

On the Future OF EUROPE

Policy Papers

3.

Pro-European Atlantists:
Poland and Other Countries of Central
and Eastern Europe After Accession to
the European Union



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Written by:

Grzegorz Gromadzki
Olaf Osica

Assistant writers:

Tadeusz Chabiera
Jacek Czaputowicz
Krystian Piątkowski

Editor:

Katarzyna Morawska
Karolina Stawicka

Translation:

Witold Czarторыński

Typesetting:

Michał Poloński

Publisher:



Ul. Sapieżyńska 10 a, 00-215 Warsaw, Poland
Tel. (48-22) 536 02 00, fax 536 02 20
e-mail: europa@batory.org.pl, www.batory.org.pl

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Introduction

The present report is the third of a series of planned Policy Papers, which will present the views of Polish non-governmental communities concerning those international issues that are important from the point of view of European integration.

This project was initiated by the Stefan Batory Foundation. We invite various non-government organisations to co-operate on successive reports.

This text, which we have the pleasure to present to you, was prepared in co-operation with the Center for International Relations, where – with the support of the German Marshall Fund of the United States – the project “Transatlantic Partnership and Poland’s Interests” is being realised.

In the work on this Policy Paper also independent experts have participated. We thank all those persons who have contributed to the drafting of this paper for their kind assistance and valuable comments.

By using the formula of short policy papers, we wish to discuss in a comprehensible manner for the Western reader on matters that are important for the future of Europe, and also to contribute to the animation of the debate on this subject in Poland. We do not wish to limit ourselves to the presentation of the point of view of Poland and Poland’s interests alone. It is our ambition that our proposals should take into account the general European perspective and provide a true contribution to the debate on the desirable shape of the external policy of the European Union.

We believe that an important role may be played in this discussion by the non-governmental organisations. They are not constrained by the numerous limitations resulting from the requirements of current politics and negotiations with the Union. It also seems that the opinions of Polish non-government communities might be found interesting, as we surely have a different way of looking at many issues than the present members of the European Union.

We have the pleasure to invite you to read and discuss these papers.

Stefan Batory Foundation

In recent months we observe a heated debate on the future of the Trans-Atlantic relations. Although the problem of the new arrangement of the relations between Europe and the United States of America emerged in the early nineteen-nineties, its present dynamics indicate that the impact of the phenomena resulting from the ending of the cold war does not disappear, and some of them have only now revealed their political significance. The present decade will therefore surely pass under the mark of discussions on the shape of the Euro-Atlantic relations. One of the key points of that debate consists of the question on the scope of political and military self-dependence within the Trans-Atlantic community, including above all Europe's capacity to react to crisis situations.

In this context it seems extremely important and timely to raise the question of the significance of the enlargement of the European Union to the East in terms of its relations with the United States. In the countries of the European Union the prevailing opinion is that the candidate countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) aspiring to join the EU, and especially Poland, are very strongly pro-American. To what extent is this stereotype true? The answer to this question is important from the perspective of the present Fifteen member countries due to the continuing discussions among them on the role of the Union in the assurance of security for their continent. The assumption of that role is reflected, among other things, by the development of the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP). The answer to the question concerning the significance of enlargement is also important for the candidate countries – in order for them to be able to define their own role in the future, in the enlarged European Union. Finally, this issue ought to be considered with interest in the countries situated to the East of the continent, such as Russia or the Ukraine and Belarus, which will soon become neighbours of the EU.

The present Policy Paper is devoted to the issues concerning the problems of security in Euro-Atlantic relations. It does not cover the entire field of Trans-Atlantic relations. The time horizon of the issues raised in this Paper extends until the year 2010. Therefore, the term CESDP is used by the authors not only as a denotation of the decisions of the European Council from Helsinki, but also of the idea to transform the EU into an organisation assuming co-responsibility for the security of Europe.

I. Appraisal of the Current Situation

1. The European Union – USA: Through Political Integration Toward Euro-Atlantic Partnership

European integration inevitably leads the countries of the European Union toward the development of the political union. The force that provides that process with dynamics consists of the tightening of the economic co-operation within Europe to such an extent as to enforce political integration. It is also the outcome of an intentionally realised political project. The two above-indicated tendencies were reflected in the decision to form the economic and monetary union, which is not only the final stage of economic integration but also, more importantly, it presses for the replacement of close co-ordination of the policies of the EU countries by their common actions.

