

*Dariusz Milczarek\**

## **Eastern Dimension of the European Union's Foreign Policy**

**Abstract:** *Ensuring proper relations with Eastern European countries has always been one of the fundamental aims of the European Community/European Union's foreign policy. The present shape of the so-called Eastward Policy has its roots in the long evolution of historical relation maintained by the Communities and their principal Member States with that region. At present, and especially since the EU's Eastward enlargement, this policy gains new importance and becomes another, new dimension of European processes of integration, occurring already within the enlarged structure. At the same time, the EU's Eastward policy undergoes further evolution in relation to third countries, including, especially, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and applying new instruments, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy. The latter measure has enjoyed some success but also suffers serious weaknesses, resulting not only from its assumptions, but also from other factors, including those related with the EU's internal balance of power. This makes deep reflection about directions of future development of the EU and its Eastern policy both interesting and necessary.*

Maintenance of proper relations with their Eastern neighbours has always been one of the key priorities for the European Communities' foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the matter has been important on both levels: on that of the Community and that of the Member States as evidenced by a large number of projects and initiatives, which were throughout the post-war period addressed

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\* Prof. **Dariusz Milczarek**, Ph.D. – Director of the Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw; Editor-in-Chief of quarterly “*Studia Europejskie*” (“European Studies”).

<sup>1</sup> See: D.Milczarek, *Polityka wschodnia – wyzwanie dla Unii Europejskiej (Eastern Policy – A Challenge for the European Union)* in: *Rola Polski w kształtowaniu polityki wschodniej Unii Europejskiej na przykładzie Ukrainy (Role of Poland in Building the EU's Eastern Policy – the example of Ukraine)*, ed. J.Borkowski, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2006.

primarily to the Communist block, including the Soviet Union and its Central- and Eastern-European allies. For example, the Communities' involvement in the process of *détente* initiated by the activities of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe or policies of individual Western European countries, including, in particular, those of the leaders of the integration processes, namely France and Germany, can be mentioned. While, the former country has advocated development of all-European collaboration above block-wise divisions since the period of General de Gaulle rule (under the slogan of "Europe from the Atlantic to Ural"), West Germany, instead, developed their own, very intensive *Ostpolitik*. This is how the category of Eastern policy became a solid element of both the European Communities' and their individual Member States' foreign policies.

The status of the Eastern Europe within this policy became even more important in effect of the "Autumn of Nations" at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. It was at that time that the European Communities had to face new challenges stemming from general transformations occurring in international relations. This mainly regarded a radical shift in the balance of power in Europe as a result of the fall of the Communist system in the East of the continent. The importance of the fact was enormous, not only for countries of the region, but for the whole Europe as well, as it opened up quite new opportunities of development of democracy and of nation's right to self-determination. Beneficial examples thereof can be found in victories of democracy in most of the post-communist countries and in reunification of Germany. However, we also witnessed an appalling negative consequence – in the form of an outburst of a civil war in former Yugoslavia.

In order to meet such new challenges, the Communities extended their legal and organisational formula by establishing, in 1992, the European Union to strengthen the area of European integration processes at an international arena. But this was just one step. They also undertook efforts to define the model of their future relations with new democracies, arising on the ruins of the former communist system. The ties contracted with countries of the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) were relatively strongest and further consolidated by the fact that member countries of the Group actively promoted integration among each other under the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), established in 1993.

For Central European countries binding close ties with integration structures of Western Europe – which has been, along the USA, the principal mainstay of democracy and of social and economic progress in modern world – provided an invaluable opportunity or even an indispensable condition of strengthening their economic and political status in Europe. Moreover, this enabled them to consolidate patterns of democratic State of law and of

principles of liberal market economy, both of which were only at the earliest stages of rebirth there.

For the newly-established European Union, on the other hand, definition of a new formula of relations with Central and Eastern European countries became one of the foreign policy's priorities. By tying a closer collaboration with those countries the EU mainly aimed to achieve its strategic goal, namely that of ensuring peace and security in its direct neighbourhood and of minimising a potential risk of political, economic and social destabilisation in the region. The EU used a number of various instruments to shape its new Eastern policy, such as trade liberalisation, economic and financial collaboration or development of political relations.

