in conjunction with Russia".

Of late, one observes in Ukraine an evolution as if in response to what is taking place on the international scene, an evolution from the Anatoli Zlenko doctrine to the Kuchma programme. I remind you that the Zlenko doctrine, almost official until recently, professed a particularly close cooperation between Ukraine and the United States and Russia – the two strategic partners, while sidelining the European Union. Kuchma's new doctrine seems to spell a return to the position formulated four years back by the then foreign minister Boris Tarasyuk, who, at least in his declarations, was pro-European, pro-Western and pro-Union. Now the Kuchma document is largely an elaboration on the Tarasyuk formulations, with greater emphasis on the Ukrainian policy targets: "we want to join NATO, we want to join the European Union".

What is the nature of the Kuchma programme? The over 20 pages are filled almost exclusively with economic issues, the big-scale reform of entire economic structure. On the other hand, there is no mention at all of society, civil society or legal order. In other words, while using the European jargon, Kuchma and his aides write only about the 1<sup>st</sup> Pillar, as if the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pillars did not exist for them at all. Also in the chapter entitled "Practical steps towards the European integration", there is reference to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria solely within the economic dimension. This is an essential misunderstanding, firstly because the EU's 1<sup>st</sup> Pillar is functioning within the more general political surroundings, democratic and civic structures. Also because to declare the aspiration for the Union without demonstrating the realisation of what this needs to entail is a hardly interesting or convincing ploy. And, finally, because Ukraine is not a partner like Sweden, Switzerland or Norway, which have contributed or may contribute a hefty economic dowry to the EU.

Ukraine may one day become a meaningful trading partner to the EU, but at present the perspective of its accession to the Union's structures not only within the political but also economic dimension can, point blank, strike only awe in the West. A more careful reading of not merely declarative, but more substantive statements about Ukraine shows that nobody in Europe, except Poland, is talking about Ukraine in earnest. And the time horizon following from the Kuchma document indicates that Ukraine will submit its application for EU membership in 2007. This is about the same time horizon as Tarasyuk drew up three years ago. Kuchma is even cutting short the date for Ukraine's accession readiness, putting it at 2011. In short, this time horizon as outlined in the document is tremendously near. Even leaving aside the present mood in the European Union and considering only the social and economic realities, not to mention the need to delineate and protect the borders, this is a short time horizon, while the distance to cover remains immense.

Now, what is Ukraine's overall attitude towards Poland? We have got accustomed to the ceremonial declarations about special relations, about strategic partnership. But they have been more frequent and more consistent on Poland's part rather than Ukraine's. At the same time, there is a visible disinclination in the recent years to admit that Ukraine owes anything to Poland. An official government publication marking Ukraine's 10<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary, makes no mention of the fact that Poland was the first state to recognize Ukraine's independence. I have come to experience this many times: there are declarations about friendship, while in practice Ukraine's attitude does not prove close and its reluctance is evident. My intention here is not to up our ante, but to have certain realities recognized. Worth recalling is the fact that minister Tarasyuk spoke differently. He often admitted that our two countries shared special relations and that Poland was a partner on whom Ukraine could count first. Now, in President Kuchma's document, the "strategic partnership with Poland", the only country mentioned in this context, is defined as based on "the fundamental European values". This can be interpreted as a positive signal and as a symptom of realism.

The time has come for me to move to the raised questions. What are Poland's real chances to support Ukraine's endeavours to integrate with Europe. I think that these chances are slim. Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz elucidated it at one recent time in his well-known essay on Poland's eastern policy, where he pointed to Poland's political and economic weakness. It is not to say that a low level of our economic capabilities is unimportant in this context. In my view, it is very important, because even though we are not capable



of extending significant aid, we are ready to argue for Ukraine's case, we are ready for analyses and debates on this subject.

