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RELATIONS BETWEEN POLAND AND ITS EASTERN NEIGHBOURS AFTER THE 1999 NATO ENLARGEMENT¹

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Introduction

The main priority of Polish foreign policy since the beginning of 1990's was membership in NATO. Joining the alliance was seen as a guarantee of national security, as it eliminated the "twilight zone" – the security vacuum between the West and the post-Soviet territories. Membership in NATO perceptibly reinforced Poland's European and international standing. The second goal was joining the European Union. These events, as part of a broader process of transformation of Polish international position were crucial for reconstruction of relations with its eastern neighbours.

The article concentrates on analysing Poland's relations with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Relations with Lithuania are not considered, though it is one of Polish eastern neighbours, because it belongs to the same security system as Poland does. As a NATO member Lithuania represents a different case than other Poland's neighbours in the East, which are part of a security architecture based on the Collective Security Treaty within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

It is also needed to clarify that the analysis will be limited mostly to political relations. It does not deal with other dimensions of mutual relations (e.g. economic) in view of the wide-ranging subject of analysis and the fact that the political consequences of NATO enlargement seem to be the most significant.

The NATO enlargement gave rise to many tensions and internal debates within Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The Russian Federation, after its failure to block this process, concentrated its efforts on influencing the direction of NATO evolution, and – more broadly – on the shape of a new security architecture in Europe. Belarus, disappointed by both the

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² *Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI.* The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.



endeavours to restore the old order, and the attempts to co-operate with the West, followed the Russian attitude. Ukraine, before the orange revolution, tended to use NATO as an instrument of striking balance between Western and Russian influence. The events in the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005 resulted in the debate over the final decision on joining NATO.

It is difficult to analyse the phenomenon NATO expansion as a fact isolated from wider context of international relations. One should bear in mind the complexity of relations in Central and Eastern Europe [CEE], resulting from the growing interdependence between these countries in a context of globalisation. Economic, social and cultural factors influence European affairs more than ever before. Globalisation must be seen as one of the main reasons for EU enlargement, which employed successfully soft influence tactics in order to solve the Ukrainian crisis.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the impact of the 1999 NATO enlargement on the relations between Poland and its Eastern neighbours. However, we cannot omit the significance of Poland's accession to the EU (May 2004) and the recent NATO expansion onto the Baltic States (April 2004) as sequels to the larger process of rebuilding the transatlantic security structures.

1. Poland's Eastern policy priorities

After the breakdown of communism, Poland tried to get rid of the historical burden of dependence on the Soviet Union by a radical reorientation of its political strategy. The Polish Eastern policy after 1989 can be roughly described as a hasty escape from the East to the West. The new quality in Poland's diplomacy towards its Eastern neighbours amounted to resigning any claims (esp. territorial). The most significant was the resignation of Vilnius and Lvov, which belonged to Poland in the past.³ This step enabled Poland to rebuild correct relations with the neighbours.

The Eastern neighbours were carefully watching Poland's steps, both with certain expectations and concerns. The so called "double-track policy" towards the East was supposed to be an answer to this complicated situation. This concept of foreign policy introduced in 1990 by Krzysztof Skubiszewski, the then minister of foreign affairs, was addressed not only to Moscow, but also to the other Soviet republics. The idea was to treat all the Eastern neighbours as independent and equal partners.

On the one hand, Poland's security still depended on the situation behind its Eastern border. Therefore, the instability of the region in the 1990s could not have been ignored by Polish decision-makers. On the other hand, there was little chance of improving the situation by unilateral efforts. Poland, struggling with its own economic and political difficulties, had no instruments to support democratic transformations of Ukraine or Belarus, let alone Russia. As a former Soviet satellite, Poland had problems similar to those of its neighbours', and offered a rather weak helping hand, or example. Moreover, its ambitions were limited by the Russian penetration of the Belorussian and Ukrainian political and economic systems. The Eastern-European elites were not ready to accept help, either. The societies in question retained their past mentality, unable to take advantage of the newly gained independence.

³ See more in: Snyder, Timothy (2003): *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus. 1569-1999*, New Haven, Yale University Press.



It took our Eastern neighbours a few years to realize the need of facing these obstacles and to overcome them to some extent. From the Polish perspective, the crucial moment came with the year 1999, which started a new phase in our Eastern policy. Poland felt secure and self-confident enough to launch a policy of engagement into the Eastern affairs. Although the results appeared less spectacular than it could have been measured by the level of trade exchange or diplomatic contacts, the direction is by no doubts right.

According to *The National Security Strategy* of July 2003, Poland wants nowadays to develop “partnership-based relations” with Russia and backs up (“will take practical measures in support of”) the deepening of Russia’s co-operation with NATO (provided that there is no “adverse impact on NATO’s effectiveness and internal decision-making process”). Polish decision-makers also declare the will to “fill with real substance” the formula of Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership and their support for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations (within NATO’s “open door” policy).⁴

The events from the end of 2004 in Kiev showed that it is not an exaggeration to claim that Poland plays the role of Ukraine’s advocate in the West. Poland’s engagement in Central and Eastern Europe helped to intensify regional co-operation, which resulted in stimulating processes of democratic transition and integration – creating a kind of European added value.⁵ However Polish efforts without a wider support from the West to forge closer links between NATO and the European Union – on the one side – and Russia, Ukraine or Belarus – on the other, may turn out to be either ineffective or counter-effective.⁵

Generally speaking, Polish successful aspirations towards NATO forced Russia and Belarus to strengthen their co-operation with NATO, and encouraged Ukraine to consider joining that alliance, too. Without a revision of these relations, NATO expansions would not be possible. Therefore, we can say that Poland’s security policy introduced after 1989 contributed to an increase in European security in general.⁶

2. Attitudes towards Poland’s accession to NATO

While evaluating Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian attitudes towards NATO’s Eastern expansion, we need to take into consideration the fact that apart from objective threats to our neighbours’ security there were also strong subjective fears, mostly unjustifiable, but equally significant. Each of the countries looked at Poland through “historical lenses” which complicated the already difficult post-Cold War relations.

Poland was perceived – on the one hand – as a country that used to belong to Russia’s sphere of influence⁷, a “buffer zone” between post-Soviet space and the West, and – on the

⁴ Belarus, for understandable reasons, was not mentioned in the document. See: *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*, 22 July 2003, in <http://www.msz.gov.pl>.

⁵ See: Krause, Katarzyna; Orzechowski, Artur (2003): “Poland’s Bilateral Relations – United States”, *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy*, p. 217.

⁶ Jaroszewicz, Marta; Szerepka, Leszek: *Wstępny Raport Projektu OSW: "NATO i partnerzy w Europie Wschodniej i Południowym Kaukazie*, in <http://www.osw.waw.pl/programy/nato/raport/Raport.doc>.

⁷ According to Jolanta Bryła, a sphere of influence is “an area with respect to which states have agreed that one or more of them will have exclusive freedom of action, [...] a commitment by two states that each will refrain from interfering or exerting influence in a territory which, as between contracting parties, is reserved for exclusive operations by the other”. She draws a distinction between “sphere of influence” and “sphere of interests”. The latter is understood “solely in the context of relations between equal powers” and mainly refers to



other hand – as an example of successful transformation (particularly for Ukraine). In that context, joining NATO by Poland was a source of threats and challenges for Russia (and Belarus) and a chance to improve its geo-political situation for Ukraine.

2.1. Russia

Russia's attitude towards the 1999 NATO enlargement was from the very beginning negative. The issue served to forge an almost unique consensus among all wings of Russian politics.⁸ Moreover the enlargement became one of the most thorny issues in Russia's post-Cold War relationships with the West. Russians felt betrayed by the decision of the Western powers, since Mikhail Gorbachev was assured, during talks over German unification, that there would not be any expansion of the alliance.⁹

According to Russia's elites, NATO's origins undermined its credibility as a core institution of a new European security system. The alliance was formed to counter the danger that had already disappeared and remained just a symbol of the Western (i.e. American) hostility towards Russia. If there is no longer a security threat from any European power, then why should NATO expand? The lack of a convincing answer to that fundamental question meant to Russians that the alliance still represented a threat to their security.

Russia's answer was simple: if the Eastern-bloc organisations were dissolved, NATO should be dissolved too, or at least evolve into a political talk-shop or a peacekeeping force under the control of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE]. As Richard Sakwa noticed, "Russia became the champion of institutional revisionism, seeking to renegotiate the European security system by enhancing the role of the OSCE – as long as the organisation remained constrained by rules of consensus".¹⁰

Russia has called for a comprehensive system of collective security based on the OSCE since the beginning of the 1990s. If the OSCE – gaining stronger institutional framework – was indeed to become the main vehicle for postcommunist European security, then NATO enlargement would have been meaningless, and its influence on European affairs would have been diminished considerably.¹¹

some kind of economic monopoly. See: Bryła, Jolanta (2002): *Strefy wpływów w stosunkach międzynarodowych: Aspekty teoretyczne i praktyczne na przykładzie supermocarstw*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Naukowe INPiD UAM, p. 47.