At the same time, for Central European countries rapprochement with the Community structures became an important element of the process of preparation for their association with the EU and then of obtaining, by some of them, a status of the EU Member States. The Communities on their part, to meet such aspirations half-way, concluded with Central and Eastern European countries association agreements known as the Europe Agreements. One important difference between them and any previous agreements of that kind was that they included political issues (under the so-called political dialogue), rather than concerned economic matters only. The process of approximation of economic, political and social life in the candidate countries to the Community standards, quite difficult and taking well over a decade, was concluded successfully: as many as eight of them became official Member States of the European Union in 2004 and two other ones will join them at the beginning of 2007.

## **1. A New Formula of the EU's Eastern Policy**

The EU Eastern enlargement also became an important turning point in the development of the EC/EU Eastern policy. While previously the policy – even if focused upon the associated and candidate countries – in fact covered the whole Central and Eastern Europe region and all its countries, after 2004 it was clearly divided into two paths.

On the one hand, it covered the so-called European Union's Eastern dimension (following the pattern of its Northern or Mediterranean dimensions) and, in consequence, began to concern a specific group of the EU Member States, separated according to specific geographic, political, economic, social, cultural and other characteristics. On the other hand, the EU's Eastern policy still covered the remaining Eastern European countries, which at present either would not or cannot aspire to become the EU Member States (which mainly relates to the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus).

These two components of the EU's Eastern policy should be clearly distinguished, because at present they are quite different, both as regards their proponents and their contents. Interestingly, new EU Member States, while naturally being an object of the new policy (*i.e.* actions undertaken by other partners are addressed to them), at the same time became authors of that policy, as well, mainly in relation to their Eastern neighbours. This means that, following their accession to the European Union, ten Central and Eastern Europe countries ceased to be the principal object of the Eastern policy. Instead, they joined the remaining Member States as countries developing and implementing that policy.

In effect of its Eastern enlargement, the European Union faced new challenges, both in the area of further promotion of its own integration processes and in that of absorbing previous achievements and potentials of new Member States in order to be able to take full advantage of benefits stemming therefrom.<sup>2</sup> The task is very ambitious, but also very demanding. In particular, it is necessary to carry on efforts aiming at prompting and completing inclusion of new Member States into structures of the EU integration. This was rendered much easier thanks to the EU's policy in the pre-accession period – no matter whether it was called “Eastern policy”, “aid policy”, “pre-accession strategy” or any other. At present, under the conditions of membership, such policy should advance with at least equal intensity or, ideally, with even greater dynamism. Considering the scale and importance of all sorts of the EU aid provided (mainly under the Structural Funds) to new Member States, its activities in this area should still be described as – specific as it may be, but undeniably true and valid – Eastern policy towards its own Member States. This takes place, at best, within what is called the EU's Eastern dimension, *i.e.* in conditions of intra-Community co-operation.

On the other hand, the “proper” European Union's Eastern policy has mainly been run, at present, in relation to third countries. Following the initial stage of binding ties in the form of an association with most of the USSR's former Central European allies and, subsequently, adopting them as Member States of not only the EU, but of NATO as well, the EU's relations with the remainder of countries of the region became very differentiated. Contrary to any superficial generalisations, it is quite difficult to find any common denominator in this respect, especially as we not only consider Russia,

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<sup>2</sup> See: D.Milczarek, *Enlargement and the Position of the EU in the World* in: *Après Enlargement: Legal and Political Responses in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. W.Sadurski, J.Ziller, K.Żurek, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence 2006.

Ukraine and Belarus, but also include other countries, such as Moldova, in the Caucasus region Georgia and Armenia, and in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, *etc.* Moreover, positions and interests of the EU as the whole, and of its individual Member States in particular, are very different depending on particular cases. This is quite evident as one analyses factors that affect the final shape of the Eastern policy, one of which, notably, is an evolution of the power balance in the very core of the European Union.

## **2. The Balance of Power within the EU**

As mentioned above, certain Member States, especially France and West Germany, have always played more active role in developing and running the EC/EU's Eastern policy. It should be emphasised that, in relation to an area of that policy which concerned relations with Russia (and previously with the USSR) their attitudes were largely similar or even identical – both were and in fact still are advocates of maintaining as warm and close ties with Russia as possible, in appreciation of the fact that while it used to be an ideological and military enemy at the Cold War era, it nevertheless has always been regarded as an important political and economic partner, as well. No wonder that for quite a long time, relations with Russia dominated the European Union's and its Member States' Eastern policy. This changed only when the issue of accession of the former communist countries from Central Europe as the EU's new Member States became one of the priorities of that policy.