The elimination of national currencies, internal borders and the development of a common migration policy is accompanied also by the process of integration in the areas of foreign policy, security and defence. This is not caused, as is often believed, only by the ambitions of some of the countries of the Union. The necessity to present the political interests of Europe to the World with one voice has its source in the conviction of the existence of many problems and threats, which are common to the Union as a whole, regardless of the geographic location, the positions and ambitions of its particular members. As Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt argue: *“The European states can count on maintaining their influence in the world under one condition – that they will jointly develop such a structure of the Union, which will make it work effectively as a whole. Otherwise, will our voice be heard on such matters as: the application of international law, the limitation of armaments, reaction to wars in other parts of the world (...)?”*

Under the influence of the Balkan lesson most politicians do not question any longer that the continuing tension in the Middle East, the potential for destabilisation in the Mediterranean region, are causes for concern also for the EU members in the North of Europe. Similarly: the development of the situation on the area of the former USSR carries the risk of disrupting the internal stability of the southern countries. The awareness of these mutually dependent relations is the factor, which most strongly enhances the development of common positions, and also, although still with rather mild force, the undertaking of common actions in international politics. So in spite of the fact that the voice of Europe is still not as loud as could be expected from the numerous declarations, the main problem is not any more the lack of consent for the very idea of joint communications with the outside world, but the weakness of the mechanisms involved and the of the institutions in charge of such communications.

The Achilles heel of European policy consists also of the deficiency of adequate means and instruments, above all of military capacity, with the help of which the EU could add credibility to its propositions. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and also the months preceding the outbreak of the war in Kosovo, have overwhelmingly revealed the sterility of European threats addressed to the parties of the conflict, giving reason to question the sense of the existence of the common foreign and defence policy. Although the military weakness of the Fifteen gives reason for many people to have no faith in the effectiveness of the EU in coping with emerging threats, the dynamics of the works continued since the summit of the European

Union in Cologne (June 1999) on the creation of the common security and defence policy, allows for optimism. Its source may consist above all of the power of European integration, resulting from historical experience, which, contrary to the projects based only on co-operation, has been able to exert an exceptionally strong pressure upon the countries involved in the integration process. Just as the economic and monetary union has led to the sanation of the public finances of the countries of the Union, the concept of a common defence policy, especially when institutionally refined and supported by adequate financial commitments of the EU members, may initiate the process of strengthening the European armies, the rational system of arms procurement and the recovery of the defence industry. According to the head of Polish diplomacy Władysław Bartoszewski: – *“It may also be of significance for the internal policy, as it will make the EU more credible for its citizens. The same psychological mechanism is at work here as in the case of the power attributes of the nation state: a strong state must possess effective armed forces.”*

The political integration of Europe will also lead to the balancing of the relations with the United States in the area of security policy. Although that process is perceived on both sides of the Atlantic as necessary in order to preserve the strong ties binding Europe with America, it leads to many disputes, above all concerning the nature and the principles of the co-operation between NATO and the EU. Their cause lies in the changed geo-political situation in the world, whereby the Euro-Atlantic security is now to a small degree a matter of the capacity for defence against a massive military attack. Increasing importance, however, is coming to rest with the capacity to counteract against new types of threats, originating from internal destabilisation of given states, terrorism, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The problem of security, therefore, is the subject to various interpretations and is the object of political games among the allies.

The still continuing disputes concerning the development by the United States of the Strategic Missile Defence system demonstrate that Europe differs from its partner not only in terms of the way of perceiving the threats, but also of counteraction against them. Most EU countries estimate the possibility of attack from South Korea, for example, a rather unlikely. Whereas the United States conduct a policy largely based on the isolation of the “states of concern” presenting a threat for the security of the world, Europe traditionally attempts to soften the undemocratic regimes by dialogue and attempts at co-operation. The countries belonging to the EU are opposed to the undermining of the entire system of armaments agreements developed on the basis of the ABM treaty of 1972.

The idea of the creation by the EU of a common security and defence policy, in turn, for a long time did not meet with understanding among the American politicians. This resulted from the conviction deeply entrenched in their minds that the European allies should above all focus on the improvement of their military capacities in the framework of NATO. The establishment of new European structures was therefore received as irrational activity. The Washington administration did not wish to accept the concept of the common European security and defence policy (CESDP), advocating in the early nineteen-nineties the realisation of “European identity” (ESDI) within NATO. The CESDP, however, closely tied to NATO, is at the same time one of the components of European integration implemented by the EU. It is therefore a project the nature and features of which extend beyond the balancing of the burdens within the Alliance.