⁸ Russian leaders claimed on a number of occasions that Russia could join NATO, but there were just political declarations meant to divide the West, rather than to strengthen the alliance. Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980, and General Alexander Tsalko (deputy chair of Russia's Defence Committee) in 1991 (*Soviet Weekly*, 31 October 1991, p.4) both made such declarations. In 1994, Boris Fedorov argued that Russia's membership would end the American domination in the organisation, and would counter Germany's growing power (*Izvestiya*, 6 September 1994, in <http://www.izvestia.ru>). In 1998, Alexei Arbatov, vice-charman of the Defence Committee, (Rodkiewicz, Witold: "Rosja i NATO: Gry ciąg dalszy", *Sygnaly*, 8 July 1998) and finally Vladimir Putin entertained the possibility that Russia could join NATO, albeit on "equal terms" (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 3 July 2001, in <http://www.rferl.org/newslines/2001/07/1-RUS/rus-030701.asp#archive>).

⁹ For details see: Black, Joseph Laurence (1999): *NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms?*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield.

¹⁰ Sakwa, Richard (2002): *Russian Politics and Society*, London, Routledge, p. 415.

¹¹ Yeltsin's declaration from 1997 made in the Council of Europe summit in Strasburg. Malak, Kazimierz (2001): *Czynnik wojskowy w polityce zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej (1991-2000)*. Warszawa, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, p. 177.



But there was another reason why Russia opposed NATO expansion to the East. That process was for Russia tantamount to a decrease of its influence, particularly in the so called “middle abroad” (former Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe [CEE]). Though the CEE region was not a priority in Russia’s foreign policy, it mattered in the wider context of global rivalry over spheres of influence.¹² Russia’s *niet* to NATO enlargement was mainly a result of opposition against the growing US hegemony, because NATO was perceived as an American military “arm” in Europe. It was also a result of an incessant fear of becoming marginalised in international affairs – of being excluded from decision-making over one of the key security issues.

Therefore, Russia tried to hinder the process of NATO enlargement in all possible ways. Since it became obvious that the concept of strengthening OSCE was rejected by the West, Russia concentrated its efforts on supporting the idea of the Common Foreign and Security Policy [CFSP] calling for the building of the a “European” security system instead of an “Atlantic” one, as contradictory to European interests. Russia sought a special role for itself in that system – the role of an equal partner deciding over European issues together with other European powers.¹³

For most of the Russian elites the very existence of an expanded NATO would create a permanent source of tensions in Europe. As Andrei Kozyrev, the then minister of foreign affairs, put it, “NATO’s advance toward Russia’s borders cannot but be seen as a continuation, though by inertia, of a policy aimed at containment of Russia.”¹⁴ Paradoxically, at the same time he acknowledged the rights of a sovereign country, such as Poland, to join any alliance it wanted.¹⁵

According to Sergei Karaganov, director of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy [CFDP]¹⁶, NATO’s plans for expansion meant “a potential new Yalta”. He claimed that “by accepting the rules of the game that are being forced on her... Russia will lose.”¹⁷ Though he understood the CEE states’ motives, he suggested integration with the EU and warned against the “erosion of the European security system” if based on NATO. He also warned against the revival of nationalist forces and an imperial, revisionist policy of Russia.¹⁸

These concerns seemed to be justified if we take into consideration the rhetoric used by nationalist and communist leaders. Some of them responded by insisting that if NATO expanded, Russia should create its own new military block, made up of the former Soviet republics and other countries that objected to an “aggressive” NATO on their borders. Vladimir Zhirinovskii, the populist leader of nationalist’s Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

¹² Cf.: “Problemy rozszerzenia składu NATO (raport Federalnej Służby Wywiadu Zagranicznego Rosji z 25 listopada 1993 r.)”, *Eurazja*, No. 5-6 (1994), pp. 70-74.

¹³ For more about Russia’s foreign policy goals in Europe, see: Nizioł, Monika (2004): *Dylematy kulturowe międzynarodowej roli Rosji*, Lublin, Wydawnictwo UMCS, pp. 159-169, 177-196.

¹⁴ Kozyrev, Andrei: “Partnership or Cold Peace”, *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1995, p.13. Sakwa, *op. cit.*, p.416. That opinion was repeated by president’s advisor, Alexei Pushkov. He also claimed that the US aimed at marginalising Russia and strengthening its hegemonic position. Urbanowicz, Juliusz: “Trojka”, *Wprost*, 21 December 1997. See also similar Yevgenii Primakov’s statement: Giziński, Jarosław: “Antyjałta”, *Wprost*, 17 May 1998.

¹⁵ Graczyk, Maria: “Kremlowskie manewry” (an interview with Grigorij Jawlinski), *Wprost*, 18 May 1997.

¹⁶ A non-governmental body founded in June 1992. It represented a pragmatic centre on Russia’s political scene; president’s advisory organisation of politicians, academics and Duma deputies. See more in: *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 May 1994, in <http://www.ng.ru/english/>.

¹⁷ *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 3 February 1995. See also CFDP’s theses on how Russia should respond to NATO expansion, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 21 June 1995, in <http://www.ng.ru/english/>.

¹⁸ Karaganov, Sergei: “Nowa Rosja w nowej Europie”, *Eurazja*, No. 5-6 (1994), p. 89.



(LDPR), even demanded a preventive strike on NATO.¹⁹ Alexander Lebed', a representative of moderate nationalism, classified NATO among Russia's potential enemies.

The period before Poland's accession to NATO was also a hot time of presidential elections in Russia (1996). This situation encouraged politicians from Gennadii Zyuganov, a communist leader, to Boris Yeltsin to criticise the West in strong words. "Fighting the Western threat off" was a predominant issue in all the presidential candidates' programmes.²⁰

The threat of radicalisation of social moods did not finally turn out to be real. Lebed' admitted later that Russia was in such a deep crisis that it needed an enemy, and NATO fitted the role very well.²¹ The populist slogans were supported by public opinion, frustrated by the loss of its country's superpower status, and disappointed by the results of democratisation. Russians felt offended by the fact that the West preferred membership of "small, second-rate states" of the CEE to partnership with the Russian empire.²² Almost 41 per cent of Russians had a negative attitude towards joining NATO by the Warsaw Treaty Organisation [Warsaw Pact] members. This was mainly due to a psychological factor, the so called post-imperial syndrome, a feeling of being isolated and ignored by the rest of the world. But NATO enlargement did not turn out to be an event powerful enough to force people to protest in the streets.²³

The official standpoint of the Russian government as regards NATO expansion has been evolving over time. Faced with the firm wish to join NATO by the CEE states themselves, Yeltsin equivocated. During his visit to Warsaw in August 1993, he said "go ahead" when asked about Poland's prospects for membership of NATO. This stance was rapidly modified on his return to Moscow. From then on (especially during 1994) he was showing a very strong, almost obsessive opposition against the enlargement.

When it turned out that the decision about enlargement has already been taken, Russia started to insist that any expansion would have to meet tough conditions. Russian leaders sought guarantees that prevented the forward positioning of nuclear weapons, or the stationing of alliance forces in the candidate countries. They also demanded the assurance that NATO would not expand to the Baltic states. Russia's objections were not accepted. Moreover, the West firmly rejected Russian attempts to achieve a special relationship with NATO (particularly a veto power).

Finally, faced with a *fait accompli*, Yeltsin officially accepted the enlargement by signing the Russia-NATO Founding Act in May 1997, which he defined as "recognition of historical realities". It was followed by the signing in July of the same year of the Charter on Permanent Joint Council (PJC) as a forum for Russia-NATO discussions.²⁴

¹⁹ Giziński, Jarosław: "Wielki przetarg", *Wprost*, 25 May 1997.

²⁰ Bratkiewicz, Jarosław (1998): *Rosyjscy nacjonaliści w latach 1992-1996. Od detradycjonalizacji do retradycjonalizacji*, Warszawa, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, p. 212-219.

²¹ Graczyk, Maria: "Dieduszka Jelcyn" (an interview with A. Lebed'), *Wprost*, 27 April 1997.

²² Bratkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

²³ See opinion of Prof. Sergey Tumanov, director of Centre for Sociologic Research of University in Moscow, Giziński, "Antyjalta", p. 20.

²⁴ The document that proclaimed co-operation with the enlarged NATO (in a form of the Russia-NATO Council) proposed by Warren Christopher in September 1996 was initially rejected. Giziński, "Wielki przetarg", p. 82; Jeziorański, Jan Nowak: "Nowy porządek", *Wprost*, 1 June 1997. Yeltsin's final assent was confirmed during president Kwaśniewski's visit to Moscow in July 1998: Jendroszczyk, Piotr: "Wybaczamy miłość do Nato", *Rzeczpospolita*, 1 July 1998. See more in: Zagorsky, Andrey: "Great Expectations", *NATO Review*, Vol. 49 (Spring 2001), pp. 24-27.



In official documents, decision-makers confirmed the will to end the Cold War rivalry with NATO, acknowledging the fact that Russia cannot afford isolation and needs European assistance.²⁵ A visible sign of Russia's evolution was its participation in the Partnership for Peace initiative since 1998.²⁶ This positive, or at least neutral, attitude was transferred into relations with Poland. As Russian Vice-minister of Defence, Nikolay Mikhailov, said: "Poland will join NATO and we have to accept it and continue our relations in these circumstances, whether we like it or not."²⁷

Contrary to some analyses it was not NATO enlargement that condemned Russian-Western relations to the deep freeze for three years afterwards. This was due to NATO's bombing campaign in Yugoslavia over Kosovo in March 1999, which placed Russia and the US in opposed camps once again. That event proved that Russia, though agreed on the alliance enlargement, would never accept US global hegemony.²⁸

2.2. Belarus

Like Russia, Belarus represented a very distant attitude towards the alliance enlargement. NATO was perceived as a source of direct threat to national security and of future confrontation.

