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Center for International Relations

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*Jan Rokita*

*Polish Foreign Policy  
– How Much Continuation,  
How Much Change*

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A lecture delivered by Jan Rokita, Chairman of the Civic Platform's parliamentary caucus, on April 14th 2005. The lecture was held in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

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## **Polish Foreign Policy – How Much Continuation, How Much Change**

**Jan Rokita**

It is a great pleasure for me to speak to you today. I would like to thank you for your attendance. Especially, I would like to thank the Center for International Relations and its President for inviting me here today.

What probably everyone can see is that European policy, and the Polish foreign policy in particular, is entering a new stage. This could be a trite answer to a question: is it going to be a change or a continuation? I do realize that foreign policy works different from internal policy. It is normal that new changes in internal policy are announced along with almost every election in line with campaign promises, which in turn are characteristic of democracy. In foreign policy, if anyone mentions any change, they usually add something about continuation, in order to conduct politically correct and to give the impression of predictability and security. Therefore, I am fully aware that any changes in foreign policy are not as evident as they are in internal policy. Any change of that kind requires certain justification. Let me then begin with such a justification.

Before I do so, I would like to tell you about something very important to me. Those of you who know me and had the opportunity to discuss these matters with me know that what I am going to say is credible and supported with previous experience. What I highly value in public life, as well as between nations or states, is a precise and clear way of expressing opinions and interests. I possess neither a nature nor conduct of a diplomat. I am not sure whether this is to be found my strength or my weakness. Anyway, it seems to me that nowadays it is worth speaking openly and honestly about basic interests, views, or fundamental differences, especially within the EU. I believe that trust can only be developed through a clear way of defining views and interests. It is predictability that helps create trust, and it can be found in international relations only when all the participants tell the truth and they always speak their own mind.

Therefore, I believe that Polish foreign policy needs to be defined in a predictable and clear manner in terms of its principles and basic interests. It will be predictable once certain basic interests and a measure of compromise are agreed. I would like such a model of foreign policy-making to be widely accepted in Poland.

We are going to speak clearly to our European partners and raise no doubts as regards issues on which we have a clear and consistent view, as well as to announce our view to the public and put it forward to public debate. In my opinion, what could be a prospective value of Polish foreign policy is its integrity, openness, as it creates predictability. I have the feeling that Polish foreign policy tended to capitulate unexpectedly in cases where the capitulation was neither justified nor understandable and it involved Poland in wars and conflicts that were not at all expected. I would like our Polish foreign policy to be considerably more predictable. I think it would be a crucial change.

A change in the situation of Poland has resulted in another important change. A clear-cut direction has marked the last fifteen years: after the fall of communism and regaining independence, Poland had a clear aim – to achieve a formal status as one of Western European nations. In fact, the Polish foreign policy was therefore a policy of adjustment. What was to be done? Poland had to adopt the standards of the western world. We had to introduce the EU rules, negotiate our accession to the EU and NATO – we had to adapt all the time. It was the right way to go, because there was no other way for Poland in that time. The criteria for the adjustment were quite clear. From the point of view of the successive Polish governments and the public, everything was OK as long as the adjustment ran smoothly and efficiently; but if any obstacles emerged, it was not OK. No one could probably conceive any easier foreign policy. Nevertheless, such was the actual basis for everything we aimed for as a country over the last fifteen years.

One could say that, today, after Poland became a formal member of the EU and NATO, an independent and democratic state, with all the fundamental goals accomplished, some other principle has to be introduced within Polish foreign policy. It cannot be a policy of adjustment any more, since there is actually nothing to adjust.

Instead, the sort of principle that rules foreign policies in most normal states with long history of independence emerges in Poland, namely, the principle of choice. I would like to point out that in the three issues, which introduced the new style to Polish politics, including: the Polish mission in Iraq, the conflict over the voting rule in the constitutional treaty, and Poland's involvement in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, there were no obvious arguments nor decisions. A definitive choice had to be made, as well as accepting all the risk.

If the policy of adjustment is to be replaced by the policy of choice, there are crucial consequences for the internal dimension of foreign policy to be faced. As long as it was the matter of adapting to external standards (which was then included within Polish *raison d'état*), the method used by politicians to explain the foreign policy to the public – to their compatriots – was persuasion. In fact, for fifteen years we have persuaded Poles that the choices we have been making were right; and we got them utterly convinced about that. Once the policy of adjustment is replaced by the principle of choice, what we introduce instead of persuasion is a debate. Now, what is happening in the current foreign policy in Poland? As we learn from current parliament's record, the foreign policy has become subject to an internal debate, along with *raison d'état*, which has started to be defined through the debate and as an outcome of the discussion. Quite naturally, it has changed the extent of the public influence on Polish foreign policy. Citizens will have to decide, through the public debate and following their own political choices, which direction Polish foreign policy should pursue.