The differences in the assessment of these two projects sometimes lead to different views on the future of the Euro-Atlantic relations. As for Western Europe the alliance with the United States today is not a matter of life and death any more, the European politicians are not afraid to strongly defend their own point of view, acting in relation to their American allies in

the role of equal partners, increasingly aware of their strengths and their objectives. This tendency, however, does not present any threat for the Euro-Atlantic bonds. It is only the objective reflection of the increasing aspirations of Europe in international politics. Europeans need, as Tony Blair argued speaking to Polish politicians in Warsaw – “[Europe] to be a major power. Whatever might cause it, today the task of Europe is not only to preserve peace. Its main task is to demonstrate its common force.”

2. The Weakness of Europe as a Strength of America: International Security as Perceived by Poland and Other CEE Countries

Among the EU countries which are most strongly committed to the process of political integration and the balancing of Euro-Atlantic relations connected with the enlargement of the Union the conviction exists that Poland, and also to some extent other Central-European countries, perceive their securities in the light of the strong relations with the USA. That “pro-Atlantic orientation” is sometimes used as one of the arguments in favour of creating within the EU of a forerunners’ vanguard, consisting of the countries already prepared for closer integration. That is supposed to prevent the blocking of the process of further political integration of the countries heading towards that end, and thereby toward the new arrangement of the Euro-Atlantic relations. This concerns especially the integration in the area of the common security and defence policy.

However, the conviction concerning the inborn pro-American orientation of the CEE countries, and above all of Poland, is largely based on certain simplistic preconceptions and is not accompanied by any understanding of the reasons for which in the hierarchy of political partners of these countries the United States occupy such an important position. It is beyond doubt that many Polish politicians contribute powerfully by their statements to the reinforcement of the image of Poland as a country for which the relations with the USA are more important than the relations with Europe, and the reactions from Washington are the test deciding Poland’s position with respect to the initiatives of the Union.

The strong position of the USA in our region is largely the result of its historical experiences and the lack of faith in the support and effectiveness of the policy of Europe. In the political consciousness of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, not to mention the Baltic states, the USA have not only won the cold war, but their policy after the year of 1989, rightly or wrongly so, has been perceived as consistent and effective in realising the adopted goals. Moreover, and that is extremely important, it has been seen as corresponding with the vital interest of this region. Another significant aspect is that the enlargement of NATO is being attributed here to the commitment on the part of Washington.

The belief that co-operation with the United States is easy in comparison to collaboration with the EU also stems, to some extent, from the weakness of foreign policies of the particular CEE states. They have not yet mastered the capacity to effectively influence the policies of the Union and are able to draw benefits from it only to a limited degree. The fact that they remain outside the EU is of course an additional barrier in this respect.

The advantage of the USA over the EU is even more powerfully displayed in the sphere of security. Whereas the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) of the EU does not give cause for an major concerns for the CEE countries, the common security and defence policy (CESDP) sometimes provokes decisively negative reactions, voicing their opposition to the prospect of equipping the EU with military capacity. That opposition is not derived from the dislike of the idea as such, but rather from the conviction that this will essentially

undermine the American presence in Europe, creating appearances of European force, which without NATO will not be capable of acting independently. It is characteristic that such concerns result from the geographical-strategic location of these countries, which with the exception of the Czech Republic are at the limits of the Euro-Atlantic zone. For them the assurance of military security for themselves is still a real problem and forces them to seek allies capable to guarantee it. So the choice automatically points at the United States disposing of the necessary military potential and which have additionally been able to demonstrate their will to defend our region by supporting the admission the Alliance of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Hence, regardless of the assurances coming from the European politicians that the purpose of the CESDP is to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic ties and not to undermine the position of the USA in Europe, the respective emerging proposals are regarded in the Central European capitals with much reserve and sometimes even with suspicion. An example of the latter tendency may be provided by the very positive recognition by Poland of the arguments raised by Turkey concerning the issue of the future co-operation of the EU with NATO in the framework of the CESDP.

II. The European Union and the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Conditions for Better Understanding

1. Acceptance of the CESDP by the Candidate Countries from Central Europe

The enlargement of the EU to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will lead to the situation that the creation of the common European foreign and security policy will become even more necessary and, at the same time, which is rather paradoxical, it will be more difficult to refine that process. The necessity for the enlarged EU to operate jointly in the area of foreign policy will result from the fact that the admission of the CEE countries will delimit for many years ahead the eastern borders of the Union. This will imply neighbourhood with the countries, the policy of which with regards to the EU – in the foreseeable future – will not be a policy of integration with the Communities, but a policy of co-operation. The same applies to the policy of the EW toward those countries.