Considering that matter one has to remember what often tends to be overlooked: that originally the European Union did not intend to invite countries of that region to become its Member States at all. That idea had to ripen for a long time before it found acceptance – the fact that explains all sorts of hesitations and inconsistencies in the EU's attitude towards the enlargement. In debates held to consider that subject attempts were made to decide upon the proper order of action: should the existing integration ties be consolidated first, or is it better to start with enlarging the EU area (the choice between “deepening or widening”). What finally prevailed was a pragmatic attitude combining both options, as it became evident that they were in fact dialectically correlated: the enlargement would make institutional reforms necessary anyway, since without them it would simply not be possible.

Therefore, the concept of the Eastward enlargement neither was nor is universally and unconditionally approved in the EU. Beside various international and political factors, there are serious differences in individual Member States' fundamental, strategic political and economic interests that play an important role in this respect.

From that perspective, there may be two informal blocks distinguished in the EU: on the one hand, we have the “Eastern block” led by Germany, clearly advocating the enlargement in hope of shifting the EU’s centre of balance further East, in which they perceive an opportunity to strengthen their position (which has already been dominant anyway). On the other hand, there is the “Southern block” formed under the leadership of France which is much less inclined towards the Eastern enlargement than Germany – unsurprisingly – due to the same reasons, but seen in an opposite way. Besides, the Southern block countries naturally have much more specific and important interests in the Mediterranean region.

All these factors make the EU’s Eastern policy – both in relation to third countries and to its present Member States – rather inconsistent and vague. This mainly results from clashing interests of its principal actors – both in relations between the European Union as the whole and its individual Member States and in those among particular Member States, especially the most powerful ones, like France and Germany.

### **3. EU – Eastern Europe: Bilateral Relations**

Eastern European countries that have been an object of particular interest on the part of the European Union’s Eastward policy include Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

#### **3.1. EU – Russia Relations**

Russia assumes special position among Eastern European countries. Maintaining good relations with Russia has been regarded as priority by the European Communities since as long ago as the moment of disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the opinion of the Communities international situation in Europe after 1991 largely depended on how efficient the process of Russian systemic transformation went on. In Russia, on the other hand, collaboration with the EC was primarily perceived as the principal way to include their country into international and economic political circulation.<sup>3</sup>

Mutual relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation have had their institutional fundament in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed on 24 June 1994, which undeniably contributed to their intensification and consolidation. However, unlike the Europe Agreements, concluded with Central European countries, the Partnership Agreement provided for no prospects of the EU membership in the future.

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<sup>3</sup> See: S.Bieleń, *Tożsamość międzynarodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej (The Russian Federation’s International Identity)*, ASPRA-JR, Warsaw 2006.

In 1999 the EU adopted a common strategy for Russia, concerning a broad scope of matters, ranging from political through economic to collaboration in the area of justice and home affairs. In reply Russia adopted its own strategy for developing its relation with the EU, in which it was decided to form four “common spaces”: economic, of freedom, security and justice, of external security and of research and education.

In the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the European Union in its activities towards Russia in political area principally focused upon such issues as the process of democratisation in that country, security in territories of the former USSR and fighting international terrorism. While expressing its support for Russian activity in the field of maintenance of peace on the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States the EU at the same time objected any Russia’s tendencies to hegemony.

One of the priorities in the EU-Russia relations is international security. In that context Russia, relating to development of the EU’s defence potential, supports the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy as well as the European Security and Defence Policy, regarding them as not presenting a threat to its interests or security. The European Union and Russia – unlike the USA – also tended to maintain the validity of the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty (ABM). This way, consultation between the parties also covered the issues of operation of either already existing or planned disarmament agreements.

After terrorist attacks against the USA on 11 September 2001 both parties announced undertaking actions to effectively fight international terrorism. This was manifested by the adoption, in October 2001, of a common declaration on this subject, providing for exchange of information and cooperation in fighting various forms of terrorism. In 2003 the EU and Russia mutually acknowledged themselves as partners in the area of security and management of international crises. Development of collaboration in the sphere of civil defence and in common emergency operations were announced. (Russia participated in the EU actions in that area, such as the EU police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in the EU-NATO joint exercises in crisis controlling.)