The thesis of NATO's hostile character was repeated continuously in official speeches especially after Lukashenka came to power in 1994. In June 1999, Ural Latypov, the then Belorussian minister of foreign affairs, defined NATO as "a military alliance established to defend its members against an external aggression." According to him, the Eastern expansion was useless since there was no enemy in Europe anymore.²⁹ He also made the development of Polish-Belorussian neighbourliness dependent on Poland's "proper behaviour". Belorussian government demanded particularly a guarantee that there would be no military bases settled near the common border.³⁰ However, according to Andrei Fiodorau, an expert of Belorussian a think tank, in spite of the severe tone of politicians' announcements, there were no convincing proofs of a real threat to Belorussian national interests presented.³¹

The process of NATO enlargement weakened the already fragile relations between the alliance and Belarus. The deterioration of mutual relations started in 1998 – before the expansion – and they were finally broken off after the NATO intervention in Kosovo.³² This

²⁵ See more in: "Konceptyja nacyonalnoj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Fiedieracyi", 17 December 1997, *Rossijskije Wiesti*, No. 239 (1997); "Konceptyja nacyonalnoj bezopasnosti Rossijskoj Fiedieracyi", 1 January 2000, *Niezawisimoje Wojennoje Obozrienije*, No. 1 (2000); Malak, Kazimierz: "Konceptcja bezpieczeństwa narodowego Federacji Rosyjskiej", in Bieleń, Stanisław and Góralski, Witold M. (eds.) (1999): *Nowa tożsamość Niemiec i Rosji w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa, Scholar.

²⁶ The initiative was launched by NATO in January 1994. It represented a series of bilateral agreements with NATO non-members. Russia signed the Partnership Framework Document on June 1994, but delayed signing the associated Individual Partnership Programme till 1998. Sakwa, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

²⁷ Polish Press Agency (PAP) release of 3 December 1998, in <http://nato.pap.com.pl/nato/wiad.asp?id=6262>.

²⁸ See: "Wojennaja Doktrina Rossijskoj Fiedieracyi" (21 April 2000), *Nowyje Zakony i Normatiwnyje Akty*, No. 18 (2000).

²⁹ Popowski, Sławomir: "Białoruś", *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 June 1999. An interview with Ural Latypov, then minister of foreign affairs in Belarus.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Fiodorau, Andrei: *Białoruś i NATO*, in <http://www.bialorus.pl>. An analyst from International Institute of Political Research in Minsk.

³² Conflict over "Drozdzy" and Belarusan diplomats' expulsion from Western countries.



event showed a tendency characteristic of Belorussian foreign policy – total dependence on Russia’s “guidelines”. Belarus did not sever its bonds with Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Nowadays they are stronger than ever and institutionalised in the form of the Union of Belarus and Russia. Some analysts even claim that there is one common security and defence zone, dominated by Russia.³³ As Anna Naumczuk, an expert from the Centre for Eastern Studies, states in her article “the Belorussian political elites do not think in terms of a sovereign state and as a result they do not conduct their own foreign policy, defence or security policy.” Moreover, “Russia needs joint defence projects in order to be able to maintain influence over the military situation in an area bordering NATO.”³⁴ For Belarus, on the other hand, co-operating with Russian army is the only way to preserve its own military potential.

It is a well known fact that Belarus is for Russia an area of strategic significance, particularly because of its geographical location. On the other hand, Russia is the only partner of Belarus which matters in the world.³⁵ This interdependence results in the situation where Belorussian politics towards NATO can be described as a derivative of the Russian one.

These circumstances have been a clear obstacle in the development of Poland’s relations with Belarus. Poland, as well as all the Western countries, restricted its relations with Belarus after the 1996 referendum introducing changes to the constitution in order to give Lukashenko almost absolute power. Nevertheless, in order to avoid a total isolation of Belarus, Poland introduced the so-called politics of “critical dialogue”. It consists in maintaining working contacts and at the same time in condemning Belarus for violating human rights, etc.

A common border means both common interests and troubles which should encourage the cooperation of the neighbouring countries. Indeed, Polish-Belorussian relations became more and more pragmatic. Poland and Belarus put pressure on economic and military co-operation, particularly in the areas of transportation and border protection.

2.3.Ukraine

Ukraine never opposed Poland’s aspirations to NATO and considered it as an internal issue of Poland.³⁶ This was due to the fact that the alliance’s Eastern enlargement has never been perceived as a threat to Ukraine’s national interests. Even the communists seemed to present a neutral attitude, limiting themselves to torpedoing projects of Ukraine’s application for NATO membership.

Just before the enlargement, President Leonid Kuchma officially confirmed that Poland’s accession to NATO did not arouse any concerns among Ukrainians. Also Boris Tarasyuk, the

³³ More about Belorussian dependence on Russia: Wierzbowska-Miazga, Agata: “The Republic of Belarus or the Belarusan republic?”, *CES Studies*, No 3 (November 2001), p. 51f.

³⁴ Naumczuk, Anna: “Belarus”, *Report CES*, May 2001, p. 25. As Valerii Karbalevič pointed, Russia “aimed at torpedoing the process of NATO enlargement by provoking an artificial cooling of relations between Belarus and the US”. Snapkouski, Uładzimir: “Stosunki polsko-białoruskie (1990-2003)”, in Eberhardt, Adam and Ułachowicz, Uładzimir (eds.), (2003): *Belarus i Polska. Polska i Białoruś*, Warszawa, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, p. 21.

³⁵ Wierzbowska-Miazga, Agata: “The Republic of Belarus or the Belarusan republic?”, *CES Studies*, No. 3 (November 2001), p. 51f.

³⁶ Boris Tarasyuk mentioned Poland’s “inalienable right to choose its own way of ensuring national security”, Kościński, Piotr: “Ukraina: poszerzenie strefy stabilności”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 12 March 1999.



then pro-Western minister of foreign affairs, was convinced that the enlargement was “a process of enhancing the zone of stability and security in Europe.”³⁷

Although Ukraine did not openly seek to join NATO, it did not undertake military co-operation with Russia either. Ukraine did not accede to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Collective Security Treaty (so called Tashkent Treaty), nor did it join the treaty on collective defence of the CIS borders.

Since it became clear that NATO expansion was inevitable, Ukraine concentrated its efforts on strengthening its ties with the alliance. This diplomatic activity resulted in signing the NATO-Ukraine Charter and the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

Evaluating the Ukrainian attitude towards the alliance and its expansion would not be convincing if we ignore the Russian factor. Various bonds (particularly political and economic ones) that existed between these two countries made it extremely difficult for Ukraine to adopt a completely independent foreign policy. According to analysts of the Centre for Eastern Studies³⁸, it was in Ukraine’s primary interest to expand partnership with Russia, even if unequal. “Ukrainian businessmen and politicians are aware that they are able to do without Western help, while co-operation with Russia is crucial and all but indispensable.”³⁹

Ukraine sought to counterbalance its relations with Russia by a strategic partnership with the US, which often met with the disapproval of Russian decision-makers, interested in keeping the alliance as far from the Black Sea as possible, and in limiting NATO-Ukraine relations to co-operation within the Partnership for Peace.⁴⁰

Poland’s attitude towards Ukraine-NATO relations presented at the time of the alliance expansion is also worth analysing. Did the Ukrainians expect Poland to play the role of Ukraine’s advocate in the West?

Polish decision-makers were convinced that the answer was “yes”. As Krzysztof Olendzki defined it, Poland was oriented towards “weaving the Central, Eastern (...) Europe regions into the process of advancing the civilisational unity of the European continent.”⁴¹ In other words, Poland wanted to play an active and inspirational role of a regional leader, guiding other countries of the Central-Eastern Europe towards the transatlantic structures.⁴² Poland strove in particular to further strengthen the NATO – Ukraine “distinctive partnership”, so that Ukraine did not lag behind the NATO-Russia co-operation.⁴³

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ The Centre for Eastern Studies (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich) was established in 1990. CES is financed from the state budget. Its task is to monitor and analyse the political, economic and social situation in the Central and Eastern European countries, in the Balkans, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia.

³⁹ Olszański, Tadeusz: “Ukraine”, *Report CES*, May 2001, p.17.

⁴⁰ See more in: Olszański, Tadeusz: “Ukraine and Russia: mutual relations and the conditions that determine them”, *CES Studies*, No. 3 (November 2001), pp. 37,39, 44.

⁴¹ See: Olendzki, Krzysztof: “Outlook for Regional Co-operation: Poland’s Role”, *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy* (2003), pp. 55-56.

⁴² See the speech by Poland’s Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski at the Pact of Stability in Europe (also known as the Balladur Pact) inaugural conference, Paris, 26 May 1994, in <http://www.zbiordokumentow.pl/1994/index.html>.

⁴³ Kupiecki, Robert: “Poland’s Interests in NATO”, *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy* (2003), p. 50.



