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Balance of power in the European Union after the Eastward Enlargement. Polish point of view.

Usually researchers who present the analysis of influence of the EU Eastward enlargement focus mainly on description of political relations in Europe, resulting from trans-Atlantic co-operation. There can be no doubt as to huge influence of the USA upon political and security issues of our continent, however it also seems worthwhile to discuss the arrangement of power in the European Union and in Europe as the whole, one implied by internal relations just among the countries of this region.

As the base for this discussion one should certainly choose the key event that has taken place recently, namely: conclusion of negotiation on accession in Copenhagen in December 2002 between the European Union and ten candidate countries. Accordingly, they are going to gain the official status of the EU Member States, as scheduled, on 1 May 2004. From this moment on the EU will consist of 25 Member States and new members of the structure will include Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Malta and Cyprus. At practically the same time the Eastward enlargement of NATO will take place, since in 2002 seven Central and Eastern Europe countries are invited to access this organisation: they were Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. Those two unifying processes result in a significant alteration of the balance of power in Europe and establish a new political environment to both the present European Union and NATO Member States and the Central and Eastern Europe States and their neighbours.

Such a new environment for the EU itself results from the fact that the group of candidate countries adopted is very large and this is done in the situation where the Union isn't well prepared to efficiently act in such a big number. Although the Treaty of Nice contains some stipulations regarding the EU

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institutional reform, but the very issue of distribution of votes in the Council or of places in the remaining EU institutions among new Member States is far from being a solution of the organisation's key problems. The scope of decisions to be made unanimously is still far too broad and this type of voting procedure, if used in the EU following its enlargement, certainly cannot contribute to its efficient operation. Worse still, it may even lead to serious crises.

Balance of power in the European Union. Creation of potential coalitions

It should be remembered that the proponents of the European Union idea have relied, to a considerable degree, upon the idea of „functionalism”,¹ expecting gradual evolution bringing about approximation of interests of its member states without any infringement of their national sovereignty. It was assumed that the process would have taken dozens of years. Progress made in European integration, crowned with execution, in Maastricht, the Treaty on European Union, extended the scope of co-operation of the EU Member States by inclusion thereto the areas of foreign and security policy, as well as other issues related to sovereignty and national identity (such as common citizenship, common currency, co-operation in the fields of justice and home affairs). The EU Member States, while preparing the Maastricht Treaty and its subsequent amendments in the form of Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice, have only reluctantly agreed to have more and more areas subject to the procedure of majority voting in the Council. The reason for their objections was that, as a result, the Council was given ever-growing supra-national powers. That might have well be seen by Member States as depriving themselves of their sovereignty and entailed the risk that some of them would be outvoted. This way, they would have to accept the will expressed by the majority and subject themselves to decisions they deem unfavourable. However, it should be firmly stressed that decision-making process basing on unanimity began to fail and prove insufficient as early as the period of European Communities numbering just six Member States (to mention the 1965 crisis, as a result of which the so-called Luxembourg compromise was signed). The problem regarding efficient decision-making have quite naturally become more and more acute as the Communities were accessed by new Member States.

The growth of the number of EU Member States in 2004 to twenty-five is going to be a wholly new, unprecedented situation. In order to successfully face it, the EU has to undergo a radical reform of its institutional system as well as of its decision-making process to take place in the organisation numbering as many

¹ Stefanowicz J., *Nowa Europa: renesans renesansu*, (*New Europe: a Renaissance of Renaissance*) „Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, no. 1/1994.

members. Failing this, the integration process may slow down and flounder, relations binding the European countries together may weaken and, eventually, according to the worst scenario, the whole structure may even disintegrate. EU politicians have certainly been well aware of that risk and, while approving such a spectacular enlargement, they had to accept the necessity to develop their co-operation within the EU structures, *i.e.* to render decision-making process more efficient. It is the only solution, for the European Union consisting of so many Member States, to adopt, in a gradual yet consistent way, the formula of making decisions through qualified majority of votes, which is equivocal to gradual adoption of a supra-national (federal) formula.