I believe that two areas merit to be listed among the priority tasks for our foreign policy and for cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian political milieus and nongovernmental organizations. Firstly, the important thing is to keep our EU partners aware of the existence of Ukraine's European yearnings and aspirations and of the fact that they are legitimate to a degree. Secondly, it is important to make our Ukrainian neighbours aware of the practical criteria of Europeanism, and how much even we must and will still have to do to be part of the European Union, so that we do not only accede, but are seen and heard there. This seems to go without saying, but in the recent years Poland has measured up to the latter challenge only to an insignificant extent. I also think that all too often the authorities of Poland and Ukraine contented themselves with declarations. Declarations alone mean little. I am not referring to events such as the foot-dragging on the date of opening of *Cmentarz Orłąt* (Cemetery of Young Eagles) in Lviv (Lwów), but a fact of wholly different nature. Namely in President Kuchma's document there is no mention at all of fundamental political reforms in Ukraine. This may be also held against us, i.e. because over so many years of our discussions we have failed to get across to the Ukrainians a clear-cut message that without relevant political reforms there can be no talk of materializing Ukraine's aspirations to EU membership.

There is one more important and delicate element. As it were, from Ukraine's perspective it is necessary to choose between political integration with Russia and political integration with the European Union. This choice is up to Ukraine to make. Whatever we think of it is not really of much significance. This is a real choice as one has to be aware and remember the fact that Russia is not a candidate for EU membership not only because it does not declare such an intention, but, above all, because Russia's candidacy is not a realistic prospect. True, there are, here and there, some American or even West European politicians who claim that it is a possibility under some conditions, but when we think of seriously, we are bound to come to the conclusion that it is an impossible thing at least within the mental horizon that we follow at this moment. The impossibility results at least from the fact that the Union cannot admit a state that is not only bigger than the whole EU, but also incomparably more complex in population and cultural terms than the European Union is.

On the other hand, if Ukraine declares its intention to accede to the EU and formulates its aspirations accordingly, it needs to find in itself those

attributes that distinguish it from Russia. It needs to invent, create, show and wave its European passport. We (Poland) have some knowledge of this passport, because it is also part of our history, but in reality this kind of awareness does not go much beyond Poland.

However, I believe that at this point it is inadvisable to say in any international forum that Poland supports Ukraine's aspirations for integration with the European Union, because it can only perpetuate the impression that Poland wants to joint the Union as a maiden with a baby bigger than herself. This certainly does a disservice to our interests and certainly a disservice to Ukraine's interests. In order to speak of accession to the EU in earnest so that we can echo it in earnest, Ukraine must accomplish a gigantic work – not only economic, but also political.

What means can we employ to support and assist in Ukraine's European aspirations? The important thing is not to frighten the European Union. It really is not only a matter of our short-term interest, although we indeed have to take care of securing our interests first in order to be able to assist our even dearest friends later on. It is mainly a matter of grading the very tough challenges that the Union perceives ahead of itself. After all, we (Poland) are a difficult challenge for the Union, of which we often tend to forget. Since the integration process is a great challenge and a huge burden for us, we prefer not to remember what kind of a challenge it is for the Union not only in terms of the labour market, but also in legal, financial, technical, as well as political-ideational terms.

But there are other means with which we can support the Ukrainian friends, and this brings us back to the issues discussed many times before. It is about the issue of visas. This is already a foregone conclusion. Until recently, representatives of Polish authorities used to say that Poland would introduce the visas at the last moment or not at all. Such talk was unwise and harmful. Now the only outstanding problem is how to introduce the visas. A signal for us as to how much there is still to be done and how much we still can gain, is the hesitation on the part of Ukraine's government as to whether it should not introduce the visa regime for the Poles in reciprocity. These hesitations are at least justified by the fact that Ukraine has obtained the associated state status, so it does not want to automatically retaliate with the visa regime for its nearest neighbour. If it did not, it would be a very good move for Poland for many reasons, including economic, because in the same way as the Americans travel to Poland without visas and generally spend quite a lot of money here, so the Poles travel to Ukraine. It also is for us an opportunity to send some political signal. It is worth to invent some distinction

between the visa requirement at the Polish-Ukrainian border and the visa regime for the citizens of the other states, which are on the European “black list”. This is not about any deviations from the requirements. For example, I propose two possible measures. First: to start issuing visas as early as possible and to introduce two border crossing points, two separate “windows” at the border in order to accustom those who cross the border to pass on with visas. Also: to begin preparing the consular offices for that well in advance so that this whole process is more seamless. Second: to push apart at least symbolically by, for instance, two weeks the deadlines for the visa requirement for the Ukrainians – and for the citizens of the states that have not signed the readmission agreement. Let it happen according to the principle: if you make a gesture, we will go out of our way to respond positively. The main difficulty is related to the question of how much money we will have available for improving the performance of consulates, how many offices we will open in Ukraine and, fundamentally, what will be the period for which we will introduce national visas. There is still a lot to win here.