This attitude was by no means an altruistic one. There was a common belief within Polish political elites that Poland's position in Europe depended on its contribution to the spread of security in the region. That is why Poland was interested in the NATO "open door" policy, and supported Ukraine's membership in the alliance even without formulating appropriate expectations by Ukraine itself.

3. Poland's relations with Eastern neighbours after the 1999 NATO enlargement

Poland, after joining the transatlantic structures and after finding its place within the "area of stability and affluence", remains interested in developing regional co-operation, especially with the countries that remain outside NATO and the EU. This is due to the fact that Poland's security still depends on the situation in the CEE states, and its position within transatlantic structures is also based on the role it plays in this part of the Continent. Neighbourly relations between Poland, on the one hand, and Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, on the other, should lead to the reinforcement of the Polish political identity within NATO and the EU.

In this context, it is worth asking to what extent the relations of the above-mentioned neighbour states with Poland are being shaped by the 1999 NATO enlargement? Does Poland's membership in the alliance give opportunities to deepen regional co-operation, and thus strengthen its position in the region, or is it a source of instability and threats?

The answer is very complex, since apart from the ones mentioned above there are also other factors shaping these relations. We should bear in mind that there is growing number of common regional problems posed by organised crime, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and also, though on a small scale, by cross-border terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction [WMD]. These objective threats force countries to develop joint responses.

On the other hand, there is still a vivid memory of painful events in the past, which results in anti-western phobias among Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians and Russophobia among certain parts of the Polish society.

After 2004 Poland's relations with eastern neighbours are influenced by changes affecting the post-soviet area in Europe, with their peak at the orange revolution in Ukraine.

3.1. Russia

As was said before, Russia's efforts to block NATO enlargement did not succeed, and hence from 1999 Russia had to face the facts. The new attitude of Russia coincided with the coming to power of Vladimir Putin. From the moment of the NATO enlargement Poland has proved to be deeply interested in keeping NATO's door open, and demonstrated its readiness to support its Eastern neighbours on the way to the alliance.

Though the potential of Poland does not predestine it to play the role of an architect of NATO's Eastern policy, it certainly allows Poland to influence this policy. Due to its



geopolitical position, interests and historical ties Poland should continue to lead an active policy in this direction.

Russia declared the will to become an active player in European affairs and particularly to participate in creating the European security architecture. These declarations were signs of the growing pragmatism of the Russian elites, oriented towards rebuilding Russia's economic and political strength, and against isolation in the world's affairs.⁴⁴ The reactivation of the Russian policy towards Europe appeared to be the only way to achieve these goals.

Re-establishing formal relations between Russia and NATO in February 2000 was the first step towards improving its relations with the West, especially with the US.⁴⁵ After 11 September 2001 Russia confirmed its "final (European) choice". That declaration was misunderstood by most of the Western politicians as Russia's willingness to build close mutually beneficial relations with Europe. It should have been rather perceived as a will to reach an independent, powerful position with one-sided rights to interfere into the affairs of the EU and NATO.⁴⁶

Russia tried to make use of the September 11 events to strengthen its role in NATO decision-making structures in order to "water down" the alliance. Russia aimed at undermining NATO's military role outside the North Atlantic area, and opposed the Baltic states' bids to join NATO.⁴⁷ It tried to introduce the tenet of a "red line" – an impassable border for the alliance's expansion.⁴⁸

However, all these efforts were undertaken mainly to prevent the global hegemony of the US.⁴⁹ Russia's relations with Central European countries is of secondary importance to Russia itself, and is subordinated to its relations with Western Europe and the US.⁵⁰

In reaction to Poland's joining the EU, Russia has introduced a policy of marginalizing and discrediting Poland's position as a new member, and a state which became a collaborator in NATO's and the EU's eastern policies.

According to Jacek Cichocki, the deterioration of mutual relations is particularly visible after Poland's accession to the European Union. "Poland was generally recognized as one of

⁴⁴ Sakwa, *op. cit.*, p. 294. An interview with Konstantin Borowoj, democratic leader of Party of Economic Freedom, Duma deputy, *Polityka*, No. 50 (December 1993).

⁴⁵ See: Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, Katarzyna, "Russia", *Report CES*, May 2001, p. 9; See more in: Sokolow, Viktor: *NATO and Russia are far from being partners*, in <http://russia.strana.ru/print/982596105.html>, 19 February 2001; Sakwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 369-370.

⁴⁶ Koziej, Stanisław: "Rakiety obronne. Strategiczny targ o bezpieczeństwo świata", *Polityka*, No. 08 (2001).

⁴⁷ See: Książek, Jarosław: "Poland's Bilateral Relations – Russian Federation", *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy*, 2003, p. 295-297.

⁴⁸ Russia has delayed ratification of border treaties with those countries and tried to take advantage of their dependence on Russia's supplies of energy resources. Putin refused to participate in NATO Prague Summit, which decided over Baltic states accession; see: Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, "Russia", *op. cit.*, p.10; Kuźniar, Roman (ed.) (1999): *Strategic Yearbook 1998/1999: Review of the Political, Economic and Military Situation in Poland's International Environment*, Warsaw, Scholar, p. 139.

⁴⁹ See more in: "NATO Expansion: More Muscle for U.S. To Flex", *Stratfor Weekly*, 2 April 2004, in <http://www.stratfor.com/corporate/index.neo?page=basicsample>.

⁵⁰ Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, Katarzyna: "Ostatnie słowo należy do Warszawy", *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 November 2000; Bratkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp.178-179, 185; see also the geopolitical concepts of Aleksandr Dugin in: <http://arcto.ru/>.



the most influential states in the new European Union, and was defined by Moscow as reluctant towards Russia.”⁵¹

The deterioration in the Polish-Russian relations manifested itself in the obstructing of Polish commercial activities in Russia, the creation of the image of Poland as an anti-Russian state, whose political objectives focus on excluding Russia from Europe. As such, Poland was to be seen as lacking in credibility and unreliable.

This rhetoric was particularly noticeable during and after the orange revolution. The engagement of Polish politicians in finding conciliation of the conflict was recognized as a hostile action.⁵²

At the same time, as regards Russia's relations with certain western European states (particularly with Germany and France) we can observe the turn from “ideologisation” to “economisation” in Russian foreign policy. Russia wants to preserve its monopoly as a gas supplier, and to win the most favourable conditions on transporting these resources to the West. The project of transbaltic pipeline from Murmansk to Germany represents one of many methods of pursuing this policy. It marks a departure from a previously designed, second Jamal pipeline, which was planned to run across the territory of Poland.⁵³

In 2001 Russian society's attitude – declared in public opinion polls in 2001 – showed that for 43% of respondents the main obstacle in mutual relations was Poland's membership in NATO.⁵⁴

These fears are not as prominent as they were in 2001. The main problem in Polish-Russian relations is now the issue of NATO's expansion further to the east of Europe, that is to Ukraine, and the role which Poland could play in this process. In spite of Russia's declaration during the NATO summit in Vilnius (21 April 2005), that it raises no objections against Ukrainian accession to NATO⁵⁵, the potential presence of NATO military bases in the strategically vital regions of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov is perceived by Russia as interference with her zone of vital interest.⁵⁶

A similar problem for Russian diplomacy is the shift of focus of the European Union interests after 2004 onto the states defined in Russia's terms as “close abroad”: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, among others. So far, this area has stayed exclusively under the Russian influence, but now it has been exposed to the influences of the EU “neighbourhood policy”.

A year after the election of a new, pro-European president of Ukraine, Russian decision-makers are convinced that they need to compete with the Union for influences over the post-

⁵¹ Nocuń, Małgorzata; Brzeziecki, Andrzej: *Rosja: wielki kłopot*, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, 3 April 2005, in <http://tygodnik.onet.pl/1547,1222020,1,dzial.html>. An interview with Jacek Cichocki, Director of Centre for Eastern Studies.

⁵² It was defined by Russians as a so-called Kwaśniewski's doctrine, assuming that Ukraine be incorporated within the Euroatlantic system of safety, with considerable support on the part of the USA.

⁵³ For more details, see: Łoskot, Agata: “Security of Russian gas supplies to the EU – the question of infrastructural connections”, *CES Policy Briefs*, February 2005.

⁵⁴ Over 35% of Russians perceived Poland as Russia's “enemy”. These results of public opinion pools were presented during press conferences in Warsaw (Polska Agencja Informacyjna, in <http://www.pai.pl>) and in Moscow (RIA “Nowosti”, in <http://en.rian.ru/>) on 17 December 2001.

⁵⁵ See the statement of chief of Russia's diplomacy Sergey Lavrov, Sołtyk, Robert: “Ukraina bliżej Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckiego”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 April 2005.

⁵⁶ For more details, see: Trenin, Dmitrii: “Vneshne vmeshatelstvo v sobytia na Ukrainie i rossijsko-zapadnye otnoshenya”, *Carnegie Endowment for Peace Briefing*, Vol. 7, Issue 2 (February 2005).



soviet space. The blame for this state of affairs is most frequently put on the new EU member states, with special emphasis on Poland and Lithuania, which succeeded in persuading EU to take active part in Ukrainian affairs.⁵⁷

Nowadays, contacts between Poland and Russia are focused more on prestigious problems than on concrete, everyday-life issues. This fact is confirmed by the example of a struggle over the issue of the manner of mutual perception, and the role of the two states in post-war Europe. For this purpose, Russia and Poland lead their specific historical policies: they both take advantage of historic anniversaries (for example: the Warsaw Uprising, the liberation of Auschwitz, the end of the Second World War, and 650th anniversary of Königsberg's foundation). Russia creates its self-image of a „liberator” state, which brought freedom and democracy not only to Poland, but also to other East-Central European countries. For Poland, such a perception of history is unacceptable.