By now, however, only as little as *circa* 11 per cent of all decisions made in the Council have been approved through voting, since even a hypothetical possibility that a decision-blocking coalition might have been formed, had obliged the Member States to look for a compromise through negotiation before any voting took place. Nevertheless, since the time of the last EU enlargement in 1995, trends might be observed to gradually give up the practice of searching solutions in the Council through decisions made unanimously. One should assert that the European Union consisting of 25 Member States is certainly going to be capable of functioning effectively by resolving legal acts through the formula of qualified majority voting in the Council. It is obviously of utmost importance that the Union goes on in the process of deepening the integration, rather than plod along. In order to achieve that, it is going to be necessary to form majorities to make decisions by successfully overvoting minorities. It should be remembered, in this context, that responsibility for creating political union rests upon all Member States.

With the number of Member States as large as soon will be, and with making decisions through majority procedure, blocks and coalitions will inevitably form in the EU to even a higher degree than they do at present. Such block are going to take different forms as individual Member States look after promotion of their interests. Obviously, Member States forming such coalitions will primarily be driven by their care for their own national interests, taking into account such values as welfare and security of their citizens, resulting from their historical experience, geopolitical situation or the present condition of their economies.

The number of votes any given Member State has in the Council is an indication of its political power. It manifests, both directly and in a symbolic way, its place in the EU power arrangement. Poland, that, according to what the Treaty of Nice stipulates for, is going to have 27 votes in the Council, will be an important member of a number of coalitions. Our country is to have just a couple of votes less than as important regional powers as Germany, France or the United Kingdom. The European Convention that has been debating at present, intends to reform the distribution of votes in the Council to promote positions of

countries that are large in terms of population, such as Germany and France. This, of course, would weaken Poland's position. Any potential reduction of number of votes would be tantamount to decrease of importance and power of any given country in the EU. However, these are just plans that may be adopted only after the year 2009 and before they do, they have to undergo the procedure of unanimous approval. It is needless to add that a number of Member States is quite likely to object and exercise their veto to such plans.

Therefore, from the point of view of both Poland and any other Member State, it will be essential to promote its own interests, by either entering majority coalitions, or, in the case of decisions unfavorable to Poland, forming minority coalitions in order to block any given legal act. Our representatives, together with ministers of two other large and one medium-sized Member State, will have a number of votes sufficient to block any decision they deem unfavourable.

Blocks may be formed by smaller countries (which have been in a greater number) in order to counterpoise the advantage of their larger partners. Large countries, such as Germany or France, are of the opinion that at present smaller countries have too many votes in the Council and too many places in the European Parliament in relation to their demographic potential. Taking possible shared interests of individual Member States into account, Poland will form effective blocking coalitions in several important issues, for example it is going to co-operate with France, Spain, Portugal and Greece in order to have the Common Agricultural Policy maintained in its present shape.

Other coalition groups may be formed by the wealthier countries (that have been net payers to the UE common budget, *i.e.* Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden and Austria) in order to oppose the poorer ones (for instance where decisions will concern budgetary outlays). In other areas, formation of regional groups is more than likely, such as Central and Eastern Europe countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia; which are also going to be joined by Romania and Bulgaria in the future); countries of the Baltic Sea region (Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) or of the Mediterranean region (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Malta). Moreover, coalitions will be established both by proponents of federal model of the EU (for instance, Belgium, Italy and Germany), and by its adversaries (United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden). Finally, also the attitude towards the issue of implementation of the EU foreign and security policy is going to group the Member States in blocks, for example to form a group of neutral or uninvolved countries, such as Sweden, Finland, Austria, Ireland, Cyprus and Malta.

However, according to the most likely scenario, stable and lasting coalitions are going to form around the strongest centres – regional powers which have

their established influence areas in different parts of the continent. Such countries will certainly have to co-operate within the ever-present mechanism of balance of power, well-known and established in the history of Europe, which proves efficient in counteracting any potential hegemonic aspirations. Parallel operation of such blocks will probably be similar to the historic “concert of powers”, aiming at satisfaction of interests of the EU Member States, which, any differences and divergences apart, have all endeavoured to ensure peace, safety and welfare in Europe. It seems, therefore, that the European continent is going to be bound by an universalistic idea of integration, in the context of which, as the result of particular blocks forming by groups of countries, we will have to deal with traditional and familiar principle of balance of power.