In passing, please consider the fact that the lack of debate in some controversial cases had very negative consequences and the current political situation of Poland serves as a good example here. A recent case, which lacked debate and thus it had a negative impact on the Polish foreign policy, was the issue of Iraq. The decision was made in the atmosphere of secrecy, and it was supported by the terms and conditions of Polish participation in the Iraqi mission that were unclear to the public opinion; it lacked any debate. A measure of secrecy of arguments, failing to voice those arguments to their own nation, to inform their own public opinion, by the ruling left, resulted in what was particularly visible during the last two days. The government, which made the decision that Polish troops should

participate in the Iraqi mission, is now rightly concerned that it might fail to meet its commitments made to the allies. At the same time, the government is greatly concerned about the criticism from the public. The overall effect is not adequate at all. On the one hand, the current government does not want to finish the mission, due to Poland's international interests; on the other hand, they are trying to persuade the public opinion that the mission is about to end. Thus, the current minister of defence decides neither to continue the mission nor to end it, telling the public that he would like the next government to end it. That is the consequence of a situation where a difficult decision was made without any public debate.

To sum up, I understand that we are up to a situation where a brave internal and foreign policy has two ways to go. The first one is telling people what is the right thing to do without showing them the alternative, assuming that persuasion is the only way to solve the problem. The other one, which I personally prefer, is a truthful presentation of dilemmas, basing on a belief that the public is wise enough to define its own *raison d'état*. I am not the sort of politician who thinks that his way of defining *raison d'état* is better than that of the nation. It seems to me that an important point to accept, as regards changing the political atmosphere in Poland, not only in the field of foreign policy, is the need to start a serious dialogue with Poles. Perhaps Poles are fed up with being told that this or that is unquestionably right and out of discussion. Democracy means debate. So far, it has seemed that Poles can choose those politicians who perceive Poland's *raison d'état* the way I do. In other words, I believe that the Polish public can accept our view on Poland's role in the world, also in the eastern dimension. We should have no concerns about that. Our opponents should be concerned, because their ideas will not be acceptable to the society. This is what I think – we should not be afraid of Poles!

Now, if we assume that choice and debate is crucial for Polish foreign policy, the external effect being the predictability of the Polish state and our partners' trust, I have a question. If we are to make choices that would be predictable and trustworthy, if our criteria are to be comprehensible to the people, what kind of basic arguments, views or premises will influence Polish foreign policy in the coming years? Which arguments will shape it? In my opinion, there are three fundamental arguments and I will now concentrate on them.

The first one is the Polish way of understanding the historical record of the nation and of Europe. The second one is our understanding of Europe and the European integration. Lastly, the third one is our understanding of geopolitics, as it can be perceived today from the Polish point of view.

When I discuss the first issue, that is, our understanding of the historical memory, there can be no doubt that, after years of division, after ten or fifteen years of peace and re-integration, Europe needs to regain its own memory. I think that the turning point of the EU enlargement and a move towards the re-unification of Europe is the right opportunity for Europe to do so. In Poland, we believe that what Europe needs to regain is the memory of Central and Eastern Europe. What are the key elements of this memory from the Polish perspective? There are three things to remember. The first one is Solidarity, the movement to which we owe independent Poland and freedom in Europe. Undoubtedly, the symbol of this record is the city of Gdańsk where the Second World War began with the Westerplatte incident, and where the Second World War ended with the fall of the Yalta order. The second thing to remember is the twentieth century totalitarianism. We could say, with a measure of emphasis, that if Poles have any unique mission in today's world, we see them as guardians of the memory of totalitarian crime in Europe. The third key element of our remembrance is the historic memory of Central Europe. I would like to point out that this legacy is a treasure that Europe has lost in a way. This legacy proves inevitably up-to-date: the legacy of multicultural society, of civic traditions, of religious tolerance, which was a particularly early achievement in Europe, and, last but not least, the legacy of the oldest ideas of a European union. The great geopolitical vision of a union between a few nations living in this part of Europe was the idea of the European structure some centuries ago.

