

Piątkowska-Stepaniak W.

POLAND'S HOPES AND THE REALITY OF THE EUROPEAN EASTERN POLICY

The term of Poland's presidency in the Council of Europe commences on 1 July 2011. This means that Poland will preside over works, as well as meetings of the European Council. What connection does it have with the current shaping of the Ukrainian geopolitics? First of all, today Poland does not lie between two "milling stones", i.e. Russia and Germany, but between Germany – now moored in the EU and NATO – and independent Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Lithuania. The short borderline shared with the Russian Federation in Kaliningrad Department does not change the thesis in any fundamental manner.

We do not know for certain whether Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldova, Georgia will finally turn West or will decide to return to the East¹. This question has not been settled in these states yet. Hence, we also come to deal with a dynamic geopolitical system both between Poland and Ukraine and between Poland and the other eastern neighbours. This system, which has been undergoing continuous evolution, has a fundamental significance for Poland, even the greater as the restoration of decisive Russian political, economic and military dominance over the states lying east of Poland would mean "recreating the material basis of the Russian dominance"².

The clashing tendencies that have their roots – on the one hand – in Russia's imperial ambitions; on the other one – in fairly strong – like in Ukraine – national movements striving for ultimate liberation and democratic solutions – make us deal with dynamics that shape also the Polish geopolitics towards the eastern neighbours. Its programme towards Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Lithuania, which was sketched by outstanding Polish thinkers in exile concentrated particularly around the Parisian *Kultura* run by Jerzy Giedroyc as early as in the 1950s, departed from thinking in terms of disdain and apprehensions of Russia and assumed only the idea of building 'bridges' to reach it³. That concept offered a chance of designing projects of uniting Europe. Only non-imperialist Russia and non-imperialist Poland – in the opinion of political writers of the 1950s and the 1960s – created a chance of ordering the mutual relations. The reasons of state, as represented by each of the states – Poland and Russia – should consist in that Ukraine, Lithuania and Byelorussia should be fully sovereign. As it was emphasized "the politics of lasting sovereignty of the region of Ukraine, Lithuania and Byelorussia would put an end to the rivalry between Poland and Russia in the historical east of Poland. At the same time, an attempt at

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¹ P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Dynamizm geopolityki. Porównanie położenia międzynarodowego II i III Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Geopolityka i zasady. Studia z dziejów polskiej myśli politycznej*, Kraków-Warszawa 2010, p. 30 ff.

² Ibidem, p. 31.

³ R. Habielski, *O pisarstwie Juliusza Mieroszewskiego*, [in:] *Myśl polityczna na wygnaniu*, Warszawa 1995, p. 153.

rebuilding any bulwark with Russia would automatically re-awake Russian imperialism.”⁴

The political thoughts of the Polish emigration laid – to a large extent – foundations for Poland to regain sovereignty, and what is entailed – stability and democracy, also security. Poland’s accession to the EU and the NATO consolidated that state. Right at the moment when the largest state in Central Europe – Ukraine – regained sovereignty, the level of ordering in the region improved considerably. For Poland it is a very positive factor. It also determined the country’s international politics.

The geopolitical location of Poland, where – on the one side we have the independent Ukraine and on the other one – the democratic Germany anchored in the EU and the NATO, permits to admit that this is an advantageous situation, yet far from stable. We will not be able to talk about a stable situation only until, among others, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldova accept a lasting policy of shifting towards the West.

Poland, having stabilized its own situation through accessing the NATO and having entered the EU structures and Schengen, cannot forget that its strategic target is aiding the eastern neighbours to join institutions of the Western world. This satisfies Poland’s geopolitical interests which also allow a gradual forming of more lasting neighbourly ties with Russia that would abandon its imperialist appetites. Poland’s strategic aim becomes even the more evident as the scale of readiness of “the French, the Spanish, the Italian, and others to make sacrifices in the name of democracy of Byelorussia, or support of Ukraine, is more or less the same as that of Poland to bear costs of stabilization and westernization of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia or Libya.”⁵

“But the project of occidentalization of Poland’s eastern neighbourhood entails an unavoidable cost in the form of, among others, a political conflict with Russia.”⁶ For it is obvious that building an alliance between Poland and Ukraine constitutes a counterbalance for Russia in the region of Eastern Europe, as Ukraine makes one of the main pillars in Russia’s politics of shaping the common economic area with former Soviet republics.