It is necessary to ask the questions: **how the EU enlargement to take place in 2004 is going to influence the above-outlined vision of Europe? Which countries are going to play the role of gravity centres around which other partners will group to form blocks and coalitions? What are they going to consider areas of their vital interests?**

It seems that two main centres influencing European relations are most likely to arise: **France**, as the leader of South-Western Europe countries, and **Germany** grouping North-Western countries of the continent.² Paris (along with Madrid, Lisbon and Rome) will probably attempt to direct the EU politics towards the issues of threats to Europe’s security as arise in the Mediterranean area, namely to concerns of mass immigration, tensions occurring in Northern Africa at both economic and social background, political conflicts in those countries, seen as a threat to further stabilisation in the European continent and, in particular, the problem of terrorism, one of primary and pivotal importance. The latter issue has been closely related to Islamic fundamentalism which has centred since ever around the Mediterranean region and associated with the system of values seen as contradictory to the canon of values held in the European Union countries.³ This is not meant to suggest, however, that France will wholly renounce any attempts to influence the EU Eastern policy. Position held by France in the European continent is a key one as Paris, observing the United States’ reduced activity in Europe (resulting from the USA’s relatively larger interest in other regions of the world, and in the Near and Middle East in particular) will most certainly attempt to assume the role of pivotal regional power in Europe and to lay the fundamentals of the continent security in co-operation with Germany and Russia (this way implementing, to a certain

² Barbe E., *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy. Balancing Europe’s Eastern and Southern Dimensions*, EIU Working Papers, no. 97/71.

³ Weidenfeld W., Janning J., *Jak rządzić Europą? Problemy i struktury Unii Europejskiej. (How to rule Europe? Problems and Structures of European Union)*, “Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, no. 1/1994.

degree, the president de Gaulle's old idea of Europe from the Atlantic ocean to Ural mountains). It is, however, equally obvious that such vision of Europe is not going to be subscribed to neither by traditional Atlantic countries, such as United Kingdom, Portugal or Netherlands, nor by the newly-adopted Member States witnessing their distrust in relation to Russia (and in case of some of them, to Germany as well).

Germany (supported in particular by Austria, Sweden, Finland and newly-adopted countries) will focus its interests mainly in the Eastern part of the continent, in the countries of the former communist block. At the early stage it was the principal aim of German policy to ensure security and stabilisation east of its Eastern border and to build a "buffer zone" (through reinforcing democracy and political stabilisation in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) between Germany and economically weak and generally unstable countries of the former Soviet Union: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. This goal achieved, especially following adoption of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO, Berlin has carried its focus forward upon consolidation of its economic influence in that part of Europe and upon development of its good relations with Moscow.

In spite of fundamental differences in political directions of „Southern countries” of the European Union and those of its „Eastern countries” it should be emphasised that both types of threats, *i.e.* those forming in the Mediterranean region and those typical to Eastern Europe have been equally dangerous for the whole European Union and the main political centres have borne particular responsibility for finding consensus in implementation of their political strategies. Germany and France *“will have to provide assistance, to a higher degree than other Member States, in the area of conciliation of seemingly contradictory interests, and dissolution of conflicts arising in the context of partition of influence”*.⁴

Within such an arrangement of power inside the European Union a very important and quite peculiar role will probably be played by the United Kingdom (supported by the USA) which may act as a guarantor of the Union's balance of power. From the point of view of Europe as the whole rather than just the EU, on the other hand, the balance of power ensuring security of the continent will likely be distributed between the European Union and Russia (with an additional role of a guarantor played by the USA). Therefore the EU's Eastern dimension is of vital importance, and, accordingly, Germany's position as a powerful country is undeniably reinforced this way. One should reckon with return of Germany, after a long break, to implementation of its “historic

⁴ Weidenfeld W., Janning J., *Jak rządzić Europą? Problemy i struktury Unii Europejskiej*, (How to rule Europe? Problems and Structures of European Union), “Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, no. 1/1994, p.45.

mission” in the East of Europe. However, there is no doubt that both the growth in Germany’s power and binding the chains between Berlin and Moscow any closer is going to be of serious concern to France and to other Western European countries where it is still remembered that the Communities were originally created, among other aims, in order to control any potential rebirth of German superpower aspirations. To be sure, Berlin is well aware of such fears as to growing power of Germany, felt in other countries of Europe, and in order to reassure them it probably going to call for a greater scope of co-operation within the EU structures. This, however, does not mean that Germany is likely to confine itself to a secondary role in Europe by giving the leading role up to France.⁵