However, despite a number of declarations or even joint undertakings, relations between the EU and Russia in the area of international security have remained much less developed than similar ties Moscow has with the USA and NATO. Admittedly, Russia in fact has not regarded the EU as the principal organisation involved in the area of security in Europe. In its opinion, that role should be played by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). At the same time, it is believed that in the

future cooperation between the EU and Russia may start to play an important role in regulating local conflicts in Europe.

In the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century some tensions and contradictions emerged in mutual political relations between the parties, as well, the most serious of them regarding Chechnya and the Kaliningrad Oblast. With respect to the Chechnyan conflict the European Union explicitly condemned military action of Russian forces initiated in December 1994, but at the same time condemned Chechnyan terrorist attacks in the territory of Russia. Throughout the period of the conflict it was the EU position that it would be the only effective way to solve it if both parties work out an agreement regulating the status of Chechnya within the Russian Federation, in line with the EU's constant position emphasising Russia's right to preserve integrity of its State. However, it should be pointed out at the same time that the EU's attitude towards the Chechnyan problem was inconsistent: on the one hand it observed events occurring in that region and reacted with criticising Russia, on the other hand, it intensely collaborated with Moscow, thus causing the criticism made in the first place to lose its edge.

With respect to the Kaliningrad Oblast, instead, it was Russia that requested from the EU to have the right of free movement of persons and goods between this area and the rest of Russian territory, which the EU initially opposed with much determination. Finally a compromise was reached, according to which since July 2003 the EU has indeed introduced some transit facilitations.

Early in 2004 a new problem arose in the EU-Russia relations: that related with covering of new EU Member States with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Moscow made its approval in that question dependent upon certain conditions being met, such as its postulates concerning the introduction of movement of persons between Russia and the enlarged EU without visa obligations. The EU, instead, insisted that the Agreement should have been extended to its new Member States automatically. In April 2004 the parties managed to solve the disputable issues and Russia ultimately agreed to the EU enlargement by accession of ten new Member States.

Mutual economic relations between the parties have particular importance to their general relationship. The European Union has been one of the Russia's largest economic partners, accounting for over 60% of Russian foreign trade volume. One particularly significant area of mutual relations is operation of fuel and energy industries. The EU is the most important single sales market of Russian crude oil: during the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it absorbed over 50% of export of crude oil and over 60% of export of natural gas (which covered around 20% of the EU Member States' total demand for both resources). In effect of the EU enlargement by accession of traditional



receivers of Russian energy carriers, *i.e.* Central European Countries, the above-mentioned figures grew up even further. Moreover, Russia declares its will of further collaboration with the EU in the area of development of infrastructure for extraction and transit of energy carriers.

Particularly important in this respect is economic cooperation between Russia and Germany. Taking advantage, among other things, of privileged political relations, basing upon the so-called strategic partnership, both countries have been very significant partners to each other, as manifested by the data revealing that German market absorbs as much as *circa* 25% of Russia's total export and German investments account for nearly one-fifth of all foreign investments made in Russia. Conclusion, in 2005, of a contract for construction of a pipeline to run across the Baltic sea bottom intended to channel natural gas transit from Russia to Western Europe was spectacular and at the same time very controversial event in the area of cooperation between the countries in question. This met with sharp resistance on the part of Poland and other countries in our region that feared for their safety energy-wise.

At the same time, this issue revealed the divergence of interests and of general directions in which foreign policies of individual EU Member States gravitated. Tense relations between Poland and Russia occurred as an additional problem in this context, a regrettable example of which are Russian restrictions for export of Polish agricultural goods (including, in particular, meat). Poland failed to find sufficiently firm support from its Community partners in this matter, although one has to fairly admit that actions undertaken by Polish diplomacy have been very unsatisfactory.

Summing up, it can be argued that the model of political and economic cooperation implemented so far in the European Union's relations with Russia brought considerable effects or even successes, but at the same time it clearly seems close to exhaust its potential. Nevertheless, Russia is certainly going to remain one of the principal partners in international arena for the EU, with which it has to develop a new model of truly strategic partnership in the near future.

### **3.2. The EU – Belarus Relations**

As concerns Belarus, the European Union has been interested both in its importance in the context of the EU-Russian relations and in how its internal situation unfolds. Quite obviously, the main problem in the case of that country is anti-democratic, authoritarian policy of Alexander Lukashenka's regime. Initially, the European Union declared its readiness to cooperate in building democratic system in that country, and signed, on 6 March 1995,

bilateral Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. However, in witness of no positive outcomes of those efforts, since the late 1990s the EU has in practice frozen its political and economic relations with Minsk and withdrew its developmental aid under the TACIS program.