One of practical problems that has not been solved in mutual relations is the issue of Kaliningrad. It was used by the Russian Federation as a card in negotiations with the EU over the status of Kaliningrad as Russian exclave within the EU. According to the analysts from Centre for Eastern Studies, at the time Kaliningrad was “a tool in delaying the process of European integration, and an additional argument against NATO expansion onto the Baltic States.”⁵⁸ One of these was the development of the Kaliningrad *oblast* – an isolated part of Russia surrounded by the EU and NATO members. Finally, all sides managed to find a solution satisfactory for each country, but it only concerned the problem of transportation (transit).⁵⁹ However, the problem of defining the status of Kaliningrad district remains opened. It falls beyond Poland - Russia relations and becomes a matter of the UE and Russia's foreign policy.

Poland's attitude towards Russia is, generally speaking, determined by the following rule: the more secure Poland feels, the more open it is towards Russia. The process of “escaping to the West” ended with the Polish accession to NATO. In spite of this, attempts to develop a long-term strategy towards Russia have not succeeded. According to Stanisław Ciosek, former Polish ambassador to Russia, there is a lack of concept of mutual relations both on the Polish and the Russian side.⁶⁰ This state of affairs is most probably due to the conviction of the Polish elites that “the road to Moscow runs through Brussels”, which means that only through the EU and NATO Poland can build relations with Russia based on real partnership.⁶¹

We should also understand that Russia's decision-makers are, for understandable reasons, interested in building “an equal partnership” directly with NATO and the EU above “Polish heads”.

NATO proved to be an insufficient guarantor of Poland's security. Its geopolitical situation has improved significantly with the success of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Though at the same time, “coloured” revolution resulted in the deterioration of the relations between Russia and Poland.

⁵⁷ Popowski, Sławomir: “Moskwa zawiodła nadzieje Unii”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 14 April 2005.

⁵⁸ Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, “Russia”, *op. cit.*, p.11.

⁵⁹ For details see: Kuźniar, Roman (ed.) (2003): *Strategic Yearbook 2002/2003: Review of the Political, Economic and Military Situation in Poland's International Environment*, Warsaw, Scholar, pp.155-156.

⁶⁰ See *Przegląd Mediów Światowych*, 17 April 2000, in <http://www.msz.gov.pl/Unia,Europejska,1089.html>.

⁶¹ See Olendzki, *op. cit.*, p. 61f.



For the time being, Russia has to accept the new political situation, nevertheless, it will not abandon the attempts to maintain the influence in post-Soviet states. This may lead to the overlap between the mutual security interests of Russia and Poland, and will result in the conflict of interests between Russia, on the one side, and Poland, EU and NATO – on the other.

3.2. Belarus

The Belorussian attitude towards NATO expansion has evolved, in line with the Russian one. The rhetoric used by leaders from both countries was similar – from strong criticism through ambivalence to efforts of participation in the European decision-making process.

Since Russia re-established its formal relations with NATO in February 2000, Belarus started to soften its intransigent attitude. Finally, in July 2002, on a Belorussian Security Council meeting, president Lukashenka spoke about the need to take into consideration new international realities.⁶² In April 2003 he confirmed the acceptance of a wider NATO and of the alliance's co-operation with Ukraine. He also claimed that Belarus had to find "optimal forms of co-operation with this political-military bloc."⁶³

One of the visible signs of this will of rapprochement with the West was the appointment of Siarhiej Martyna, former Belorussian representative in NATO, to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs (March 2003). Lukashenka declared that it was a step towards strengthening the Western dimension of Belorussian foreign affairs and towards the suspension of a policy of confrontation with the US.

The Belorussian MFA formulated, among others, a proposal of making visa procedure more convenient for EU citizens, by resigning from the requirement to submit an invitation from Belarus. It also presented many proposals of widening co-operation with NATO. For example, during the meeting of the EAPC in December 2003 the Belorussian delegation introduced a plan to deepen regional co-operation among the EAPC states.⁶⁴ Worth noticing is also the Individual Program of Partnership (IPP) for the years 2004-2005 between Belarus and NATO, launched in February 2004. Throughout 2003 there was also a noticeable increase of Belarus' diplomatic activity in relations with the CEE countries, particularly with Poland. The talks concerned mainly economic relations and regional co-operation.

All these measures undertaken to deepen co-operation with the West seemed to be ineffective, because they have been opposed by president Lukashenka's hostile statements and actions towards the western neighbours of Belarus. He implied that Poland had become "subdued by the West", that it showed "a lack of independence in its foreign policy" and uncritically took "orders" from NATO and the EU.⁶⁵ The Belorussian administration, afraid of a possible location of American military bases in Poland, accused Western and Polish leaders of creating a direct threat to Belorussian security. Some politicians even declared the need to strengthen the military co-operation with Russia.

⁶² Razanau, Anatol: "Ewolucja NATO – spojrzenie z Mińska", in Eberhardt and Ułachowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Sadowski, Rafał: "Intensyfikacja działań białoruskiej dyplomacji w kontaktach z państwami Europy Środkowej", *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, 18 December 2003.

⁶⁵ Książek, *op. cit.*, p. 312.



Moreover, the Belorussian media agency “Byelta” published an analysis proving that Poland, strengthened by American help, wants to regain its historical Eastern Borderlands.⁶⁶ Last but not least there was the accusation against the Polish minority in Belarus (the second largest one, 3.9 percent of population) of being used by the West to provoke conflicts within Belarus in order to overthrow Lukashenka.⁶⁷ Taking into consideration all these anti-western phobias, we need to ask ourselves: what are the real motives of Lukashenka “openness” towards NATO, EU and Poland?

The time of Belorussian efforts to improve its relations with the West and Poland not surprisingly coincided the period of failures in forming the Belarus-Russia union. The tensions in Belarus-Russia relations immediately mirrored in Lukashenka’s verbal declarations concerning revision of his attitude to NATO and the EU.⁶⁸ It was also the time of Vladimir Putin’s new approach to the West, and thus it can be said that Lukashenka again followed Russian steps.

Lukashenka’s declarations to participate in building a new European security system (with American presence reduced to minimum) were made to gain particular effects. Belorussian president desperately needed to strengthen his position towards Russia.⁶⁹

It was also a kind of campaign aimed at regaining international recognition for the Belorussian president. The tactics chosen by Lukashenka consisted in developing contacts in economic and technological issues, which were not as controversial as political ones. This activity was to result in legitimising the president’s regime.

These efforts are doomed to failure, since both NATO and the EU attach great importance to the democratisation process and make the deepening of co-operation with other countries dependent on real successes in that sphere.⁷⁰

An example of this principle was the fact that despite his attempts, Lukashenka was not admitted to the Prague NATO summit (November 2002), which decided on the eastward expansion of the alliance. In this way, NATO members expressed their protests against his undemocratic rules.⁷¹ Lukashenka’s intention to co-operate with West seem to be dictated by short-term expediency, and are unreliable in the context of all his decisions (e.g. disbanding the OSCE Watch and Consultative Group in Minsk, support for Saddam Hussein’s regime, involvement in the sale of arms to Iraq). His aim is to be acknowledged by the international community, and he is ready to take any opportunity that occurs to achieve his goals.⁷²

⁶⁶ “Białorusini emocjonalnie o amerykańskich bazach w Polsce”, *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, 29 May 2003.

⁶⁷ Naumczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Książek, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

⁶⁹ See Astapienka, Uładzimir: “Rozszerzenie Unii Europejskiej- konsekwencje dla stosunków Białorusi z Polską”, in Eberhardt and Ułachowicz, *op. cit.* (eds.), p. 38. “Białoruś - orędzie Aleksandra Łukaszenki”, *Tydzień na Wschodzie*, 17 April 2003.

⁷⁰ Sadowski, *op.cit.*

⁷¹ Lukashenka responded threatening in the Interfax agency that if he were not to be invited to the summit, the Belorussian Border Guard would stop monitoring the common border, whereupon Poland would be flooded by a wave of illegal emigrants from the East.

⁷² For details see: Książek, *op. cit.*, p. 315.



The weak position of Belarus on the international scene is very harmful to its relations with Poland. Polish leaders declare that, despite obvious obstacles, they will aim at building contacts based on “the principle of neighbourliness”.⁷³

Does Poland have an equal role to fulfil in this relation, as in the case of Ukraine? The task seems to be much more complicated. Poland could use its experience of successful co-operation with Ukraine or Lithuania and for example establish a common battalion or organise common military manoeuvres. However, before building any forms of co-operation, particularly within NATO structures, Belarus needs to overcome the Soviet-era prejudices about the alliance and the West as a whole.