The European Union’s Eastern dimension

It has to be stated that the EU enlargement is going to strengthen its “Eastern dimension”, thus raising the importance of Germany even further. At the beginning of the year 2001 one could observe evidences of intensification in relations between Germany and Russia. Both the Chancellor G.Schröder and the Minister of Foreign Affairs J.Fischer visited Moscow. Witnessing those events, the French diplomacy in its turn felt stimulated to act. In a wake of that trend, a forum of regular Russian-French consultation regarding security issues has been established. Policies of both Berlin and Paris may be read as a sign of a certain rivalry of both European powers to achieve privileged relations with Russia. The fact that Russia, following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, declared itself on the side of the USA, marked a new role of Russia in the area of international relations. Also, such redefinition of Russia’s role within a new international power arrangement reinforce the position of Germany, the country that also aspires to play a bigger role in foreign politics. Until quite recently, Germany’s foreign policy was restricted by the lack of clearly defined directions of Russian diplomacy. In other words, Berlin was cautious not to affect the interests of Russia. Involvement of Moscow into international anti-terrorist coalition after 11 September should be read as a pro-Western turn in Russian diplomacy and, accordingly, it enables Germany to intensify its activity in the Central and Eastern Europe region.

Even the very fact of carrying the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany from Bonn to Berlin can be read as a signal meaning that an emphasis is put upon contacts with Eastern Europe. Out of ten new countries to become

⁵ Szlajfer H., *Perspektywa rozszerzenia UE a procesy transformacji w Europie Środkowej (problemy polityczne i bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego)*, (*Perspectives for EU Enlargement and Processes of Transformation in Central Europe - political and international security problems*), “Sprawy Międzynarodowe”, no. 4/1995.

the EU Member States, as many as eight has been situated to the East of the present EU border. Furthermore, those countries have originated from the former Soviet Union zone of influence (additionally, a next couple of countries from this region of the continent have stood in line to access the European Union, namely Bulgaria and Romania). Admittedly, all of those eight countries are going to seek the closest and strongest political centre in no other place than Berlin. Although the two remaining States invited to the EU, Malta and Cyprus, have been situated in the Mediterranean region, yet neither their size nor number can be expected to significantly reinforce the "Mediterranean dimension". With both the number and geographic situation of the countries newly-adopted as the EU Member States taken into account it is clear that the enlargement actually weakens the position of France as the centre of Union's policy, thus strengthening the position of Germany that has gradually acquired the status of the most important partner for both the USA and Russia.

The accession of the Central and Eastern Europe countries brings about a new geopolitical situation for the EU as, since their adoption, the Union is going to have Russia, Belarus and Ukraine as its directly adjacent neighbouring countries. Endeavour aiming at providing better stabilisation of political situation in those countries is going to become one of principal aims of the EU's foreign policy, along with further development of economic co-operation. Establishment of closer relations with them would put the EU in proper position to increase its activities not only in Eastern Europe, but, subsequently, in Central Asia and in the area East of Caucasus as well.

However, shifting the EU border further to the East must not mean creation of a new "Iron Curtain" in our continent, as it must not become the dividing line between the wealthy and the poor. Quite surely, an asymmetry in economic development will exist and it may even occur a threat for political, economic and social balance, yet the EU, within the context of its Eastern policy, should aim at relieving and solving such problems in order to prevent new barriers from being built. Without a doubt, the enlarged European Union Member States will implement an active Eastbound policy, but their relations with their individual Eastern neighbours will be specific to each pair of partners, according to their significance or depending on progress made in the process of democratic and market-oriented reforms taking place in the Eastern partners' countries. The newly-adopted Member States, in particular Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, but Poland and Hungary as well, will endeavor at elimination of the syndrom of the EU "border State" and to extend the zone of stability beyond their respective Eastern borders.

In any case, Russia remains the most significant partner of the European Communities in the East. It should still be considered the key element of European security system. Additionally, it is also evident at a recent time that it

has sought to establish especially close relations with Berlin. It is during the period of German presidency, in 1999, that the EU formulated its common strategy with respect to Russia, containing general vision of how such a strategic partnership should develop. The EU Member States, mainly following German encouragement, have declared their support for Russia's activity in terms of securing peace in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States since the early nineties, aiming at having political and economic stability in the area of the former Soviet Union guaranteed.⁶ However, such an attitude on the part of the EU should not be regarded as expressing approval for regaining by Moscow its influence in this region. As the goal was rather different, namely to provide better stability of situation which seemed to threaten the EU's security at the time when it was incapable to undertake operations in the field of securing peace independently. This situation was to change at a later time and nowadays such facts as invitation of three states formerly belonging to the Soviet Union (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) to become the EU and NATO Member States give evidence to gradual extension of the European Union's influence in the post-Soviet region.