At present there has been an evident state of tension in relations between the Community and Belarus. Early in 2004 the European Commission started investigation concerning infringements of rights of trade unions and national minorities (especially the Polish one) in Belarus, supporting this with a threat of the Community trade preferences being suspended. Moreover, the EU explicitly condemned both the electoral campaign and the way in which presidential elections were held in March 2006, declaring both not to have met democratic standards. As a consequence, in April of the same year restrictions were applied in the form of prohibition of entering the Community territory for persons responsible for forging the elections and breaking citizen rights in Belarus.

It should nevertheless be realised that Belarus has got a very important geopolitical position, being a sort of a buffer zone between the European Union and NATO enlarging Eastwards and the area of Russia's political and economic influence. (It suffices to mention in this respect that pipelines for natural gas and crude oil transit from Russia to Western Europe run across that country, just as they do across Poland.) Seen from this perspective, maintenance of stabilisation in the region is really in the interest of all the parties involved.

### **3.3. The EU – Ukraine Relations**

Some years ago, Zbigniew Brzeziński aptly expressed how vast is the importance of Ukraine to Europe when he referred to that country as to the so called “geo-strategic pivot” capable of having more influence upon the development of situation in our region than Poland had.<sup>4</sup> The strengths of Ukraine include enormous if still not fully used economic and social potential as well as significant geopolitical situation, in particular in the context of relations between the European Union and Russia. Accordingly, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and regaining its own independence, Ukraine has found itself within the scope of interest of the Community foreign policy. This was illustrated, among other things, by the conclusion, on 14 June 1994, of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which provided

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<sup>4</sup> Z.Brzeziński, *Wielka szachownica. Główne cele polityki amerykańskiej (The Grand Chessboard. Principal Aims of the U.S. Policy)*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1998.

for consolidation of mutual ties and supporting Ukraine on its way to create and develop democratic institutions.

As time went by, it was political and economic cooperation that clearly emerged as priority. However, strangely enough, there was a great deal of inconsistency visible both in terms of its coverage and progress. On the one hand, Ukrainian decision-makers shifted between preferred directions of their principal interest several times, hesitating whether to bind closer ties with the Community or with Russia and, on the other hand, there was much ambiguity in political line taken by the EU either, mainly as the result of the EU-Ukrainian relations being treated as secondary compared to those with Moscow. (This was especially evident in behaviours of Germany and France). This finally resulted, in the mid-1990s, in a quite peculiar situation in which Ukraine only pretended to make reforms to get closer to European standards and the Community only pretended to provide that country with political and economic aid in this respect.

In 1999 the European Union formulated its common strategy towards Ukraine. The document, just as the EU common strategy towards Russia, drafted general vision of developing the EU-Ukraine partnership by defining fundamental objectives and areas of cooperation between both parties and specifying in more detail means and instruments to implement common strategy.

According to the EU, the adoption of the strategy was an important political sign attesting how important it regarded relations with that country anyway and the role Ukraine ought to play in shaping peaceful and stable relations in the Eastern European region. Ukraine, on the other hand, reacted to the strategy with some disappointment, describing it as not reaching far enough. This was mainly caused by vague nature of provisions made in the document and – most of all – by the absence of at least mention of potential membership of that country in the EU in the future.

Furthermore, important controversies emerged in mutual relations between the parties, as well. Politicians of the Community – including, in particular, representatives of France and Germany – began anew to express their fears about “using the Ukrainian card” to aggravate or even undermine their relations with Russia which they still regarded as priority. After 11 September 2001, during the period of intensified anti-terrorist co-operation with Russia, this attitude was further developed by attempts to criticise President Leonid Kuchma, in more or less justified way, for various political sins.

This was counterbalanced by a number of accusations and objections put forth by Ukrainian authorities. For example, in the context of the accession of Central European countries to the EU, Ukraine believed that application of

the EU standards by the new Member States, among other things in the form of introducing visas for Ukrainians, contributes to isolation of that country in Europe. Moreover, Ukraine requested a clear declaration from the EU about prospects for its potential membership in European structures. Initially the Community refused to address that issue at all and only at the end of 2003 it began to soften its position, stating that such membership would be a possibility, but under the condition that Ukraine would first become a democratic State with developed market economy.