Therefore the question arises as to what extent Poland is able to realize these strategic goals and to what extent Ukraine is interested in them⁷. It seems that answers to the above should be looked for in the very issue itself of the degree of democratization in both partners on the one and the other side. Still, in this very context there arises yet another question about the very democratization process of the international space. Does Poland, and the whole European Union, exert sufficient influence on the increase in the degree of democracy in the eastern neighbour, which makes one of the conditions torn the latter to access the EU?

⁴ Ibidem, p. 154.

⁵ P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Dynamizm geopolityki...*, op. cit., p. 43.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ L. Koćwin, *Partnerstwo Wschodnie. Aktorzy i interesy regionalnej geopolityki Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] R. Riedel and P. Klimontowski (eds), *2011 Polska Prezydencja w Unii Europejskiej*, Opole 2010, p. 364.

We cannot determine – despite the effort of contemporary intellectuals and analysts – to what extent states influence the level of democracy of international relations, and to what degree it is exactly on the contrary – it is stabilization and international peace that influence formation of democracy and its consolidation. In this situation, one can state that both national states, including Poland, and the very political entity itself, which the European Union is, are subject to both vectors that act with a similar force in both directions⁸. Since, as we have emphasized, we come to deal with both situations within the EU – “the democratic character of the elements forming the Union, as well as stability, peace and economic prosperity, which are elements present in the Union and constitute ‘glasshouse’ conditions for the development of democracy”, then it is with more carefulness that we can speak of any special role which Poland plays in the mission of occidentalization of its eastern neighbourhood. Inasmuch as Poland accepted – as its priority in the foreign policy – to undertake actions for including Ukraine into the European structures – in the geopolitical dimension the problem has a broader background, especially as a controversy is running on within the very EU itself which concerns overcoming deficit in democracy within it, the controversy – as Scowcroft says – over its passivity, lack of ambition, unwillingness to fight, for instance, in Afghanistan, and the like⁹.

Does this mean that we can justify the lack of due determination and consistence of the Union in the mission to include Ukraine in the European structures? The problem is the more complex as in the very foreign policy of Ukraine itself there is insufficient determination and inconsistency that are becoming more and more distinct.

In this context, the forthcoming formal presidency in the European Union will prove a measurable test for Poland, a member of the EU. The evaluation of the quality of Poland's leadership, when it has an exceptional influence over the course of European issues, should run on two main planes: from the point of view of realized European goals and from that of realization of its national interests¹⁰. In the latter case – realization of national goals – Poland has a perfect occasion to become a neutral state which does not push forward its national preferences too excessively, and most of all – taking into account its reasons of state – to act for an effective realization of the concept of Eastern Partnership. This issue – apart from concern for security in the spheres of energy supplies, competitiveness, trade and education – makes one of the leading themes that promote questions of European integration. Realization of the Eastern Partnership is not only in the interests of Poland as a state – the co-author of the idea – but also Poland as a bridging state, particularly in the eastern politics, one that consolidates stabilization and safety in the region. In this

⁸ R. Riedel, *Demokracja w Unii Europejskiej – problem legitymizacji władzy w warunkach globalizacji*, [in:] R. Riedel (ed.), *Unia Europejska w XXI wieku. Polityczno-prawna wspólnota interesów*, Toruń 2010, p. 26.

⁹ *Ameryka bez fajerwerków*, the interview with Brent Scowcroft conducted by Marcin Borecki, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 3-5 IV 2010.