I have the feeling that if you look at today's problems of the EU, they reflect the history of Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, or Belarus in the fifteenth, the sixteenth, the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. Looking at these four centuries you can find debates on the same ideas and issues that are present today in the EU: on solidarity and egotism of nations, on whether to introduce a common foreign policy and how it should be done efficiently. Concerns regarding the creation of a superstate are also

discussed; would a republic of nations transform into a sort of weird superstate? All this is the heritage of Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, or Belarussian political thought of those ages. I have the impression that today's Europe has not yet fully adopted this heritage. Nevertheless, I am confident that this will happen; it only requires more time. This heritage is a completely unknown area for those pursuing debates in Brussels. The simple idea that things created, wrote or said in Vilnius or Minsk in the sixteenth century may correspond to the current European discussions seems weird for anyone in Brussels. Nevertheless, this is probably the deepest and the oldest unionist tradition in Europe, remaining close to the ideas of the founding fathers of the EU.

I hesitate whether I may now refer to the great Pope's words. The late Pope put the whole issue perfectly well in a speech delivered once in the Polish Sejm: "From the Lublin Union to the European Union". Unfortunately, most Europeans probably failed to understand this brilliant phrase. It expresses the topicality of this heritage, which is, in my opinion, something of a great value to us in Poland. However, I feel assured that Europe will regain this tradition; it only takes time.

I speak about these things because if anyone seriously wishes to understand Polish foreign policy, they will fail to do so without accepting the impact that this heritage has on Polish policy and on Poles. However pragmatic, Polish policy will not ever become cynical; it has always been marked with a sort of pragmatic idealism. You could say that the mission of supporting freedom in the world is extremely crucial in terms of the way we perceive our identity. Please remember that this point of view enormously influenced Polish decisions regarding participating in the peace mission in Iraq. It also influenced our engagement in backing the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, as well as our position regarding sanctions imposed on Cuba and our attitude towards Belarus, a nation and a country that is very close to us in many terms, the Belarus ruled by a dictator.

I would like to draw your attention to one thing. In the nineties we were thinking that the twentieth century memory and the heritage of Central Europe was spontaneously being re-adopted by the European memory and we could see that in Europe in that time. We hoped that it would be finally re-adopted. However, we were

astonished to see that there are at least several countries where attempts emerged to redefine this memory in a direction we consider untrue.

In 1989, Poles thought that the world has changed so dramatically that there was no need to raise any issues concerning historical claims. The Polish-German treaty of early nineties was signed with such an assumption, belittling the issue in a sense. Then it was the perspective of both the Polish and the German government. Later, we were greatly astonished to discover that the historical issue keeps coming back. Apparently, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the re-unification of both German states, as well as other changes throughout Europe were not overcoming the history. In the nineties, we probably made a mistake, failing to support our historical arguments. Now, various communities in Germany have raised their arguments. Here, I would like to remind you of the discussions over the Center Against Forced Migration [Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen] issue and then the establishing of a German organization that would raise German citizens' claims against Polish citizens and institutions [Federation of Expellees or Bund der Vertriebenen]. The Polish Sejm reacted with natural astonishment, inspired by the sense of justice. How is that possible? The German claims concerning the Second World War? Against Poland? Is it a joke or something? Then we started to do something we have never done – to estimate all the damage Warsaw had suffered. The city of Warsaw was demolished, like Carthagina and, what is more, German troops destroyed it deliberately, building after building, palace after palace. The German troops demolished the city to the ground. That is the truth. Bearing the truth in mind, we were taken aback at learning about German claims.

What we would really expect is a change of the German government's doctrine. We expect that, sooner or later, the German government, which has already taken some positive steps in that direction, will declare one thing: if some German citizens claim anything by way of the Second World War, they can only address the German state. It is the business of the German state to judge these claims or not to do so, but they must not be addressed to the true victims of the Second World War, especially to the Polish state. Moreover, I would like to emphasise the fact that in case of Polish citizens who had been expelled from the then eastern parts of Poland as a result of the Second World War we, the Polish state, have declared that we

would, within our capabilities, try to satisfy their claims. In that situation, Poland attacked neither Lwów nor Vilnius, but it was the warfare that changed the European borders. We, the Republic of Poland, told our compatriots who stayed at the other side of the River Bug not to address their claims to the independent Ukrainian state nor to the independent Lithuanian state. We told them not to try to regain their properties in Vilnius or Lwów, as it would be against the interest of Europe. That is the Polish doctrine and we would like the German one to be the same.

That is why our reaction in Poland was so violent. The Sejm responded strongly to a civic movement that emerged in Germany to help German citizens formulate claims against Polish citizens on the grounds of the Second World War. We were astounded at learning that and it resulted in cautious, but not radical, scepticism, regarding the forthcoming commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Moscow. I admit we have major concern that the anniversary is planned to commemorate the Yalta treaty and Joseph Stalin. We think that such commemoration should not take place in Europe.