In summary: Ukraine’s economic integration with Russia is progressing, whereas it follows from the political documents issued by the Ukrainian authorities that the Ukrainians do not want to superimpose a political integration on the economic one, but, conversely, they want to be politically associated with the West, the main highway to which is leading through Poland. However, an essentially difficult aspect is the issue of the Ukraine-Russia border, which is neither demarcated nor guarded. Mr. Tadeusz Olszański from the Eastern Studies Centre has long promoted the thesis that Ukraine will never accede to the EU, because it will never install a border with Russia, because it is simply impossible to do that politically or psychologically. If this is indeed true, the case is closed. The European Union cannot accept in its body a state that has no borders. The demarcation of the border and the conclusion of the border treaty with Russia are being postponed, but are not completely taken off the agenda. However, unless this problem is resolved, there is practically no point in discussing anything.

And the final question asked by Paweł Kowal: is there a possibility to develop multilateral Polish-EU programmes in support of Ukraine’s integration with the European Union? In my view, any multilateral agreements at this moment carry the risk of continuing empty talk. There will be just declarations, meetings, chats and conferences to review good

intentions and bring no practical effects. The opponents of the enlargement can also exploit such events to frighten the Union. That is why I am cautious about such initiatives, all the more so as I have taken part in a few such conferences and I saw that they were at best fountains of well-wishing declarations. On the other hand, I appreciate the significance of bilateral projects. Still, I believe that the Ukrainian side should understand that Poland’s political possibilities are limited at present. We are on the final straight of our integration process with some uncertainties before we cross the finish line. So let us focus on concrete things and not on promises. One example could be practical cooperation between local self-governments that the central governments would support. Another is cultural cooperation where there is plenty to do at not too much expense. One other is scientific cooperation, which is going on at a low ebb. The important thing also is the political cooperation, which should result not merely in declarations of good intent, but real interaction of the governments in concrete matters, such as the fight against contraband or the protection of natural environment. It sounds quite modest, but we cannot afford more at this moment.

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*Paweł Kazanecki*

**Belarus, Poland  
and the EU's "Eastern  
Dimension"  
(points for debate)\***

The themes addressed to me are, in my view, quite broad-ranging. I will thus try and narrow down my presentation to the shape of the European Union's policy towards Belarus over the recent few years and what point this policy has arrived at today. In this context, I will try to ponder the possible role of Poland and Polish foreign policy towards both the EU policy and Belarus alone. I will not describe in this connection the internal situation in Belarus, because I believe that it is familiar to everybody present here today and, besides, the discussion on whether we deal with a "softer" or "harder" regime, more or less authoritarian, would not be productive.

First of all, let me address the question of what the EU or the European countries in general did after 1996 or after Lukashenka had staged a veritable coup d'état against the democratic 1994 Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. There were at that time several responses of European policy, which we should recall.

The first response was the flat ban on travel by the Lukashenka administration officials to the EU member states. That blockade was lifted at the moment when Lukashenka consented to the opening of the OSCE Mission Office in Minsk. A scandal marred the very start of the work by the Mission. A day before the OSCE Office opened, two boys were sentenced to two years in prison for painting graffiti. Thus, right at the outset Lukashenka demonstrated where the place of that Mission in Belarus was.

The Mission faced two key objectives. The main problem for the EU or the European states in general was that the 1996 November constitutional crisis eliminated Belarus as a partner to any talks. The European states adopted the position that the 1994 Constitution was the sole legitimate basic law in Belarus and that the amendments made in effect of the 1996 referendum were not legal. Thus, the parliament elected subsequently was also spurned as illegitimate and, in fact, the only legal authority remaining was that same, loathsome president Lukashenka. His legitimacy originated with the 1994 Constitution and continued until June 1999. Thus, to maintain relations with president Lukashenka after June 1999 would fly in the face of the accepted doctrine of diplomacy. The ensuing discords led to a crisis of the European countries' relations with Belarus. That is why, the main objective before the OSCE Mission was to bring about democratic elections that would lead to a legitimate mandate of parliament as a partner to the talks, as a legitimate instance of Belarussian authority. But that strategy turned awry and the parliamentary elections in 2000 as well as the presidential elections that followed in 2001 were held in breach of all rules of democratic election.