¹⁰ Tomasz G. Gross, *Euro 2011: polska prezydencja w UE*, [in:] „Międzynarodowy Przegląd Polityczny”, No. 4(20), Warszawa 2007, p. 88.

case, the national and European goals share a common vector, which does not raise any fundamental conflict of interests. At the same time, for Poland this is a chance to manifest an active role and articulation of its own geopolitical interests.

This political intention was announced by the chief of Polish diplomacy already during the presentation of the Polish-Swedish initiative at the Brussels-based European Policy Centre in May 2008. In 2009, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, “We, in Poland, make a distinction between the southern and eastern neighbours of the EU. In the south we have neighbours of Europe. In the east we have European neighbours of the EU, who – if they satisfy the criteria – can apply for their membership in the European Union some day.”

According to Minister Radosław Sikorski, “The Eastern Partnership is addressed to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Its task is to contribute to realization of one of the key targets of the Polish foreign politics, that is bringing closer and integrating Eastern Europe and the European Union. The Eastern Partnership [whose basis is formed by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – W.P.-S.] is introducing a new quality in the relations between the EU and the states included in it through a progressing and gradual integration of the states and their societies with the European Union, as well as supporting aspirations of East-European states to strengthen the ties and integration with the EU. [...] Poland acknowledges the commencement of the initiative of the Eastern Partnership at the summit held in Prague on 7 May 2010 to be a historic success of the European Union and all Eastern partners.”

“Strong Poland within Europe, Poland that influences the politics of the whole of Europe,” is what R. Sikorski said in 2009, and the very statement itself made a good slogan to fuel the works on the programme of the Polish presidency¹¹, the more so as the Polish-Swedish initiative in the dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy displays solid foundations. It was preceded by the Czech, Swedish, and Hungarian terms of presidency in the EU. All these states articulated their care for the eastern politics.

The whole of the many-year-long debate which has been accompanying the preparations of the Polish presidency generally writes into the above-mentioned slogan-like framework, the debate which has been running on in both scientific environments, the opinion-shaping media and circles of the Polish political establishment.

In May 2010, during the international conference entitled *The Polish Presidency in the European Union*, which was organized at Warsaw University, the Vice-Prime Minister, Waldemar Pawlak, who was invited to take part, concluded, among others, that the Eastern Partnership initiated by Poland would be one of the priority themes¹².

In March 2009, the academic and experts' environment opened a discussion devoted the Presidency at the Institute of Political Sciences of Opole University. A

¹¹ Anna Szczepańska, *Prezydencja 2011 – odpowiedzialność, a zarazem szansa na określenie miejsca Polski w Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] R. Riedel and P. Klimontowski (eds), *2011 Polska Prezydencja w Unii Europejskiej*, Opole 2010, p. 284.

¹² www.newstelegraf.pl/contet/polska-prezydencja-w-ue-cele

few scores of scientists unanimously expressed the opinion that the Polish Presidency has a chance of being the most significant event in the Polish politics since the time of the Republic of Poland joining the European Union on 1 May 2004¹³. The majority of researchers were also of the opinion that skilful investing the Eastern Partnership with a proper shape and depth can be decisive to its success in the geopolitical dimension of this Presidency.

Since we acknowledge the fact that the Eastern Policy is our 'flagship' in the forthcoming Presidency, what tasks are set for Poland? These tasks must take into account – on the one hand – the dynamism of political and social transformations of the eastern neighbour, which do not always proceed – despite declarations from representatives of political elites – toward Europe, and Poland is not perceived as a partner in the geopolitical system that will accelerate Ukraine's integration with Europe¹⁴.

Poland's engagement in the realization of the Eastern Partnership must also take into account the fact that the implementation of it raises a strong objection on the part of Russia, does not win approval of France or Germany. Poland is entering not only a political conflict with Russia, but with France and Germany as well; with France, because the Eastern Partnership is a competitive initiative with reference to the Union for the Mediterranean, which "is the priority of the French foreign policy", and with Germany which, running a strategic policy with Russia, does not have to be interested in strengthening that of the Eastern Partnership¹⁵.