In other words, it is the duty of the unified Europe to rebuild the common European remembrance on true bases. Moreover, we consider it a key element of the future true unity of Europe. Without it, building a community of European nations will be very difficult.

I also consider the cultural diversity of European nations to be the natural strength of the European unity and the source of its potential. I would like to go even further: without the cultural diversity, the idea of a union would make no sense. That is why I oppose the EU as a culture-standardizing factor. These cultures must remain diverse. From this point of view, I would seek the political strength of the EU in including within its orbit, after meeting all the necessary conditions and after completing all the negotiations, the two more countries of a different cultural tradition, which apparently aspire to EU membership. These are Turkey, a Muslim state, and Ukraine, a state belonging to eastern tradition, baptized through Constantinople. Thus, I think, the EU project would become what it should - a political project, instead of a project for standardizing cultural diversity. I am quite confident about it.

Now I would like to discuss the second principle, which is, in my view, fundamental for the future Polish foreign policy. It is about our understanding of the European unity. The basic issue is: what were the reasons for Poland to join the EU? The answer is simple: Poland became the EU member in order to increase its development capabilities, following other countries' example, and to make up for the time lost during Nazi and communist occupation. That is not, however, the only reason. We saw the EU as not only a project for accelerated growth, but also a project that provides us, a country with a difficult geographical location in Europe, with a friendly geopolitical surrounding. On the one hand, the Union has symbolized a space of solidarity to us: the rich have always supported the poor so that the whole continent could develop evenly towards the future. This was the doctrine of the EU founding fathers. On the other hand, the Union has been a space of nations' geopolitical security. The nations, especially those located in difficult regions of Europe, could be assured of their security and participation in formulating common policy. I would like to emphasize that: not only the security, but also the participation in formulating the common European policy.

Such was the Union we entered. We do not regret it; it was our great national plan and a national dream. Today we ask ourselves whether the current EU is what we expected to participate in fifteen years ago. Before I try to answer this question, I would like to admit that the enlargement itself, with numerous new and prospective members, gives evidence to great vitality of the EU. Europeans should take pride in it. Unfortunately, that is probably not always the case. I am under the increasing impression that the way the EU is adapting to the new situation, without communism and the Soviet Union, lacks consequence and encounters many obstacles on its way. You could put it this way: the criticism, or some kind of cautiousness, does not probably regard the Union as a whole, but only some of its members who failed to pursue internal reforms and invited social crises. It is a characteristic of those countries which realized successful internal reforms that their citizens were less concerned about both their accession to the Union and Union's enlargement as well. The most intense fears arose in those countries whose politicians created an illusion that, despite globalisation and the enlargement, everything would remain the same. That is why the latter nations grew increasingly anxious when inevitable changes proved so deep and uncontrollable. The anxiety has started to undermine the EU

principles of unity and integration. I think that concerns given to the constitutional treaty in several countries serve as a good example here.

What sort of phenomena have we encountered after entering the EU? Firstly, we saw that the principle of solidarity has weakened substantially, which is apparent even now in the EU budget debate. The Union's budget actually reflects what kind of Union the European nations want to create. If the budget is based on the principle of solidarity, it means that they want a solid Union. But, if the budget is based on the principle of egotism, it means that they do not want a solid Union. The budget debate proves to be a kind of a lens that stores the answer to the fundamental question. We found ourselves in a Union where the ideas of a single market, of free movement of workers, goods, and capital, or of opening up towards a single market of services appear to be a problem. Paradoxically, the poor nations that joined the EU do not question these ideas; they are questioned by the rich. We can see a situation where the most powerful and the richest EU members try to create more comfortable conditions of their participation in the Union than other members enjoy. A good example, and one that attracted much attention in Poland, was the issue of the Maastricht criteria. We tried to guess who is going to be the winner: the European Commission or a number of the largest states, which apparently wish to secure more comfortable conditions of their participation in the Union. We all know the outcome.

I would like to express my feeling that globalisation of markets, the EU enlargement or changes in demographic structure in Europe resulted in a situation where states failing to cope with these processes actually break their commitments as members of the community and put the community's future cohesion at risk. Introducing effective reforms, which would encourage the development of Europe, must not be considered as an internal issue of the few richest EU states. Whether setting up a single market is possible or some states will oppose it; whether the budget will be based on the principle of solidarity or the richest states will block it; whether Europe will be able to implement the Lisbon strategy or the strategy will remain on paper only – these are not the issues for individual members to solve. They have to be solved by the whole Union, and the result will be cementing the Union's cohesion or dismantling it.