The mutual relations are complicated by the fact that Poland, as a member of transatlantic structures, is bound to act in accordance with the Western position. Therefore, in November 2002 Poland openly endorsed the decision of imposing sanctions, whereby top-ranking Belarus officials were banned from entering the EU states and the US. However, President Kwasniewski, emphasised in his address that Poland “must have a different title than the EU to co-operation with Belarus,” and therefore, would not apply the full scope of restrictions.⁷⁴

Currently, the most important matter in the mutual relations between Poland and Belarus is the concern of Lukashenko’s administration about the democratic transformation, which could lead to the loss of the former influence and control over the country. In the context of the incoming presidential election in Belarus in 2006 and still decreasing support for Lukashenko’s regime among the society, there exists a probable risk that a revolution similar to the one in Ukraine may erupt in Belarus too.

It seems that the increasing criticism from the West narrowed dramatically the Lukashenko’s room for political manoeuvre. The only way to prevent the loss of the former political position is to get closer to Russia, thereby accepting the Russian vision of integration.

Russia’s position on this matter is ambiguous. On the one hand, Russia wants to deepen its integration with Belarus in order to hinder the disintegrative processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On the other hand, Russia has to draw conclusions from the policy of support for the Kuchma/Yanukovych regime, which resulted in failure.

An apparent cooling in Polish-Belorussian relations is the direct consequence of the change in the Ukrainian government and Poland’s involvement. Lukashenko, similarly to Russian decision-makers, saw the involvement of Polish diplomats as the operation directly threatening the country’s safety. The decision to position the S-300 rockets along the border with Poland was the indication of the sense of threat. This action, which is an execution of the plans even from before Poland’s accession to NATO, is supposed to be the guarantee of Belarus and Russia’s defence against Poland’s attack.⁷⁵

⁷³ Poland wants to “promote [...] independence, democracy, economic reforms and pro-European tendencies” in Belarus. See *Information of the Government of the Republic of Poland on the Polish foreign policy in the year 2003 delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs W. Cimoszewicz at the Sejm session of January 22, 2003*, in <http://www.gov.msz.pl>.

⁷⁴ Książek, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

⁷⁵ See Popowski, “Moskwa zawiodła ...”, *op. cit.*



3.3. Ukraine

In the case of Ukraine the enlargement of NATO did not influence its policy towards Poland significantly. The most noticeable change in mutual relations was Ukraine's transition from proclaiming strategic partnership with Poland to limited but measurable activity. It was NATO enlargement which helped to fill the gap in Polish-Ukrainian relations with tangible projects undertaken within its structures.

National interests of both countries converged to a great extent, especially in the matters of security. Both states were interested in basing European security on the US presence, and therefore they developed military co-operation using the Euro-Atlantic security structures. Military manoeuvres were organised on the Ukrainian territory, in which NATO members and non-member states participated. Ukraine took part in peacekeeping missions within the framework of the Polish-Ukrainian battalion UKRPOLBAT (e.g. in the KFOR mission Kosovo since July 2000)⁷⁶ and in NATO operations in the Middle East. In spring 2003, in the course of American military action against the Iraqi regime, Ukraine agreed to send an anti-chemical battalion to Kuwait, and then took part – under Polish command – in the stabilisation mission in Iraq after the conflict. Ukraine also established a Centre of information and Documentation of NATO in Kiev.⁷⁷

After NATO enlargement, Polish diplomatic agencies in Ukraine started to play the role of contact points, explaining the potential ambiguities arising around Poland's membership in the alliance. Moreover, Poland helped Ukraine in introducing NATO standards in the defence and security sector reforms, and in implementing an agreement on Host Nation Support (HNS)⁷⁸ by means of wide range of workshops, conferences, meetings with Polish experts, common exercises, etc.

What was the impact of the Polish membership in NATO on these relations? Generally speaking, this event did not change the (strategic) direction of the Polish foreign policy, moreover it created new tools of developing mutual co-operation, especially in the political and military domains. This co-operation, however, had its limits defined by Ukraine's geopolitical position and heavy dependence upon Russia.

The “policy of balance” implemented even before the expansion from 1999 has been maintained by the doctrine, announced in the beginning of 2001 by the pro-Russian minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolii Zlenko. It recognized the relations with Russia and the US as of strategic vitality. According to Zlenko, there was no alternative for neither economic co-operation with the Russian Federation, for the security co-operation with the US, as a counterbalance preventing political dependence on Russia.⁷⁹ The doctrine was then put into practice, aimed at deepening the relations both with Russia and with NATO (as an organisation lead by the US). The endeavours of simultaneous integration with both the West

⁷⁶ See more details in Figel, Ewa: “Poland's Bilateral Relations – Ukraine”, *Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy* 2003, p. 307f.

⁷⁷ Olszański, “Ukraine”, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ NATO program addressed mostly to its members' and PfP nations. It means “civil and military assistance rendered in peace, emergencies, crisis and conflict by a Host Nation to Allied Forces and organisations which are located on, operating in or in transit through the Host Nation's territory”. See more in: <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb080202.htm>.

⁷⁹ Zlenko claimed: “...the development of a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and the United States ... are crucial to our safety”; in: <http://www.mfa.gov.ua.zlenko/2001/0123.htm>. See: Olszański “Ukraine”, *op.cit.*, p. 17; Olszański, Tadeusz (2001): *Ukraina między Rosją a Zachodem*, Kraków, Instytut Studiów Strategicznych, p.11.



and Russia were defined by the Ukrainian government as a “multi-dimension policy”, while independent analysts call it a “schizophrenic” attitude.⁸⁰ The “multi-dimension policy” resulted from Ukraine’s geopolitical position and strong Russian political-economic influences, which Ukraine could not reject at that time.

On 23 May 2002 the Council for National Security and Defence [CNSD] adopted a decision to develop and implement a strategy that would lead up to, as the ultimate objective, Ukraine’s accession to NATO.⁸¹ It was then followed by a number of documents, including a *Memorandum on Support for NATO Operations in the Territory of Ukraine*. Finally, at the NATO summit in Prague in November 2002, Zlenko signed the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan.

According to Ukrainian diplomats, it was a version of a Membership Action Plan (MAP). This statement was, in fact, an exaggeration, since the document lacked the proclamation of the ultimate aim of joining NATO.⁸² Mykola Ryabchuk, an expert at the Centre for European Studies in Kiev, claimed that it was rather a short-term political declaration, which would not have any practical consequences in the foreseeable future.

The NATO-Russia rapprochement after the Declaration of Rome, establishing the NATO-Russia Council in May 2002, when Russia became almost a member of NATO, made realised Ukrainian authorities that the relations between its two “strategic partners” were turning disadvantageous to Ukraine. They posed a real threat to Ukraine of becoming marginalised in Europe. Ukraine could not play the “NATO card” with Russia any longer, nor could it blackmail the US with Eurasian integration projects.

According to analysts at “Stratfor” (Strategic Forecasting – an American private intelligence firm), Ukraine’s concerns were justified, since the US had given priority to relations with Russia. Moreover, Russia got a free hand in the post-Soviet zone. One of the first symptoms of that process were the trade sanctions imposed on Ukraine by the US for breaking American copyrights. As the analysts claim, it was the prize for Russia’s pro-Western approach, shown after the terrorist attacks of September 2001.⁸³

The increasing economic-political presence of Russia and lack of interest in attracting Ukraine to the West caused the principles of Minister Zlenko’s policy to become inadequate to the changing situation. Ukraine started to deepen its integration with Russia. In April 2004, the Ukrainian parliament passed two agreements: about the use of the Azov Sea, and about the creation of Common Economic Zone. The first document ended the Tuzla conflict by the decision of common use (together with Russia) of the whole Azov Sea (which is of great importance for energy industry in this region). It also encouraged Russia to sign a land border treaty with Ukraine.⁸⁴ The second agreement created free trade zone between Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Thanks to it, Ukraine can buy Russian oil and gas without paying VAT, which could save a 800 mill USD each year.

⁸⁰ See: Olszański, Tadeusz (2003): *Trud niepodległości. Ukraina na przełomie tysiącleci*, Kraków, Instytut Studiów Strategicznych.

⁸¹ The decision became legally binding two months later when Kuchma signed a proper decree (during the visit of the NATO secretary general). Kościński, Piotr: “Na razie współpraca i integracja”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 July 2002.

⁸² Figel, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

⁸³ The sanctions in a form of 75 billion USD were imposed on Ukrainian export goods to the US in January 2002. Polish Press Agency [PAP] 26 December 2001, in <http://dziennik.pap.cp.pl/swiat/20011226193530.htm>.

⁸⁴ Tymoszenko, Julia: “W strefie wolnego handlu ani handlu, ani wolności”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20 February 2004.



Another sign of the pro-Russian direction of Ukraine's foreign policy was President Kuchma's suggestion to lease out to Russia the strategic pipeline Odessa – Brody, which previously was to become an alternative way of supplying energy to Ukraine and to the West.⁸⁵ Moreover, owing to the renewal of the lease on the harbour in Sevastopol for another 50 years, Russia secured its military presence in the strategic region of the Black Sea.

Parallel talks with NATO did not lead to the development of co-operation. On June 7 2004 during High Level NATO-Ukraine Consultations in Warsaw NATO signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Strategic Airlift with Ukraine to use its transport planes.⁸⁶ This agreement set out a framework for future cooperation in this area. The memorandum did not fulfil Ukraine's expectations to get an invitation into Membership Action Plan (MAP). NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said the country must build a functioning democracy before it is ready for membership.⁸⁷

After the NATO-Ukraine meeting in Istanbul (24th June 2004) Leonid Kuchma erased from the defence doctrine (accepted just before the meeting) the point which stated that the aim of Ukraine is to become the rightful member of the EU and NATO.