It seems that this unfavourable process that gives rise to tensions inside the Union can, to a large extent, decrease proper management of the European Public Sphere (EPS), including states of Europe which should enter this space because of the nature of things, I mean here – first of all – Ukraine.

In the process of establishing the EPS, the basic role is played by international political communicating. We speak here of removing communication barriers, but also of europeization of communicating, As Polish researcher, Ewa Nowak, underlines, this europeization should manifest itself in a more and more forceful penetration of issues, problems and European perspective into the content transferred and analyzed on the national level. The author emphasizes that the evaluation of the degree of europeization of national public spheres, and – at the same time – the level of development of the EPS depends on the answer to the question: To what extent is what is happening in 'Europe' reflected in the media of individual states? We are talking about the European perspective¹⁶. It ought to mark out the agenda setting to the media. Is it so indeed?

Deepened studies and analyses of contents of the media in Europe indicate that merely from 5 to 7 percent of the news in the press and TV is devoted to issues

¹³ Cf. Conference proceedings under the title: *2011 Polska Prezydencja w Unii Europejskiej*, R. Riedel and P. Klimontowski (eds), Opole 2010.

¹⁴ L. Koćwin, op.cit., p. 365.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 361-362.

¹⁶ Ewa Nowak, *Europejska przestrzeń publiczna a polityka medialna i audiowizualna – problemy i zadania w perspektywie polskiej Prezydencji w Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] *2011 Polska Prezydencja...*, op. cit., p. 254.

related to the Union as a community¹⁷. In Poland, studies of the content of TV programmes released by commercial and public channels pointed to sporadic appearance of news, which present events and phenomena from the European perspective. If the news does appear, then the dominant theme is problems connected with the common economic policy of the EU, which occupy 50% of all the space devoted to the EU and Europe. In recent months the so-called European theme has also been the economic crisis (the course of the crisis in Hungary, in Island, the crisis in the banking sector in Belgium and Britain) and ways of overcoming it¹⁸. In this place it is worth repeating after M. McCombs that in the world where it is the media that establish the public agenda and lead the dialogue, matters that are ignored by them may as well not exist. Contemporarily, this may, in particular, concern the TV as still the dominating and influential medium, one that is still the greatest 'popularizer' of norms, opinions, attitudes and judgments. Yet, one needs to add also – one which is being entered, with greater and greater force, by information that is interesting or useful, but as a matter of fact – trifle in its character, creating the so-called 'infotainment'¹⁹. This new category is slowly ousting news items of the so-called 'hard' information service category.

In this context, it also worth ascertaining that for the time being it is only to a small extent that we have come to deal with a pan-European public sphere. We will not be able to talk about it until events, whose consequences have a European or global character in one state, become a vital theme in the media of another one. For a while, in Poland, we can boast of a wider debate in the media which is devoted to Europe's problems. This state consolidates the closed national consciousness. Inasmuch as the fact that findings of the study *Eurobarometre* indicate, as quoted by E. Nowak, that 60% of respondents confirm their interest in and willingness to get to know opinions and views of citizens of other states on such issues as environmental protection, threat of terrorism, crime rate, power supply security, employment policy, human rights, it does not decide about the general evaluation of the lack of media coverage of the European policy and European proceedings²⁰.

It is significant that similar research confirms that, among respondents, Poles – in a decisive manner – stand out against other states as regards the degree of affirmation and acceptance of the idea of the EU. "Among Europeans, the percentage of Poles and Belgians who believe that matters relating to the Union are moving in the right direction (the Polish – 64%; the Belgian – 65%) is the highest. The Irish and the Polish also acknowledge, to the highest degree, (the Irish – 87%; the Polish 83%) that their membership in the UE is beneficial to their countries."²¹

The change in the attitudes represented by the Polish is tremendous. Merely a few years ago, during the referendum held in 2003 that was to decide about Poland's joining the EU, it was feared – primarily – that there might be problems with

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 260.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 261.