Hence, the current situation is that none of the Belarussian authorities is legitimate in the light of the

\* This is an excerpt from the discussion held on 25 June 2002 at the Centre for International relations

old diplomatic doctrine that the EU states first adopted. But nobody mentions it today. The problem remaining for the European countries is how not to sever diplomatic relations with Belarus, because that would precipitate the loss of its empowerment as a state and would throw it wholly into Russia's hands. The whole doctrine that had operated until the 2001 elections proved not credible enough and since those elections no new formula of cooperation with Belarus has been worked out.

One can ask why this is the case and what the EU or the European countries wanted to achieve through the activities of the OSCE Mission. The Belarussian authorities often vociferate that the Mission's main objective was to overthrow the president's regime. I personally think that Europe was not after that objective at all, and not in the least was Germany, which headed the OSCE Mission. I believe that the main objective of German policy was to legitimise president Lukashenka as a partner to talks, all the more so as Lukashenka was seen by Europe as a guarantor of stability in the region and a guarantor of stability in Belarus.

What is the situation like today? There is no Europe's policy towards Belarus, there is no new concept that would enable a move forward in diplomatic relations with that country. A new initiative was launched recently. It was described as a "visit of last resort", a visit by MEPs (Members of the European Parliament), which would give Lukashenka a way out of the impasse. Lukashenka would no longer recognize the OSCE Mission as a partner to talks. The Mission's Ambassador was barred entry into Belarus. The Mission's top officials found their Belarussian visas expired. Thus, the Mission's office, which in theory is still operational, does not play any role, because residing there is only a secretary and a few clerical officers with no representative or decision-making function. A visit by EU representatives could indeed give Lukashenka a "sidestep", a possibility of sidestepping the OSCE Mission issue and moving onto a plane of diplomatic contacts with European countries within a new formula.

But can such a prospect be attractive to Lukashenka? It also is worth considering Russia's policy towards Belarus, as, perhaps, a new chapter in relations between Belarus and Russia is opening up. It is hard to predict in which directions these relations are really heading. Until 2002, Russia had unequivocally supported Lukashenka. It had recognized the legitimacy of all successive elections in Belarus and had recognized all authorities as legitimate representatives of the Belarussian State. The first signs that Russia perhaps did not quite approve of Lukashenka came in June 2001, when Moscow did not give its unambiguous support to Lukashenka

before the elections. However, it rather took the form of sounding out the Belarussian public opinion as to whether there would emerge in Belarus a meaningful competitor to Lukashenka in the presidential race. But then in July any doubts about Russia's attitude disappeared and Moscow gave Lukashenka a big credit, which enabled him to calm down the public opinion, disburse wages and salaries and quietly run the elections. All of that happened in return for the sale to Russia of a few ranking state enterprises in Belarus. However the present year (2002) shows that Russia is no longer going to approve of Lukashenka's to-date behaviour. A conflict is brewing. The clearest evidence of that is Lukashenka's latest visit in the Kremlin and, finally, Putin's firm declaration yesterday (24 June 2002) that there could be no talk of any union between Belarus and Russia, a union that would de facto spell Belarus' incorporation into Russia. Hard to say if Putin's plans really rule out the absorption of Belarus, but his declaration means a resolute "no" to Lukashenka's any ambitions to be treated as an equal partner if it came to the creation of a new form of statehood.

How would Lukashenka react to that? In this context, I think that the EU's proposal would be for Lukashenka quite a good way out of an awkward situation in which the complete financial dependence on and increasing claims from Russia restrict his room and in fact place him in a position that he has never accepted, namely the position of a governor rather than a peer.

Will Lukashenka really use that opportunity? We will see in the course of the next two months. It may be a moment at which either Lukashenka begins to "flirt" anew with the European countries, or his regime begins to crumble. A bankrupt regime without European funds or with "short" Russian funds is heading for a collapse within the next two years.