As an anecdote, I would like to tell you about an astonishing fact, although I do not take it seriously. As everyone knows, the American Central Intelligence Agency has its website. There, I found a report on the prospects of the European developments, including a characteristic thesis (which I consider rather untrue) that social and demographic problems of Europe somewhere around 2010 will cause an EU cohesion crisis. Such an opinion can be found today on CIA's website!

I think this is the reason why Europeans should seriously consider the direction they wish to follow. There is no doubt about that, from our point of view, as Poles would like Europe to be a community that would balance natural national egotisms. We want a Europe with a strong and well-established European Commission, capable of pursuing the policy of openness, instead of the policy of separating individual nations and markets. We want a Union ruled by natural mechanisms of competitiveness. Last but not least, we want a Union that does not show the red light to potential members, including, of course, the Balkan nations, as well as Romania, Bulgaria and very important eastern and southern partners – Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, however exotic it may sound today. No matter how distant the moment of the definitive arrangement of the eastern border of the EU is, no EU document nor any EU announcement may include any declaration that there is no way for those nations to enter the European Union. It is not the matter of time, as some of those countries may access the EU even in one generation's time. What matters is that the relations between the EU and its eastern neighbours are not to be described as setting up a barrier, but as creating the atmosphere of openness in the future.

If I were to formulate a message that would be, from my point of view, fundamental for Polish foreign policy, it would probably have the following shape. For the last fifteen years Western Europeans spoke to Poles and to other nations that went out of communism and regained independence: "Open up!" Our friends from the largest EU countries called us to open our markets, to liberate our trade, to let competition and foreign investors in, and to form an open Europe together. We listened to their calls, fascinated, ideologically committed, but then we encountered various internal problems. We had to persuade our workers, who lost their jobs in declining industry, that this was the right direction. Today, we have the feeling that

the history repeated itself after fifteen years. Perhaps it is the moment we have to speak to the rich and befriended European countries: "Open up!" Open your labour markets for all EU citizens, do not fear competition nor free trade, nor the liberalization of the European services' market. Do not mourn over a single company that moves to Slovakia or Poland. For fifty years, your companies were located in your countries and could not locate in our countries. Do not mourn over a single company that moves from the Mediterranean to Central Europe. It will not be a tragedy for Europe. We have the wish that Europe should not create any particularly privileged tax conditions in favour of the richer. It is our desire that, within a reasonable period, the last internal barriers disappear from the EU and the Eurozone together with the Schengen area expands. If our today's European policy is to be lead by an imperative, it should be the internal opening of Europe, as well as its opening to external neighbours. By a historic irony, after fifteen years of realizing the difficult task of adapting to Europe, we feel we have the right to speak today to the whole Europe: "Open up, like we already did!" Do not let us be afraid of a Europe of internal freedom for business people, for services, for finances, for the movement of people. All these were the basic ideas of the founding fathers of the Union.

This seems to me the central problem of Europe today. I cannot resist the impression that, if the hypothetical political crisis of the EU resulted from the disputes around the constitutional treaty, the crisis in question would be actually artificial.

A well-known anecdote came to my mind. Stefan Kisielewski, a famous Polish journalist, told it years ago and I think it reflects the problem perfectly well. Mr Kisielewski wrote that socialism is a political system particularly capable of solving problems it has created. The same goes for the issue of referendum and the European constitution. The way of preparing the treaty, its provisions, a way of being alien to European nations, its technical character, socialist prejudices it includes, etc., all that is the trouble Europe invited. And it is Europe that has to solve it now. As in the anecdote by Stefan Kisielewski, we introduced socialism and now we have to solve the problems it has created. It is obvious that the European constitution, even if it is accepted by all the European nations, will by no means help develop the European integration. The integration develops thanks to other essential processes, which I tried to describe today. The treaty, which is *de facto* an incomprehensible

result of combining the three previous treaties together in just one document, is, in my opinion, of little importance. Nevertheless, the fact that it is being referred to as a constitutional treaty undoubtedly results in a huge problem. I hope Europe will be able to cope with it smoothly and the future European integration will not be affected, with the constitution or without it. I have a hunch that the European nations are not going to accept this project and therefore the crisis is unnecessary. What is important in this context is that Poles have a very clear view on this issue. They do not commit themselves to incomprehensible discussions around the treaty. I am sure that neither Polish MPs nor Poles themselves have read the treaty. According to opinion polls, Poles say: “We support the Union! We want the Union and the unified Europe.” This stance makes me quite optimistic.