From the above examples of contradictory statements made by Kuchma one might draw the conclusion that there was no clear direction in Ukrainian foreign policy. The president first talked about the will to join transatlantic structures and soon after about “the great mistake” of Ukrainian pro-Western orientation.⁸⁸

In fact, the agreements on the division of the Sea of Azov and the integration within Common Economic Space signified L. Kuchma's choice of the eastern direction in the foreign policy. L. Kuchma treated the issue of the membership in NATO as a means of achieving his own aim. The declarations of Ukraine's presence in NATO and the decision to send Ukrainian troops to Iraq were to serve as a means of creating a positive image of Ukraine in contacts with the West and constituted an additional bargaining argument in talks with Russia before the autumn presidential election.

The concessions made by L. Kuchma during the talks with Putin (the presidents met 20 times in 2004) were aimed at gaining support for the Kuchma's camp for the time of the election. Those arrangements were given the term “new Pereyaslav Agreement”⁸⁹

The Ukrainian political and economic elites cannot afford the loosening of ties either with Russia, nor with the West. Before the 2004 presidential elections the most popular idea upheld among the elites was the one of combining two contradictory aims – going “to Europe with Russia” or, in other words, integrating both “with Russia and with Europe” at the same

⁸⁵ Sowula, Sławomir: “Pomalują rurę”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 06 February 2004.

⁸⁶ Ukraine's An-124-100 cargo jets for long-range missions.

⁸⁷ Information displayed on the website of Ukrainian Embassy to the US, Washington, DC in <http://www.ukraineinfo.us/index.html>, 8 July 2004; *Komentarze OSW*, 04 July 2004, in <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2004/07/040701b.htm>.

⁸⁸ “There is no one waiting for us in the West, while Russia was and remains our biggest ally and partner” said president in February 2002. Riabczuk, Mykoła: “Retoryka i polityka: paradoksy ukraińskiej “wielowektorowości”, *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, No. 2, March-April 2004, pp. 48-50, citation from p. 59.

⁸⁹ Podebski, Roman: “Polskie okno możliwości”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12-13 February 2005. The Treaty of Pereyaslav, concluded in January 1654 in Pereyaslav, provided for the protection of the Ukrainian Cossack State by the tsar, which resulted in the Russian subjugation of the Ukrainian territory over the river Dnieper.



time.⁹⁰ Public opinion polls showed that the majority of the Ukrainian population wanted to preserve “special” relations with Russia, and over 30 percent would like Ukraine to join both the EU and the Union of Belarus and Russia. What is more, one third of the society was in favour of NATO membership, one third against and one third had no opinion on this topic.⁹¹

As a result of political transformation in Ukraine, one essential issue underwent a change: there is a social consensus about the membership in the EU along with the recognition of the importance of the relations with Russia. However, there is still no unanimous support for the membership in NATO. The social preferences were mirrored by the military doctrine updated 21st April 2005, in which the membership in the EU was put in the first place, and the membership in NATO – in the second (the change in the doctrine took place on the day of the Ukraine-NATO summit in Vilnius).

The character of the relations between Ukraine and NATO can be illustrated by the statement of George W. Bush, who made his decision about the support for the Ukraine’s membership in the EU dependent on hearing the unambiguous declaration from V. Yushchenko. According to American diplomats, however, Ukraine “does not wish” too far-reaching declarations in this matter⁹², since they could lead to the decrease in Yushchenko’s popularity among the society and have a negative effect on the result of the parliamentary election in 2006.

An additional problem is the negative standpoint of the Russian political elite (the President Putin’s administration being convinced of the Yushchenko’s support for Ukraine’s membership in NATO, for this and other reasons provided firm and open support for Yanukovich.) Despite the lack of official objections from the government administration, the eventual presence of Ukraine in NATO is perceived there as the “historic catastrophe”. The main argument against such a scenario is the fear of using Ukraine as the USA’s staging area against Russia.⁹³ The attempts to counteract the loss of influence over the near abroad can be noticed. An expression of this trend is, for instance, the establishment of the presidential Directorate for Interregional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries, which was created by President Putin in February 2005.⁹⁴

What role should Poland, as a member of NATO, play in relations with Ukraine under these new circumstances?

Currently, the issue of being a member of NATO is not of top priority for Ukraine. The fundamental aim declared after the Orange Revolution is the membership in the EU. Poland’s co-operation with Ukraine within NATO is becoming a matter of lesser concern. Nevertheless, Ukraine is interested in Poland’s support for its EU ambitions. The scenario that was difficult to imagine before the Revolution, in which Ukraine is a member of the EU became feasible after the Yushchenko’s victory. It could be changed only by the victory of the anti-Western opposition in the parliamentary election in 2006. The first step that brought Ukraine and the EU closer was the “action plan” signed at the beginning of 2005, which specified the relations between Ukraine and the EU.

⁹⁰ See opinions of Ukrainian politicians presented on the conference in November 2002 in Warsaw: *Europejskie aspiracje Ukrainy*, Warszawa, Inicjatywa Współpracy Polsko-Amerykańsko-Ukraińskiej (PAUCI), 2003, p.66f.

⁹¹ See: public opinion pools released by the Batory Foundation in: <http://www.batory.org.pl/mnarod/ukraina.htm>; see also: Riabczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 61, 69-70.

⁹² “Czy chcecie być w NATO?”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 April 2005.

⁹³ Trenin, *op. cit.*

⁹⁴ See more in: http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/state_grp/84755.shtml.



Raising the issue of the membership in NATO could only result in a failure of the pro-Western choice that was made by Ukraine.

Conclusion

Five years after its Eastern enlargement, NATO proves to be a solution that broadens the area of security and stability in Europe. It became a political forum for deepened dialog between the US and European member states, on the one side, and Russia, Ukraine, to some extent also Belarus, on the other.⁹⁵

Generally speaking, Poland's membership in NATO did not deteriorate its relations with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Moreover, the membership gave Poland a chance of their improvement in the political and military dimensions.

First of all, it filled the security vacuum in the CEE region which was the *sine qua non* condition of Poland's rapprochement with Russia. The alliance also offered many concrete tools to carry out new programs of regional co-operation (e.g. within the Partnership for Peace and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). For its Eastern neighbours Poland became both an example of successful transformation and a signpost pointing the way to transatlantic integration.⁹⁶

Since 1999 the Polish policy towards Russia, Belarus and Ukraine has been partly realised within NATO structures. At the same time, Poland is expected to play an active role in shaping NATO and the EU policy towards the East. It has a long-term task to fulfil – to develop regional cooperation ties, created over the past decade, within the sphere of these organisations' foreign affairs.

How could we sum up the impact of NATO enlargement on Poland's relations with its Eastern neighbours?

The initial reactions of Russia and Belarus to NATO expansion were negative, as we saw, mainly because of prestigious reasons. There was, of course, some sense of military threat, but far more important was the anxiety of being "excluded from Europe." Enlargement was particularly difficult to accept for Russia, because it challenged its already undermined superpower image. Both elites and the whole society of Russia had to face the problem of their "post-imperial syndrome". They felt helpless and deceived when the idea of NATO enlargement occurred, but during the process, when the decision was already irreversible, their attitude evolved to a neutral acceptance. Moreover, the enlargement forced both the Russian Federation and NATO to make a critical review of their relations, and to find a new formula, satisfactory for both sides – which resulted in establishing the NATO-Russia Council (NRC).

Poland, through its membership in the alliance, gained new forum of dialog with Russia. Polish authorities launched many initiatives of co-operation within the NRC, for example in

⁹⁵ NATO military role visibly decreases – mainly due to the US preferences of unilateral actions and building coalitions outside the organisation, which acts by unanimity and therefore is not able to respond to international conflicts quickly enough.

⁹⁶ See Olendzki, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.



the form of common seminars or workshops, during which Poland can make use of its experience and expertise in reforming the defence system and reaching NATO standards.

These positive changes were possible to a great extent thanks to the growing pragmatism of the Russian political elites under Vladimir Putin's presidency. Putin was interested in economic development of the country more than of ideological disputes. Also, he understood that the co-operation with the West is the cardinal condition on the success of his efforts to achieve his goals. Poland's commitment in the Orange Revolution resulted in the deterioration of its relations with Russia. Poland's involvement in a conflict in Ukraine was followed by the change of Russian rhetoric towards Poland. were Russia accused Poland of cooperation with the USA in order to destabilise the CIS area and to urge the EU to compete with Russia for the influence in Ukraine.

Undoubtedly, there is a connection between Poland's membership in the EU and the increased EU activity in the Eastern Europe. According to Jacek Cichocki, Poland's accession to the EU caused Russian decision-makers to define Poland as the state critical of Russia. It also brought about the attempts to weaken Poland's position in the EU by depicting Poland as the country of "little credibility" when it comes to the matters of the East."⁹⁷

The Belorussian attitude towards NATO enlargement evolved in a way parallel to the Russian one and it still remains derivative of its relations with Russia. Both countries put great attention to the rhetoric in their foreign policy. Verbal demonstration of power seems to be a useful tactic to gain certain political benefits in the internal policy and abroad.