There also are other premises that would make the prospect of Lukashenka's coming to terms with the EU unlikely. For the past two months there has been talk that Lukashenka will cancel the local elections scheduled for the next year (2003). Cancelling them would again disrupt the chances for a legitimate, democratic change in Belarus. Related to that are the plans for a referendum that would give support for a union with Russia, but one of the points in the referendum also is to enable Lukashenka to again run for presidency of Belarus. The current constitution, which Lukashenka forced in 1996, limits presidency by the same man to two terms in office. Now we are in Lukashenka's second term, so his next presidential bid without amending the constitution is impossible.

Against this broad background, I would like to take on board the question of Poland's role. The Union and the European countries in reality have no concept

of what to do about Belarus. The past four years have also showed that the EU's position on Belarus is highly inconsistent, flexible and fluid under the impact of various factors both in the internal situation in Belarus and in the overall international situation. One can say that in reality the European countries are not interested in Belarus, that it is not a serious political problem. For Poland, Belarus as an immediate neighbour, is important. Poland's role in this region, also vis-à-vis Belarus, is very important. But an analysis of what the Polish government is doing in this area prompts a judgement that the Foreign Ministry regrettably shows no signs of any policy concept about Belarus, nor even an attempt to work it out.

On one hand, we observe two serious initiatives – the aforesaid “visit of last resort” initiative largely developed in association with Polish diplomats, and the talks on establishing a Polish-Russian commission on Belarus. Talks to this effect were held during Putin's visit to Warsaw, and what is really quite significant here is not so much whether Poland would play a really important role on such a body, but the very fact of Russia's recognition of Poland's interest in Belarus. On the other hand, we see no concept of what to do about Belarus. There were meetings between the Polish foreign minister Cimoszewicz and his Belarussian counterpart Khvastovy, which would be indicative of attempts to establish some contacts with the regime and to overcome the blockade. Later came ill-considered diplomatic notes. I am referring particularly to the latest note concerning a Radio Polonia broadcast, which was rebroadcast by the Belarussian State radio. In its rebroadcast, the radio expurgated the speech by foreign minister Cimoszewicz. The Polish foreign ministry reacted very sharply and, in my view, overdid it, because that speech did not fit in with the programme formula that had been originally agreed upon with the Belarussian radio.

So much about the current situation. Now I would like to ponder what Poland really could do in relation to Belarus. What should be the substance of what is called the “eastern dimension”, or a Polish foreign policy strategy towards the neighbouring countries.

Firstly, it should be restated that Europe takes no interest in Belarus and I also think that it has not developed any concept about the rapidly changing situation in Ukraine. Nor Europe has any concept for a long-term strategic cooperation with Russia. But it is just the eastern countries – Belarus, Ukraine, Russia – that will become the main foreign policy issue after Poland's accession to the EU. As a member of the EU, Poland will be able to aspire to formulating an eastern policy not only of its own, but also of the EU. Poland's main competitor to such a role is Germany, which is very sensitive about this competition. At least for the past year we can hear a criticism on the part of German

diplomacy of both Polish NGO activities in Ukraine or Belarus and some moves by Polish diplomacy. Germany wants thereby to emphasise that the shaping of an eastern policy should belong to it. This is an important challenge for Poland and one that requires an analysis of Poland's role in this area. We hold one more trump card for this competition. It is the support of the United States, which has an interest in Poland's position in this region and in the conduct of a policy by Poland towards, first of all, Belarus and Ukraine. An astute manoeuvring by the Polish foreign ministry to create a balance between the American interest and a representation of the EU interest could strengthen our hand in elaborating the eastern strategy for the entire Union.

Thus, what should this policy vis-à-vis Belarus alone be like? I believe that it should be, above all, a long-term policy. None of the short-term actions taken by the EU have produced effects. Even a replacement of president Lukashenka, which could open up the way to political change in Belarus, would not generate a radically different situation in that country mainly due to the conservative disposition of the Belarussian society itself. Only long-term actions can bring an outcome. Europe is not prepared for long-term actions and hence all the greater role Poland can play. The alternative to the failure to develop such a strategy will amount to surrendering Belarus to Russia. Belarus is under Russia's economic control anyway, so the question remains whether it has to be also under Russia's full political control, or to be downright incorporated into Russia. Would such a solution be in Poland's interest?