The difficulties in making integration more profound will in turn result from objective divergences in the perception of security, in the mode of operation and interpretation of events. Membership of the CEE countries will bring about the situation that the EU will expand to include a group of countries having common historical experience hitherto absent from European politics, related with the several decades of soviet domination over that area. Its essence consists of the prevailing, even if gradually declining, sense of military threat, concern about their own independence, and also perception of international politics from the point of view of national interests. In comparison to EU countries, in the CEE countries the culture of co-operation with other countries in the pursuit of common goals is much weaker.

For the acceptance of the idea of a common European security and defence policy by the CEE countries it will be very important whether the EU will realise its existing decisions in that sphere, and especially the Operational Goal – the formation of a sixty-thousand men strong Rapid Reaction Corps together with all the elements of required support. Because this will endorse the European strategy with more credibility.

There is also no doubt that of major significance for the attitude of these countries toward the CESDP is the predictability of the process of enlargement of the Union. The fears still existing in those countries that it might be slowed down are one of the causes of the mistrust toward the European ideas concerning the sphere of security and defence. Remaining outside of the EU is also related with the problem of these countries not participating in all the discussions around the CESDP, and also the limited possibilities of influencing the shape and the mechanisms of European defence.

An additional source of many doubts in the CEE countries consists of the deficit of knowledge concerning the CESDP, and in connection with that the lack of understanding of its nature and purpose. Hence, it would be advisable for the EU to take action in order to launch a wide reaching information campaign in the CEE countries to explain the CESDP concept. Such a campaign ought to reach above all the political elites and also the opinion forming circles in those countries. It would be worthwhile for it to devote much space to the explanation of the principles of consultations, which the EU has proposed to the candidate countries on this matter.

Taking into account the fact that over the next few years the intensive discussion on the further development of the common security and defence policy will continue among the present members of the Union, it is important that the EU should draw into it the current

candidates, which should in turn make use of that opportunity. The concepts developed together could provide a basis for the further development of the CESDP after the enlargement of the EU. Through the participation in the development of the future shape of the common defence policy the CEE countries could come to feel co-responsible for its implementation.

Poland and other CEE countries should also make use of the chance to become included in the co-operation of the defence industries of the EU countries. This requires a carefully thought through strategy of procurement for the armed forces, which must take into account the fact that the choice of arms leads to certain consequences of a political nature and is not exclusively a matter of the price alone. It would therefore be a mistake to purchase or acquire arms only from the United States.

The predictability of the course of the process of enlargement of the EU would allow to prevent the possibility of competition between two processes: the enlargement of the EU and of NATO. The lack of prospects for European integration, with the concurrent continued expansion of the Alliance, might this cause a complete reversal concerning security issues in favour of NATO and the emergence of opposition against the ideas of the Union in that field, at least in some of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The EU should therefore become more aware and bring it also to the attention of others, that its enlargement toward the East is related also with security issues.

It should not be expected, however, that any country of Central and Eastern Europe as a member of the EU might assume a position similar to that represented by Denmark, which opposes European integration in the area of security and defence. The CEE countries will wish to avoid becoming second-class members. Only by being involved in the main current of European integration offers them a chance to overcome the differences separating them from the present members of the EU. Therefore, these countries can be expected to treat the political integration of the EU in the area of security and defence with greater understanding than before.

If within the European Union the view will win the upper hand that some part of its members, including the newcomers, should be integrated at a faster pace than the others – which might turn out to be indispensable in order to keep up the pace of the political integration of Europe – one should do everything possible to prevent such a decision from increasing the distance between the policies of the different CEE countries and the rest of the EU members. For that would be tantamount to a further reinforcement of the conviction that the only available strategic partner for the countries of that region consists of the United States.

2. EU Policy Toward the East as an Important Element in the Perception of Trans-Atlantic Relations by the New Members of the Union

It is also necessary for the EU to understand the specific features of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially their historical experience of their contacts with Russia (USSR). That experience need not cause anti-Russian attitudes. The CEE countries, when embraced by Euro-Atlantic and European structures, are open to dialogue with Moscow, which is exemplified by the improvement in the recent period of the climate of Polish-Russian relations.