The thing is that Europe can successfully continue to integrate either with the constitutional treaty or without it. At the same time, Europe may plunge into egotisms and lose the integration momentum – either with the constitutional treaty or without it. It will not be the European treaty that will rise to the challenge of integration. The treaty will not solve anything. It may be there or it may not be there. If it finally causes a crisis, the reason for that will be our inability to write it and to make it acceptable by the European nations, and to prevent May 29<sup>th</sup> from being associated with a crisis, which is the way many politicians consider this date today.

Let me now tell you about the third issue which has and will have a great impact on our understanding of Polish foreign policy, namely, our geopolitical location. Poles are unanimous in this matter: they want a strong Europe because they associate it with growth and security. At the same time, Poles do not doubt that Europe needs a strong presence of the US, particularly in the military sense. The reason for that is simple: Poles tend to trust the American leadership, especially in times of crises. That is why we find the American presence in Europe to be something important. It is also a significant premise for the understanding of the Polish way of perceiving the world. We use a category, which seems to have weakened in both Western Europe and the US. We refer to this category as “the West”, describing even more than the unity of the Union and NATO. It covers all the transatlantic relations between Europe and the US.

One elementary thesis of the Polish foreign policy is that there can be no two rival solidarities within “the West” – the European solidarity and the American one. There can be only one solidarity, namely, the Atlantic solidarity. An attempt to create a European unity in order to compete with America or, conversely, an attempt to dismantle the European unity in order to strengthen one’s own competitiveness in relation to America – these are the visions of transatlantic relations that always raise fears in Poland. This stance remains the elementary thesis of Polish foreign policy. Of course, friendly relationship with the US is an asset and we are not going to part with it. Nevertheless, as regards the Polish-American relations, we have to clearly define our mutual expectations. Our expectations of America are rather substantial, especially in terms of the military co-operation scale. They should be expressed more clearly to America, and, at the same time, we would like to have a clear view on what Americans expect of us.

I have the feeling that, like the issue of the economic and social openness of the EU, there is still an issue of political or geopolitical definition of the EU position in the world after the fall of communism, that is, after the main enemy, the Soviet Union, is gone. Europe tends to define its position in a very chaotic way, involving many arguments. We would really like this position to be defined in a more orderly manner. The war in Iraq serves as a good example here. It is true that those who planned this war made mistakes and failed to anticipate various events. These facts are evident, but if you think, without any prejudice, of such achievements as: the Iraqi elections, the Palestine elections, a change in Libyan stance, encouraging signals from Lebanon and Egypt, then you probably should not doubt one thing. Although those who criticized the intervention in Iraq were sometimes right, a way of confrontation with America over that issue or a sort of communication that followed in Europe was by no means justified. Some strong, negative emotions seemed to be sweeping across the European continent in that time. Thank God, the tide of those emotions has probably fallen.

From the Polish point view, the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is unquestionable. Of course, we are aware that this role has changed recently and that some of its members tend to attach lesser importance to it today. We also admit that there is no way to block a debate on NATO’s reforms and that we are ready to

participate in such a debate. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the possible NATO's reforms depend, from the European perspective, on three main conditions. Firstly, it is the Union, the Community, the Europe that has to be more politically united and capable of developing common foreign policy. If Europe is to become an important pillar in NATO, it has to be able to formulate a common position, showing that this is a true community. Secondly, Europe must show greater readiness to take the risk and responsibility for non-European states. If it is not ready to take the risk and responsibility, increasing its role within NATO can prove difficult. Thirdly, which I am a bit ashamed to speak of, extending Europe's responsibilities within NATO also means extending financial commitments regarding military expenses. This is also Poland's concern. It seems to us that any institutionalised form of transatlantic co-operation, other than NATO, would be less effective, less thought over, less efficient, and for sure – one that has not yet proved to be useful. Here I could repeat a Churchill's anecdote, which says that democracy is very bad, but it is the best choice out of other options. Today, we could apply this anecdote to NATO. It has numerous shortcomings, but it is the best organization that we have as far as the transatlantic solidarity is concerned. We could not devise any better solution in the near future.

The geopolitical problem, from our point of view, is an issue of Poland's location and its direct geopolitical neighbourhood. On our accession to NATO and the EU, we provided ourselves with a significant geopolitical security in the West. Have we managed to provide ourselves with such a measure of security in the East, too? It does not seem obvious to us today. Undoubtedly, the greatest Polish achievement of late is a friendly attitude of both the government and the people of our largest neighbour – Ukraine. Our support for the Orange Revolution resulted from the way we perceive our security. The solidarity with the Ukrainian nation was not, from the Polish perspective, an attempt to win some Ukrainian politicians or some ruling party. It was an opportunity to overcome the unfortunate twentieth century history of Polish-Ukrainian relations. In my view, more good things happened between Poles and Ukrainians in recent months than in the course of the whole twentieth century. We consider it a historical achievement of both our nations.