Now comes the second important consideration, which I wish to underscore in discussing a policy towards Belarus: I believe that this policy should be pursued along two tracks. The first track is one of cooperation with the authorities of Belarus and I personally also believe that it is a good thing that the Polish authorities have established contacts with the Lukashenka administration. I only have my doubts as to whether one should establish these contacts right away at such a high level. It would certainly be better to begin with relations with local authorities and with a bid to establish local-level cooperation than to start from cooperation with the presidential administration. The only chance of overcoming the blockade that the Belarussian side is mainly responsible for is a patient and consistent opening for talks and reasonable contacts.

The second track of this policy is work on social transformations in Belarus, chiefly through economics and nongovernmental organizations. I stress this not only because I myself represent an NGO. It appears to me that this is the only way for a long-haul conduct of some policy on the east. Besides, it we



consider Poland's role in competition against Germany, we see that we are much better disposed. We have come to hold a meaningful position in both Ukraine and Belarus owing to our active social work in those countries, whereas the German actions are limited to charitable aid from protestant churches, which are not always positively perceived by the authorities or the society which is Orthodox Christian, and, as we see, the Orthodox Church is averse to activities by other Churches on its home ground.

In giving you a more detailed view of activities along these two policy tracks, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that Poland has a lot more to do especially in economy in Belarus, Ukraine or Russia than what it has done so far. Obviously, we cannot compete against big capital and we know that Russian or German capital will predominate in Belarus: Russian – due to Russia's traditional economic contacts with Belarus, and German – due to Germany's greater investment capability and an already set German investment strategy for Belarus, as well as Russian-German capital groups, which have already come up with a plan to share in the privatisation of various enterprises in Belarus. But Poland can play a role in wholly different area, first of all the SME sector. What Poland takes the most credit for in economic reforms, particularly in comparison with the Czech Republic, is its creation of a small and medium-sized business sector. And, in view of specificity of the Belarussian economy, which has not yet generated oligarchs like in Russia or Ukraine, one can envision here a field for action in the long run. This will have an impact on Belarus' social structures, leading to the shaping up of a middle class, which could become the basis for democratic change in that country. Belarus is a small country and small-scale actions have a relatively big and tangible impact on the overall situation there.

When I refer to work with the Belarussian society, I have in mind two goals that can be achieved within such a long-term policy.

The first is the overcoming of the cultural, civilisational and administrative blockade. Risks will appear once Poland has joined the Schengen. Visas may in time restrict the cross-border traffic. At the same time, Poland's economic changes are rapid, while economic changes in Belarus are rather for the worse and this adverse civilisational divide will be widening. The same goes true for the cultural divide, which is rather an upshot of the absence of permanent contacts between the Polish and Belarussian communities.

The second goal is the "empowerment of society". I see no way of creating a democratic system in Belarus short of the participation of a society that would demand such a system. Developing a strong society in Belarus is the only chance for Belarus not to be afraid of Poland. In this way we would gain a neighbour, who

would understand the processes taking place in our country and would react similarly to certain instances of social behaviour, would follow the same course of growth. I again underscore here the role to be played by NGOs from Poland. The purpose of such actions would be to develop local communities and self-help groups, which means any groups that self-organise a society, to develop scientific exchanges and exchanges of young people. The Polish State is not promoting such actions at present. Poland's present actions are limited to relations with Polish minorities in the east. Meanwhile, owing to nongovernmental organizations it would be possible at relatively low cost to build up quite a big elite with a positive Polish disposition and one interested in changing their country.

The important thing here is to present the Polish experiences related to the economic and political-systemic transition, to show positive as well as negative lessons, which would allay the fears of the Belarussian officials and society of taking a first step in the direction of reforms. An information blockade and the incomprehension of the processes occurring in Poland are very weighty psychological factors that are petrifying the present status in Belarus.

And, finally, a different promotion through culture: not doing it as it has been done so far in the form of increasing the budget of *Wspólnota Polska* (an organization developing relations with Polish communities broad) and financing Polish minorities in countries east of Poland, but doing it by working out a forward-looking manner of policy conduct, by the so-called social diplomacy.

For the present, the Polish foreign ministry has no concept for cooperation with Polish nongovernmental organizations active in the east. Nor has it any concept for promoting Poland's experiences and I regard this as the most serious gap in the Polish foreign policy. All of the time, this policy has been relying on the conventional, 19<sup>th</sup> century principles of diplomacy practised among officials.