Other impulses were given by the events that took place in Ukraine in late 2004, related with outburst of the Orange Revolution. Initially the EU behaved rather passively and it was only after the forged presidential elections that it requested Ukrainian authorities to respect principles of democracy. Particularly active roles in solving the conflict were played by Poland and Lithuania. Presidents of both these countries and Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, undertook mediation between the authority and the opposition with an objective to preclude the use of violence and favour a solution reached through dialogue.

However, generally speaking, the European Union's attitude occurred inconsistent again. During the Orange Revolution EU politicians wondered whether it was better to support the process of democratisation (as favoured with much determination by Poland) or to leave Ukraine alone with its own problems admitting that it was really situated in the Russian zone of influence – as proposed, for example, by Josep Borrell, the President of the European Parliament. One could even have an impression that in fact most EU Member States principally intended to maintain correct relations with Moscow and that they were ready to even sacrifice democratisation of Ukraine to that priority. (This was especially evident in the attitude assumed by France.)

At the beginning of 2005 the European Parliament adopted a resolution concerning potential membership of Ukraine in the EU in the future. However, when newly-elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yuschenko visited Brussels in January that year, the EU official position was already quite different over that issue. The EU politicians emphasised that although they wished gradual rapprochement with Kiev, for the time being Ukraine had to satisfy itself with a so-called Action Plan, adopted at that time, which made no mention about potential membership, or with the so-called Ten Points for Ukraine, announced by Javier Solana. Moreover, political situation in that country was still unstable and unclear, as evidenced in August 2006 by taking the office of the Prime Minister over by Viktor Yanukovich, declared opponent of the Orange Revolution and, generally, of Ukraine's rapprochement to Europe. Since that time situation in that country became even more complex, considering an evident increase of internal political tension, caused by

intensified rivalry not only between the President and the Prime Minister, but also within the former Orange camp as well.

On the other hand, however, there have been evident elements of pragmatism, indicating continuation of pro-European course, in declarations and actions of Ukrainian politicians, even those believed to be opponents of the country's European aspirations, such as Viktor Yanukovich. All in all, however, it is really quite hard to tell to which degree Ukrainian aspirations for membership in the structures of Euro-Atlantic integration, *i.e.* in the EU and NATO are vivid and really approved by Ukrainian society and political circles which both seems seriously divided over that matter.<sup>5</sup>

It is worthwhile to appreciate the attitude of Ukraine's neighbours which plays an important role in this respect. Leaving apart the case of Russia which would not renounce treating Ukraine as natural zone of its influence for geopolitical and ideological reasons,<sup>6</sup> one should pay attention to political behaviour of Poland. Despite certain, not always justified inconsistencies and hesitations evident within its policy throughout the 1990s, since 1989 Poland has always attempted to act in the role of European advocate of its Eastern neighbour. (It should be remembered that Poland was actually the first State to recognise independence of Ukraine back in 1991.) This attitude stemmed from the fact that not only political circles, but basically all Polish society perceived democratic Ukraine as a promise for easier achievement of our goals and benefits to all of the Community.

In a new political configuration, the Eastwards policy had to evolve as well. It ceased to focus upon not aggravating relations with Russia and assumed a more open attitude. At the outburst of the Orange Revolution Poland for the first time stepped out in the role of at least partial or perhaps even principal creator of the EU Eastwards policy, and achieved some success in that field. One has to admit that this time Poland's consistent and determined position (supported by several other Community partners, such as Lithuania and Scandinavian countries) contributed to the EU policy towards Ukraine being consolidated along a new line. Whilst no fundamental change has taken place and Ukraine has not yet been shown any clearly drawn path to lead it towards the membership, the controlling of neo-imperial ambitions or an overt intervention of angry Russia which treated the region as a zone of its exclusive influence was achieved.

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<sup>5</sup> A.Górska, *Dokąd zmierzasz Ukraino? (Ukraine where you bound?)*, Elipsa Publishing, Warsaw 2005.

<sup>6</sup> M.Bojcun, *Russia, Ukraine and European Integration*, European University Institute, Florence 2002.

#### 4. The ENP as a New Eastern Policy Instrument

As mentioned above, the recent EU enlargement by the accession of Central and Eastern European countries brought important modifications to the EU's Eastern policy. This way, it was divided into two separate, but closely inter-related, currents, covering relations with some of the new Member States as well as with countries traditionally addressed in the Eastern policy. It should be underlined, however, that controversies in the EU regarding potential continuation of the enlargement process directly affect and will affect both the present and future shape of the Eastern policy which really becomes a hostage of a wider play of interests within the entire EU's foreign policy.