The countries of the former communist block will naturally attempt to exert their influence upon formulation of the EU's Eastern policy. There have been two things all of the eight prospective Member States of the region have in common. Firstly, they have all had tragic historical experience that can easily give rise to their feeling of being at threat and to concerns for their security due to potential rebirth of "*imperial tendencies in Russia's foreign policy*".⁷ Secondly, they have been under strong economic influence of Germany (which especially holds true for the Czech Republic and Hungary), the country which, as mentioned above, tends to tighten their relations with Russia. This way, a complex political configuration is likely to occur, in which a skilful and cautious interplay of all the EU Member States will be required. Among the problems the new EU Member States will face those concerning the Russian minorities will be prominent (in Estonia this minority accounts for 30 per cent of its citizens, while in Latvia the percentage is even higher, reaching 34), as will be issues regarding the Russian-Latvian and Russian-Estonian border (also the unsettled issue of marine border between Lithuania and Latvia) and the problem of the Kaliningrad District, mainly involving Lithuania and Poland. Also, some conflicts emerge once in a while along the lines Prague-Berlin and Prague-Vienna, as German nationalists demand that "Benès's decrees" be withdrawn.

⁶ Starzyk J., *Wspólna Polityka Zagraniczna i Bezpieczeństwa Unii Europejskiej (The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy)*, Warsaw 2001.

⁷ Żurawski vel Grajewski P., *Wspólna Polityka Zagraniczna i Bezpieczeństwa Unii Europejskiej – aspekt bałtycki i śródziemnomorski (European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy – Baltic and Mediterranean Dimensions)*, Łódź 1998, p.32.

The situation of Lithuania is one deserving particular attention. Its situation between the Kaliningrad District and Belarus, which is the country highly dependant on Moscow is quite similar to Poland's position just before the Second World War. At that time the Northern part of Poland was inserted between the East Prussia and the Reich. Lithuania, afraid of Russia, will surely co-operate with Poland and other Central and Eastern European EU Member States in order to weaken Russia's domination. On the other hand, with its historical experience, dating mainly from the period between the two World Wars, Vilnius is also quite likely to retain reserved attitude towards Poland. It should however be underlined that both countries' interests in the area of security have certainly been convergent and that mutual relations between Lithuania and Poland have recently been significantly improving.

Poland is the largest of the countries invited to become the EU Member States. With both the area and demographic potential of the country taken into account, it is only going to be second to France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, ranking in a similar position as Spain does. Due to its geographic situation and historical experience Poland has the right to aspire to play the principal role in creating EU's new Eastward policy. With historical experience of the States of the former Eastern block and apprehension about potential rebuilding of Moscow's zone of influence taken into account, Poland will undeniably play the role of a major leader and, at the same time, that of a bedrock for the rest of the smaller Central and Eastern Europe countries. Poland, as the country standing at the forefront of that group, will face the task of implementing the policy of controlling any excessively close relations between Germany and Russia.

From the very outset of political transformation in the former communist block the Polish government was a firm advocate of independence of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. Through provision of its express support for aspirations of those countries to their full independence, Poland was consistently implementing its Eastward policy assuming creation of a "buffer zone" dividing it from Russia. Poland has found an important partner in execution of this strategy in Ukraine, the country which prevents rebirth of Russian imperialism by retaining its own independence. In effect, the newly-adopted European Union Member States will act together in their efforts to support independence of Ukraine in fear of Moscow. This concerns the countries that directly border Ukraine and the more "remote" ones alike (as the latter ones have also been well aware of the importance of Ukraine being strong and independent).

Politicians in Warsaw and Kiev have defined mutual relations between the countries as strategic. Both the Government and the President of Poland have repeatedly supported Ukraine on an international forum, pointing out the importance of this country for the security system in Europe.

Unfortunately, the European Union Member States failed to develop far-reaching contacts with Ukraine. While a common strategy towards this country has been adopted, no significant events in the area of promotion of economic co-operation have taken place as follow-up to such purely political declarations. Poland itself is economically not strong enough to closely bind Kiev and Warsaw together. The EU Member States, on the other hand, have been afraid of risk inherent in investing in the region which is still seen as politically and economically unstable. As yet, the resulting situation is won over by Moscow which, having rendered Ukraine dependent on supplies of strategic raw materials and energy from Russia, at the turn of 2000/2001 signed a number of agreements with Kiev.