Of course, the most difficult issue in the geopolitical context is Russia and the Russian policy. The reason for that difficulty is not the fact that restoring trust

between the Polish and the Russian nation requires time, as is the case in the Polish–German reconciliation. Apart from reconciling the two nations, which I hope has already started and is going to succeed, we would like to be able to improve the quality of political relations between the two states. I have the impression that if it depended solely on Poland, those relations would surely improve, but unfortunately it does depend more on our eastern neighbour. There are numerous problems related to this issue, but I would like to mention only three of them, which I found absolutely crucial. The first thing is that our great Russian neighbour is inclined to treat the new EU member states in a different manner than it treats the old ones. There are certain practical issues, like trading in agricultural produce or sanitary inspections, which create a situation that we are not willing to accept. Secondly, our Russian neighbour is rather reluctant to recognize the fact that Poland's close relations with other eastern neighbours are quite natural in a democratic world. Our will to maintain close relations with post-Soviet states does not result from any anti-Russian attitude, but it is something normal among democratic and independent nations throughout the world. Russians seem to look at such relations with scepticism. The third difficult issue is, I must admit, reaching an agreement in the power sector. All those who are following Polish internal affairs closely can see that strong political connections within the Russian energy sector influence the situation in Poland. They cause various troubles, as we could experience during the hearings of the Sejm's special committee. I would even say that they are to blame for a measure of decline in Polish politics.

I think that in the future course of events the largest EU states will start to consider whether it is not better to have a common eastern policy, instead of a number of separate policies pursued by individual states. Such a reflection may emerge because of the fact that Union's actions taken in connection with Russia have failed completely. Here I would like to remind you of recent years' output of the so-called policy of neighbourhood, which was thought to be a great European undertaking. As could be expected, Russians did not accept the fact that they were treated in the same way as all other EU neighbours, arguing that they did not intend to access the Union or to adapt to it. Therefore, the EU did not manage to formulate any action-plan regarding Russia. A rather fictitious conception of four policy areas as the method of co-operation with Russia was devised, but even then no common

action-plan for the four areas could be agreed. Then it was agreed that the Union should have a separate roadmap for each of these four policy areas, but no such roadmap was ever created due to lack of agreement over their content... Today we observe exactly the same situation. I think that European politicians began ask themselves why it is impossible to agree on anything with Russians in the framework of the policy of neighbourhood. The answer is simple: because everyone, including Russians, finds this non-existent policy of neighbourhood to be of minimum significance. What really matters is the attitude of individual large European states towards the eastern policy and how they are going to act. For example, the question is whether a pipeline should go through the Baltic Sea, as the memorandum agreed between German and Russian companies last Monday during Hanover fairs declares, which is an evident violation of both EU's and its members' interests, or the pipeline should go to Germany through continental Europe, across Poland, as was already planned in case of the second Yamal-Europe gas pipeline. That choice, of crucial importance for political and economic interests of the whole Europe, should be a part of the community's negotiations concerning the four policy areas, whereas it is a subject of the talks and the memorandum signed after the German chancellor invited the Russian president to visit fairs. Thus, if the most important issues are arranged in a way that had not been wholly agreed, the common policy is surely to fail. In other words, if the common policy is not to fail, it has to be clear that the common policy is the leading policy; which is false, if you look at the evolution of the European politicians' views.

Three weeks ago, I had an opportunity to speak to several French politicians, who are thought quite reliable as regards this approach. I believe these discussions give hope that such an approach will be convincing, together with lasting, stable and rational arguments put forward by Poland and other states, which I can summarize as: "Let us do it together, because it proves better for the whole Europe." Perhaps it will not happen overnight, but I can recall a thought of Juliusz Mieroszewski who wrote in the sixties that a survivor on an island, who is standing on the shore and waving a white handkerchief in the hope that a ship would spot him or her, is not really a romantic loser. The survivor pursues the most rational policy available. This is I believe the case of our policy, which is the most rational policy available to us. Eventually it will appear that there are many ships to rescue us on the horizon.