As one of the reasons of this situation, a clash of interests both between the European Union as the whole and its individual Member States and among them, especially the most powerful ones, such as France and Germany may be quoted. Moreover, effects of the recent EU Eastern enlargement occurred to be additional factors in this context. As a result of their accession, ten new Member States, notably Poland as the largest of them, became actors – instead of just subjects, as it had been before – of the EU Eastern policy. Finally, it should be observed that development of consistent Community policy is not favoured by ambiguous attitude taken by its addressees, as it has been witnessed in the case of Ukraine. All in all, this makes the EU Eastern policy little consistent or comprehensive.

One of the methods of managing such weaknesses and shortcomings was undertaking by the EU of specific organisational and legal measures, the most important of which included the creation, at the beginning of the current decade, of the so-called European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Whilst it has been in fact addressed not only to Eastern European countries – its beneficiaries include countries of the Mediterranean as well – the real centre of gravity of this policy remains in Eastern Europe anyway.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See: D.Milczarek, A.Z.Nowak, *Eastern Dimension of the ENP – a New Challenge for the European Union. The Case of Ukraine* in: *The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Framework for Modernisation?*, eds. M.Cremona, G.Meloni, EUI Working Paper LAW, No. 2007/21, European University Institute, Florence 2007; A.Adamczyk, *Znaczenie Polityki Sąsiedztwa Unii Europejskiej dla budowania stosunków z państwami Europy Wschodniej - przykład Ukrainy (Importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy for Relation-Building with Eastern European Countries - the example of Ukraine)* in: *Rola Polski w kształtowaniu polityki wschodniej Unii Europejskiej na przykładzie Ukrainy (Role of Poland in Building the EU's Eastern Policy – the example of Ukraine)*, ed. J.Borkowski, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2006.

There is no doubt that the assumptions the ENP is based upon are very noble and, at the same time, politically and economically attractive. Its principal objective is to build a zone of political stability combined with balanced and sustainable economic and social development around the borders of the European Union. This is assumed to ensure the optimum conditions for smooth development upon an international arena to the EU and its partners alike. In order for that policy to be implemented, a comprehensive range of measures were developed, not only economic, but political and social as well, to be used by the EU and its Member States under various types of aid schemes.

However, final efficacy of all those efforts depends on more than just the quality of projects, preparation of appropriate actions or amounts of resources involved. Instead, it seems that the principal problem behind the ENP is its very serious limitation, which results more from the very essence of that policy than it does from any weaknesses of its concept. The main problem is the lack of the most important impulse to stimulate the EU's partners to contract close ties and collaboration under the European Neighbourhood Policy – namely: the lack of real prospects of getting their full membership in the European Union. This assumption was at the very base of the policy idea in the first place: out of definition, it is not meant to pave the way for membership, it is just going to build a network of close links with neighbouring countries or regions.

Of course, one may rightly argue that the EU membership is neither necessary nor indispensable condition of development for any European country, including those situated at peripheries of the continent. Without any doubt, there have been many countries outside the European Union recording good or excellent economic and social results – and we are not only referring to wealthy ones such as Norway or Switzerland (neither included in the ENP), but to some Mediterranean countries, such as Israel, as well. Moreover, some ENP beneficiaries have been quite hesitant about binding too close ties with the European Union due to their various inner circumstances – this even holds true in relation to countries that officially wish to become the EU Member States, such as Turkey or Ukraine. Finally, it is obvious that neither a mere presence within the EU integration structures can be an automatic guarantee of success, nor staying aside causes a country to necessarily lose its development opportunities.

Nonetheless, as proven by both political and economic practice, prospects for becoming a European Union Member State acts as a very strong impulse that stimulates candidate countries to undertake serious efforts in the area of introducing reforms in many areas of economic, social and political life. Officially, such efforts aim at achieving harmonisation with the EU standards,

but after all they bring an important contribution to general development of such countries, in particular as regards making up for their underdevelopment when compared to Western Europe.