¹⁹ Cf. Instytut Monitorowania Mediów. *Analiza głównych wydań dzienników informacyjnych*, May 2010.

²⁰ E. Nowak, op. cit., p. 264.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 265.

attendance, and the fears were not without foundations – the attendance was not impressive: there were nearly 59% eligible for voting who took part, out of whom 77% voted 'yes' and 22% voted 'no'²². Today, after 7 years of Poland's presence in the EU, over 80% are satisfied with the membership in the Union and see advantages of it for the country²³.

It seems that the forthcoming Presidency can still strengthen this state of acceptance for the EU among Polish society even more. It can also, through realization of the Eastern Policy, entail – in a fundamental way – a change in the state of perception of Europe's matters in Ukraine.

The survey research into the content of the press, which was conducted in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol in 2010, revealed that out of 10 titles merely one presented the question of Ukraine's entering the EU in the negative light in the majority of the presented material, while the others assumed an objective approach to this issue by pointing out both strong and weak sides of the enterprise. On the other hand, the columns of one of the papers *Krimskij Obozrewatel* (*The Crimean Observer*) were evidently dominated by publications that applauded the idea of Ukraine's uniting with the European Union²⁴. This is a picture that stands out upon analyzing the content of the press, yet in the era of 'mediatization' of politics, the phase of 'europeization' of communication must take into account the media as well as politicians, political institutions, and at last – receivers, who – gradually – should form a civic-European sphere, not a national one. This concerns, to the same extent, Poles, Ukrainians and all the other citizens of European states. This aspect ought to stay in the centre of attention while realizing the Eastern Partnership.

Europe is a geographical and civilization-cultural notion, but also – to the greater and greater extent – is becoming an economic-political one, especially when there are talks of European integration and economic space, European foreign policy, European security system, or European common home²⁵.

The Polish Presidency should give a boost to realization of assumptions of forming political-economic teams which are of supranational character. For a modern economy that is based on affluence of working people a national state is too tight. This fact, however, is tied to altering the mentality of societies which, today, are not capable of thinking in terms of citizens-Europeans. Here the need arises for a greater involvement of the media in the action of changing the mentality of citizens of not only the EU member-states, but also of all inhabitants of the Continent. A common economic activity can serve the purpose only too well. The economic supra-state unions which are formed as a result, developing a new universal type of social and

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[Http://referendum.pkw.gov.pl/informacje_prasowe/obwieszczenie_o_wyniku_referendum_akcesyjnego.htm](http://referendum.pkw.gov.pl/informacje_prasowe/obwieszczenie_o_wyniku_referendum_akcesyjnego.htm)

²³ Results of a survey, TVN 24, an evening information programme *Fakty po faktach*, 01.05.2010.

²⁴ Oleksij Besarabow, *Eurointegracja na storinkach krymskich gazet: jaka wona?*, [in:] *Mediokrytyka*, No. 17, 20 VII 2010, p. 9-10

²⁵ Cf. E. Halizak and R. Kuźniarek (eds), *Stosunki Międzynarodowe. Geneza, struktura, dynamika*, Warszawa 2006.

political bonds, may serve as signposts to show the future aiming to a fully free flow of human potential within Europe²⁶.

In the process of determining the *European character* of the European Union the primary role is played by historical and cultural factors, as well as by common identity and identifying with democratic values.

Accentuating the function of geopolitical factor, it is possible to conclude today that the Central-Eastern European belt still holds the first-rank significance. Without the states of that area Europe is dangerously weak. Therefore, the Polish Presidency does declare that in the relations with the countries included in the Eastern Partnership it will strive to draw articles of association, to form zones of free trade with the EU, to make progress in the area of visa and trade liberalization, as well as to intensify economic cooperation. These themes have been written down as the priority ones for the Polish activity during the coming term of Presidency²⁷.

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²⁶ F. Gross, *Uwagi o Europie Wschodniej*, [in:] „Kultura”, October 1958, No. 10, Paris, p. 105.

²⁷ www.prezydencjaue.gov.pl.