And one more issue is, in my view, very important to Polish foreign policy in the east. It is about the Polish State's active role towards both the countries of Eastern Europe and the EU's policy towards the East. The desistance from such a policy or the failure to develop a concept for it will signify the inclusion of both Ukraine and Belarus into the Russian sphere of influence. The lack of Poland's interest in those countries and the failure to involve Lithuania, Czech Republic or Slovakia in activities in those countries will signify a growing isolation between the two spheres in Europe.

**Paweł Kazanecki** – historian, president of the Institute of Democracy for Eastern Europe (IDEE), formerly on the staff of the Office for National Minorities in the Ministry of Culture and the Arts.





# CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## WHO WE ARE?

The Center for International Relations (CIR) is an independent, non-governmental establishment dedicated to the study of Polish foreign policy as well as those international political issues, which are of crucial importance to Poland. The Center's primary objective is to offer political counselling, to describe Poland's current international situation, and to continuously monitor the government's foreign policy moves. The CIR prepares reports and analyses, holds conferences and seminars, publishes books and articles, carries out research projects and supports working groups. Over the last few years, we have succeeded in attracting a number of experts, who today cooperate with the CIR on a regular basis. Also, we have built up a forum for foreign policy debate for politicians, MPs, civil servants, local government officials, journalists, academics, students and representatives of other NGOs. The CIR is strongly convinced that, given the foreign policy challenges Poland is facing today, it ought to support public debates on international issues in Poland. The Founder and the President of the CIR is Janusz Reiter.

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A number of projects implemented by the Center have been sponsored  
by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Already when Poland was joining NATO and also during Poland's accession process for EU membership, there was and still is much talk of Poland's "eastern specialty", i.e. Poland's special ability and readiness for contacts with the countries situated east of the River Bug. But this general idea has not been yet translated into the language of a specific action programme.

The EU's 'eastern dimension' is a buzzword launched by the Centre for International Relations (CSM). Poland's former minister for foreign affairs, Władysław Bartoszewski, used to make references to the "eastern dimension" idea and Poland's present chief of diplomacy has put it back on the front burner. A proposal has been advanced to treat the northern dimension authored by Finland as setting the pattern for the authoring by Poland of an "eastern dimension" programme for the European Union.

But the "eastern dimension" is still lingering as only a postulate hardly accommodating any concrete ideas and initiatives, at a time when the accession negotiations for the EU's enlargement have been completed.

Poland is facing an opportunity for its active and creative foreign policy to become a meaningful factor of shaping the European policy in the east of Europe.

In launching at the Centre for International Relations a project headlined *"The EU's 'Eastern Dimension' – an Opportunity for or Idée Fixe of Poland's Policy"*, we were seeking answers to the following questions:

- Which countries and regions should the "eastern dimension" apply to?
- Can Poland define an acceptably detailed list of issues that the possible "eastern dimension" should envelop? What areas of politics, economy and social life should it cover?
- Which of them should be seen as political priorities?
- How and how fast should they be carried into effect?

The project led to a succession of seminars involving experts. On 7 May 2002, Aleksander Smolar delivered at the CSM a paper entitled *"The EU's 'Eastern Dimension' – an Opportunity or Idée Fixe of Poland's Policy"*.

On 4 June 2002, a discussion forum was held on the subject *"The EU and Russia in the Context of Poland's Aspirations to Create the 'Eastern Dimension'"*, with an introduction offered by Stanisław Ciosek.

*"Poland's Role in Ukraine's Integration with the EU and the Potential for Creating an 'Eastern Dimension'"* was the theme of a meeting held at the CSM on 13 June 2002, with Professor Zdzisław Najder as the keynote speaker.

On 25 June 2002, another discussion forum tackled the subject *"Belarus – Poland – European Union. A Search for the Possibilities to Create the EU's 'Eastern Dimension'"*, with a keynote by Paweł Kazanecki.

Presentation of this paper is the first to be undertaken by Polish specialists in an attempt to grasp in a comprehensive way the issue of participation of Poland and other Central European countries in the shaping of the eastern policy of the European Union after its enlargement.