The case of Poland provides a good example of this. From the very beginning of the systemic transformation in this country, Polish authorities and society agreed it was necessary to achieve a strategic goal of Poland's accession to the European Union. This enabled the country to undertake an enormous efforts to adapt all the areas of life to required standards, even despite the fact that the EU membership was not guaranteed at all. (One has to remember that the Europe Agreement which Poland signed with the European Communities in 1991 stipulated for no automatic accession). In effect Poland, such as other candidate countries, managed to meet strict membership criteria and in 2004 became the EU Member State, but – and this should be emphasised – the process of thorough reform and modernisation of the country's economy, legal system, political and administrative structures and so on would have been beneficial anyway.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, prospects for achieving the EU membership may, on the one hand, act as an impulse stimulating systemic transformation, but – on the other hand – the lack of such a prospect can undermine processes of general development in countries-beneficiaries of the European Neighbourhood Policy. That, in turn, due to a resulting non-compliance to requirements regarding political and economic stabilisation, might seriously weaken the effectiveness of the policy. This is a real paradox, considering that the lack of prospect for the full EU membership has been the fundamental assumption of the ENP.

## **5. What Future for the EU's Eastern Policy?**

All this leaves us with a complex, but very important question: what is the future of the EU's Eastern policy? Of course, there is no single, easy answer to that question and since the objective of this paper is to indicate difficult problems, rather than offering simplified ways out, we are only going to list some general conditions that determine the future of this policy.

Most importantly, it seems necessary to define in a more transparent and resolute way general political and strategic perspective, not only for the Eastern policy or the ENP as such, but more broadly for the entire foreign

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<sup>8</sup> See: A.Z.Nowak, *Poland in the European Union: Advantages and Threats in: Global Economy. Challenges in Developing and Transition Economies*, eds. M.Baliamoune-Lutz, A.Z.Nowak, J.Steagall, School of Management, University of Warsaw; Coggin College of Business, University of North Florida, Warsaw-Jacksonville 2007.



policy of the European Union. There are evident signs suggesting that both political class and societies of the “old Fifteen” are weary with the recent round of enlargement and ill-disposed to consider any further inclusions to the EU membership. This, however, is not going to prevent the European Union from having to answer a couple of fundamental questions sooner or later, such as: what the EU is after all and what it is meant to become in the future? Is it just a group of countries tied with economic integration, with loose political links among each other? Or is it meant to bound towards closer political union, basing upon the ever-stronger Economic and Monetary Union?

The importance of such questions is further emphasised by such facts as the failure of the Constitutional Treaty. While, naturally, it was not solving all those problems, at least this Treaty was a step in the right direction, towards better clarification of some of them. However, as it occurred, citizens of some EU Member States, while having no “political compass” to show them the direction the European Union was bound, preferred to opt for a conservative solution and to avoid the risk of giving a new impulse to European integration.

Admittedly, such a clear vision is certainly needed: an alternative idea of the European Union as wholly functionalistic organism, developing along purely pragmatic lines and only through solving subsequent problems, according to a “spill-over” effect, neither seems sufficient nor – more importantly – efficient enough.

Just as important in the context of the future Eastern policy are questions about where are the borders of the united Europe, or Europe in general? What does it mean to be a European? Provisions of the Maastricht Treaty stipulate for any European country a possibility to obtain the EU membership, but which criteria have to be met? Are Russia or specially Turkey (which has already been associated with the EU for 45 years and has a status of a country-candidate for the membership) European countries? Which are the boundaries of Europe in geographic, political or cultural sense?

Quite naturally, one has to be aware that the above questions are very sensitive politically or ideologically. (For example, for some religious fundamentalists the identity of Europe stems, in the first rank or even exclusively, from the influence of Christianity.) In consequence, what we have to deal with here is neither any objective truth nor undeniable facts. Nevertheless, some attempts have to be made at the very least to answer such questions, because otherwise we are going to face real and serious barriers in developing the European Neighbourhood Policy. After all, how can one resolve upon any specific action in relation to Turkey or Ukraine, unless criteria of what is “European” are set at first or political and cultural borders of the united Europe are marked? Should these countries be left for good in “European waiting room” within the ENP, or should a vision – perhaps

difficult and ambitious, but ultimately viable – of gaining full EU membership be offered thereto?

While, as mentioned above, we are not going to give any easy solutions regarding the future development of the EU's Eastern policy, some options may nonetheless be suggested. Above all, it seems necessary to render the principles that regulate that policy more flexible. In particular, a provision should be made allowing for offering to certain, selected ENP beneficiaries of the EU membership prospect. Another obvious necessity is that of intensifying the debate on the fundamental, strategic objectives of both the European Union and its foreign policy, including the EU's Eastern policy.