One more comment, we would really like Russia to be completely open and democratic, but we know we can have little impact on that. Therefore, we would like Russia to be aware that their choices in terms of respecting human rights and economic freedom do affect their relations with the Atlantic community. We would like the position of the Atlantic community to be elaborated jointly. In other words, and that is perhaps the last argument I will touch on, from our point of view, the competition or rivalry between EU member states, especially between EU member states in the eastern policy, means a complete and elementary lack of geopolitical solidarity. From the Polish perspective, this is a central problem related to the common foreign and security policy.

If I am criticising the competition or rivalry in foreign policy among EU member states, particularly in eastern policy, it is quite clear that I do praise the idea of CFSP as a whole. Yes, it is true, Poland is dreaming about a CFSP, provided that the CFSP would be a truly common policy. We are dreaming about a CFSP that would meet certain conditions. Firstly, it should concern regions that are important for the EU as a whole: the East and the Mediterranean, because these are the two regions where the EU has its fundamental interests.

Secondly, the CFSP must be a policy that will be pursued without eliminating the participation of some member states in its shaping. Perhaps today Poles are not as sensitive to symbols as they were in the past, but there are situations in which we, Poles, look at the map of Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains and see which countries border each other from the West to the East. Then we read a newspaper and see that the EU-Russia summit is one where the represented states are: Spain, France, Germany, then we can see a sort of geographical bracket, and finally: Russia. Obviously, such an approach is perceived to be wrong in Poland. Anyway, the thing is not about symbols. What is important, in the face the failure of the four areas policy regarding Russia, is that we could, within a short period of time, develop a common foreign policy that would be ready to respond to challenges of the new Europe, also in terms of eastern issues.

Long time ago, one of the founding fathers of the EU said that after the

Second World War it was the first time ever that several world superpowers, instead of using the 'divide et impera' rule, started to consistently and bravely support a project of a great community that would unite the previously divided nations. Thinking of the superpower which stopped dividing and ruling and started to develop a community, he meant the US. I feel that the comment of one of the founding fathers should appeal to all of us today, especially to those strong in the EU. It should apply to them in terms of consistency, courage and lack of fear as regards building a community, both in the field of common foreign policy as well as in the field of opening to common markets and free trade. These are the true foundations of the EU.

What supports our idea of the future of Europe today is: the idea of modernity – everything that is modern supports the future of Europe; the idea of opening nations and markets – openness within Europe favours its unification; and the idea of community – everything that is more community-like supports building the European unity. On the other hand, the enemies are: the economic stagnation in Europe; detrimental separating of European nations from their closest neighbours and other EU members; and finally, the intergovernmental way of solving problems of Europe and of the world by the strongest members of the EU.

I understand that upon our accession to the EU we took the co-responsibility for supporting nations that suffer poverty. We would like to contribute to the international, European or UN activities in this respect. Secondly, if we treat the perspective of a common European foreign policy seriously, the direction of this policy can be twofold: the East, and the Mediterranean together with North Africa. I recently talked with the French minister of foreign affairs and we were discussing the possibility of holding joint Polish-French debates about how to shape the common European foreign policy in the East and in the Mediterranean. We would like to join the debate about the relations of Europe with African countries, especially with North Africa, because we believe that if we are the true Europeans, this dimension of European issues is extremely important. The third issue is the problem of the Middle East. I believe that the improving relations of Poland with Israel and the Arab countries, which are getting better and better every year, will allow Poland to take co-responsibility when it comes to establish enduring peace in Africa and the Middle

East, just like we did in Iraq. That is why as soon as the opportunity arises to establish lasting peace, which is our great dream, Poland will not remain neutral. We do feel a lot of solidarity towards those who strive for peace and freedom, also in the Middle East. I also think that Poland should be gradually more involved in all aid-related activities in Africa. Although, in comparison with rich European countries, Poland still remains a poor one, we have the awareness, resulting from our sense of solidarity, that, objectively, Poland may be counted among the richer states of the world.

Undoubtedly, Polish foreign policy considers Europe as a lens through which we perceive the whole world. When we are thinking about our relations with the US, we are actually trying to devise the way to make the ties between Europe and America closer. On the other hand, when we are looking towards the East and thinking about Polish interests in the East, in fact, we are considering the eastern dimension of the EU policy. Apparently, Europe acts as a lens through which Poles look at the world. Therefore, the point of reference for our future foreign policy will be undoubtedly the plan, the organization, and the best possible condition of both Europe and the European Union. It is something that we Polish people treat as the most vital and the most fundamental interest of our nation for many decades to come. Only sometimes do we feel that others tend to consider us, the true Europeans, to be somewhat sceptical about Europe. Although such an attitude astonishes us deeply, we have already quite accustomed ourselves to that. Thank you.

## 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 president of the Center for International Relations is Mr Janusz Reiter.

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