The specific features of the CEE countries indicated in the first part of this paper, as they are situated along the future border of the enlarged EU, imply that an extremely important role for them will be played by the Eastern policy of the enlarged Union. Already today the countries of the “Fifteen” ought to work out scenarios taking into account the emergence of the long border in the East with the countries that in the foreseeable future will not join the Union. In particular, the future of the Northern Dimension calls for reflection, as its addressee is and will probably remain only Russia. The enlarged EU will need to develop the Eastern Dimension, which apart from Russia would also embrace Belarus and the Ukraine.

The lack of clearly defined targets of the Eastern policy of the EU causes the enhanced attractiveness of American policy for the CEE countries in that area. Both Poland and the Baltic states regard American policy with respect to Russia as more realistic than the vague policy of the EU toward Moscow. It is also noticeable how the USA values the significance of the Ukraine and the interest, even if marginal, concerning Belarus.

In spite of the differences between European and American policies concerning Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus, visible from the perspective of the CEE countries, these countries ought to be committed to the co-ordination of the activities of both parts of the Trans-Atlantic community. Although it is difficult to imagine the possibility of identical policies on the part of the EU and the USA with respect to the countries of Eastern Europe, it seems realistic to expect that the activities of these two actors will mutually complement each other, and that they will certainly not be mutually contradictory.

In the course of the next decade there will be a need for active involvement on the part of the new EU members from Central and Eastern Europe in the creation of the Eastern policy of the enlarged Union. It would need to consist of the ability to introduce their own concepts to the debate within the Union. One of them would consist of the already mentioned Eastern Dimension, which would be complementary to the Northern Dimension accepted by the EU, which emerged on the initiative of Finland. Our goal ought to consist of demonstrating to the EU countries the diversity of the area lying in the immediate neighbourhood of the enlarged EU, together with the resulting necessity to conduct a differentiated policy in that area. We should counter a policy that frequently seems to be reduced to the “Russia first” concept.

3. The Need for Active Contribution of the New Members to EU Foreign Policy and to Providing Europe with a Defence Identity while Maintaining the Trans-Atlantic Bonds

If a weakness common to all the CEE countries in their relations with EU were to be looked for, it would consist of, despite of some positive changes, the still insufficient ability to perceive the European integration as a process of a political nature. This phenomenon results not only from the situation of remaining outside of the Communities, and therefore insufficient understanding of European politics, but also from the fact of concentrating on their own internal problems and striving to meet the criteria for membership of the European institutions. It is also beyond any doubt that the feeling of insecurity concerning the future, which is to some extent shared by these countries, gives rise to passive attitudes in foreign policy, reflected in the reluctance to change the principles, which in the past have guaranteed the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic zone. In that sense the membership of NATO or the EU seems to fully satisfy the political ambitions and, as the experiences of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary indicate, it might determine the reduced commitment to new projects. A factor, which reinforces to some extent that tendency to be passive, or to remain at

the margin of the Euro-Atlantic discussions, consists of the objective weakness of the institutions of the state, staff deficits, and also reluctance to undertake the extremely difficult and costly reform of the armed forces. In other words, the adaptation activities seem to largely exhaust the political energy and resources of the CEE countries, preventing them from participation in the new EU or NATO initiatives, such as the common defence policy or the Defence Capabilities Initiative.

On the other hand, in spite of the above mentioned weaknesses and limitations, the CEE countries are able to become actively involved in the resolution of many international crises, confirming thereby that their thinking is not limited only to their own garden. The military and police formations from Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Hungary, and in spite of various difficulties also from the Czech Republic, take part in the operations of the Alliance in the Balkans. What is important, these actions meet with the support of their societies, as their own problems do not blind them to the tragedies of others.

This phenomenon allows to formulate optimistic forecasts for the future, contrary to the conviction that Poland and other CEE countries will regard membership of the EU only as a means of accelerating their economic growth and that they will oppose the endorsement of its own identity to Europe in international politics. Membership of the EU will undoubtedly exert an alleviating influence upon the concerns formulated in those countries, especially those related with the sense of military threat. Participation in European politics will also probably involve a process of political education. The awareness of the enormous mutual dependence among the EU countries, their vulnerability to the consequences of crisis situations at the peripheries of the continent, will enhance change in the manner of thinking by the CEE politicians concerning their own role in Europe and also on the role of Europe in the world.

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Stefan Batory Foundation

ul. Sapieżyńska 10 a, 00-215 Warszawa
tel. (48-22) 536 02 00, fax 536 02 20
e-mail: europa@batory.org.pl, www.batory.org.pl



Center for International Relations

ul. Flory 9, V piętro, 00-586 Warszawa
tel. (48-22) 646 52 67, tel./fax 646 52 68
www.csm.org.pl, email: info@csm.org.pl