Poland hopes that as the EU Member State it will be in proper position to contribute to real progress of economic relation between Ukraine and the European Union and that, through opening up a number of the EU aid programmes it will be possible to assist that country to gain a stable, long-lasting position among European democracies and to secure its independence on a long-term basis. Polish Government, while facing the obligation to introduce visas for the Ukrainian citizens as a result of the Schengen Agreement requirements, will nevertheless attempt to relieve effects of that decision in order not to arise, in Ukrainian society, a feeling of being pushed back or denied. (This will probably be achieved through introduction of repeated-use visas thus making it possible to retain contacts among societies of both countries.)

Relations with Belarus have also been of particular importance in the context of the EU's Eastward enlargement. In this case we have to deal with the country ruled in an authoritarian manner by the President Lukashenka and, at the same time, remaining to a very high degree in the zone of Russian influence. Presidents of both States have declared the will to merge both countries a number of times yet their visions of such a union have so far been diametrically different. Lukashenka requests union according to the principle of equal rights of both entities, while Russia envisions Belarus as no more than of its autonomous republics, the option rejected by the regime in Minsk. Moscow is generally uninterested in bringing the merging process of both countries any further as it has already gained from Belarus anything it could get: it exerts military control over it and enjoys its support in an international arena. "*Actual and complete union would prove very expensive for Russia in economic terms, the more so that it is still far from being able to successfully cope with its own problems*".⁸

Facing such political situation in Belarus, the most interested countries, i.e. Poland and Lithuania have still hoped to attract that country towards the

⁸ Gromadzki G., *Mity i rzeczywistość w stosunkach Białorusi i Rosji (Myths and Reality in Relations Between Belarus and Russia)*, in: Stańczyk J. (ed.), *Dokąd zmierza Białoruś? (Where Belarus Goes?)*, Warszawa 2000, p.76.

European Union. For both Warsaw and Vilnius the existence of independent Belarus is a strategic aim. Unfortunately the Union itself failed to define its policy with respect to Minsk yet. The true nature of restrictions and sanctions against Łukaszenka's administration have been nothing more than symbolic acts. In fact, it was promised that economic sanctions will be abolished as soon as democracy is restored in Belarus, yet such an instrument of pressure is inefficient taking into account an insignificant volume of trade relations between the EU and that country.

Both the EU Eastward enlargement and influence of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia upon formulation of the EU's Eastern policy should also contribute to further definition and consolidation of activities undertaken in relation to Belarus. After all, it is from that very country that a serious threat radiates: a threat undermining security of the European Union and of Europe as the whole, to be sure. It is Lukashenka's regime that during the late nineties sold weapon to the terrorism-supporting countries, such as Iraq and Sudan as well as to Kosovo at war at the time.

Poland, Lithuania and Latvia are particularly interested in restoration of democracy in Belarus and in securing that country's firm position among the stable European states. Efforts made by those countries have also been supported by the Czech Republic that is interested in the fall of the Belarussian dictator as well. Additionally, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic have been among the most resolute advocates of binding Ukraine closer to European structures. The EU, accordingly, should expressly declare that the process of its Eastward enlargement has not been finished yet and that in the future it may involve subsequent countries as well (including the independent, democratic Belarus and Ukraine). Such Central European countries' policy results, among other factors, from the fears as to possible extension of Russia's influence in the region of Europe. Therefore it seems that the former Eastern block countries will co-operate, following their accession to the EU, in order to control Russian influence through creation of an appropriate Eastern policy of the European Union. This policy, however, has to be implemented in a very competent manner as it should, at the same time, support the process of shift towards democracy, stabilisation and economic growth in Russia since it is the European Union in partnership with democratic Russia that have best potential to play the role of a guarantor of long-lasting peace in Europe in the future.

Poland however, together with other Central and Eastern European countries, due their historic experience, is afraid of both Russian and German domination. Hopefully, through further progress in the integration process, those countries will find themselves in proper position to significantly influence the EU's Eastern policy and, as fears arise regarding relations between Berlin and Moscow growing alarmingly close, may also look for support in other Western

European countries, mainly in France and the United Kingdom. And nevertheless, one shouldn't be surprised that – as mentioned above – new EU and NATO Member States also look up to Euro-Atlantic structures as a source of an ultimate guarantee of their security, in particular to the USA active European policy.

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