Belarus' independent relations with Poland and the alliance are limited. Belarus, as a "*persona non grata*" in Europe, will not be treated as a partner, as long as it refuses to accept the changed terms of coexistence. However, it does not mean that Poland should resign from its own policy towards Belarus, since it shares a common border with this country.

However, it should be noticed that serious obstacles exist hindering the development of mutual relations. One of them is the authoritarian attitude of Lukashenko. Among others, Poland held an opinion that referendum from October 2004 concerning the President's re-election in 2006 was falsified.

Another problem in the mutual relations is the issue of NATO. Lukashenko is using this problem to intensify the sense of threat – in his opinion the security of Belarus and Russia is threatened by NATO expansion. Coloured revolutions on the CIS area allegedly initiated by the members of NATO were supposed to be one of the symptoms of this expansionism. Sharp statements were directed especially at Poland, from where the export of such revolution to Belarus was expected. Similar approach for Orange Revolution has inclined leaders of Belorussia and Russia to enhance security cooperation. And among others, they have caused for demonstration of strength by announcement of placement along border with Poland S-300 rockets.⁹⁸

Ukraine did not perceive the enlargement as a threat to its national interests, but rather as a chance to improve its geopolitical situation. Direct neighbourhood of the alliance was to guarantee Ukraine's political and military independence from Russia. Poland, after joining NATO, engaged in Eastern affairs, particularly in its relations with Ukraine, to a much greater extent than before. Numerous initiatives of mutual co-operation were initiated on the alliance

⁹⁷ Nocuń and Brzeziecki, *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ *Wiadomości OSW*, 13 April 2005, in http://www.osw.waw.pl/news/arc_news.htm.



forum. Though Poland's financial and organisational resources are limited, it has very important assets at its disposal: the knowledge of the CEE region, and the experience of successful transformation of its own defence policy.

Briefly speaking, after joining the alliance, Poland's role evolved from a "consumer" to a "promoter" of security and stabilisation in the transatlantic region. In practice, it translated into concrete projects undertaken in cooperation with Ukraine, promotion of the NATO "open door" policy, and developing informative policy in order to build a positive image of NATO in the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian societies.

The concerns that Russia and Belarus associated with the extension of NATO referred mainly to the deterioration of the role of universal organisations like the UN and the OSCE, to the restoration of division lines in Europe, to exclusion of the East-European countries from decision-making in Europe and to the necessity to transform Kaliningrad into Russia's "military bridgehead".⁹⁹

In the end, these concerns all turned out to be unjustified.¹⁰⁰ The alliance managed to avoid Russia's and other East-European countries' alienation by developing individual dialog. Russia was satisfied with the deepening of its relations with the alliance, and with gaining the right to discuss most of the international issues. Belarus, for understandable reasons, did not improve its relations with the alliance, but will not complain, as long as Russia is pleased with NATO development. Ukraine established special relations with the alliance, in the form of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

While evaluating the NATO enlargement, we should also bear in mind the impact of global factors. One of the most significant influence seems to be that of the threats of non-military and trans-border nature.¹⁰¹ These threats deepen relations between the countries concerned, since there are more and more common concerns that need joint counteraction. Neither Poland, though a member of a military alliance, nor Russia, though preserving its nuclear potential, nor Ukraine or Belarus can afford solitary actions in circumstances where common solutions are needed to new problems, such as organised crime, drug trafficking, illegal immigration or terrorism and proliferation of WMD.

Worth noticing is one more event, which altered the relations in the region. On March 29 2004, NATO accepted seven new member states, among others Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, reaching Russia's borders. However, comparing that event to the previous enlargement we can notice that neither the US, nor Russia stressed its importance for its own and European security. The second round of enlargement seemed to be much less controversial for Russia. Why? This time Russia did not feel marginalised, as it did in 1999, since it has already a say in NATO through the NATO-Russia Council. Russia was also convinced that NATO did not pose any military threat to its security, as most of Russian military leaders and diplomats feared.

Nevertheless, the 2004 enlargement was preceded by two months of aggressive campaigning by the Russian authorities, in the media and in parliament. As the analysts from

⁹⁹ Cf. Sakwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 414-421.

¹⁰⁰ The deterioration of the UN or OSCE role in international affairs is due to their internal weakness and inability to respond to new threats, rather than to the NATO enlargement.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Pietraś, Marek: "Bezpieczeństwo państwa w późnowestfalskim środowisku międzynarodowym", in Górka-Winter, Beata and Dębski, Sławomir (eds.) (2003): *Kryteria bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego państwa*, Warszawa, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, pp. 161-172.



the Centre for Eastern Studies prove, the Russian elites wanted to make use of NATO expansion to gain some political benefits.¹⁰² The short-term goal was to demonstrate to their own society that Russia did not agree silently on the enlargement. Russia also wanted to obtain guarantees that NATO forces stationed on the territory of the Baltic States would be limited in numbers. The middle-term objective concerned the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty. Russian authorities insisted on ratifying it not only by NATO, but also by the Baltic States. Finally, the long-term goal was to discourage the alliance from expanding its influence over the CIS area (first of all, over Ukraine).

For Poland, the result of the next wave of enlargement seems to be positive – it gained new partners in its efforts to stabilise the CEE region – especially the Baltic States, Romania and Slovakia.

It is also worthwhile to draw a parallel between the 1999 NATO expansion and the recent EU enlargement. These two processes had a great impact on regional relations, though in different ways. The distinct aims and roles of these processes in Europe make an exhaustive comparison difficult, though allows drawing some general remarks.

Russia seemed to be more reconciled with the idea of the new EU borders reaching farther to the East, than with the NATO expansion,¹⁰³ but the 2004 revolution and an increased engagement of the EU in Eastern Europe changed that situation towards growing competition between these two actors.

On the contrary, Ukraine initially expressed its anxiety over the EU enlargement, since it caused serious difficulties for Polish-Ukrainian trade, the free flow of people, etc.¹⁰⁴ However, Poland's efforts to keep the common border as open as possible helped to minimise the negative consequences of that process. Nowadays the Ukrainian attitude is positive – its membership in the UE became a goal number of its foreign policy.

In Belarus, we can observe a growing dissonance between the authorities and the society. It can be expected that the “last dictatorship in Europe” has a slender chance of survival. Mainly because it is anachronistic, has insufficient support of Russia and because there is growing engagement of the West in the democratic changes in this country.¹⁰⁵ After the enlargement, Poland proved to be deeply interested in keeping NATO's door open, and showed readiness to support its Eastern neighbours on their way to the alliance. Though the potential at Poland's disposal does not predestine it to play the role of an architect of NATO Eastern policy, it allows Poland to wield its influence on this policy. Due to its geopolitical position, interests and historical ties, Poland should continue its active Eastern policy.

The significance of this direction in Poland's foreign policy is underlined by the politicians who in their statements stress the wish to normalise the relations with all closest neighbours. In his address delivered at Lomonosov Moscow State University in September 2004, Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski saw the chance of closer co-operation with Russia that could result from the improvement of Russia's relations with NATO and the EU.

¹⁰² For details see: *CES Comments*, 1 April 2004, in <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pub/koment/2004/04/040401b.htm>.

¹⁰³ Just 4% of the Russian population claimed the EU enlargement would be harmful to the Poland-Russia relations, while 49% claimed that NATO expansion would be damaging to mutual relations. For more details see: Książek, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-8.

¹⁰⁴ See a declaration of Petro Sardeczuk, Ukraine's Ambassador to Poland: Montgomery, Katarzyna: “Polska w sercu”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 December 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Mickiewicz, Robert and Przybylski, Jacek: “Ostatnia dyktatura w Europie”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 22 April 2005.



The president stressed that Poland wishes to actively participate in both the NATO and the EU Eastern Dimension.¹⁰⁶

Janusz Onyszkiewicz notices that the future of Poland will largely depend on the direction of the changes in the countries that are its neighbours on the eastern border. He considers helping first Ukraine and later Belarus to enter NATO and the EU to be the fundamental aim of Poland's foreign policy. The success of such a plan "is closely connected with the Poland's future role in NATO and especially in the EU".¹⁰⁷

Owing to the transformation that took place in Ukraine, the concepts of Eastern policy developed by the Polish politicians have become more realistic.

The role that NATO played in the relations with the Eastern neighbours has diminished. However, this is counterbalanced by the increase in the engagement of the EU, which results from the success of democratic changes in Ukraine, as well as from shifting the EU borders to the East. The Alliance retains its potential to co-operate on the field of traditional security dimension by, for instance, engaging countries in the actions similar to the operation in Afghanistan within the competence of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). There is also an increasing EU ability to influence considerably not only the economic standards, but also the political principles in Europe by using the "soft power" instruments. Of course the greater the ability to develop a common attitude towards the East, the more effective the EU will be.

The possibilities of influencing this region by Poland within the EU turned out to be incomparably wider than its capabilities within NATO. It is beneficial to Poland to sustain the interest in the issues connected with the Eastern Europe, both in NATO and the EU. Long-lasting stabilisation of Poland's safety environment depends on replacing the bilateral relations between the Western European countries and their Eastern partners with the relations maintained within the international structures.

¹⁰⁶ Assuming the leadership of the European Parliament's delegation for Ukraine and Belarus is an example of Poland's involvement. Kwaśniewski, Aleksander: "Rosja i Polska potrzebują dialogu", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 1 October 2004.

¹⁰⁷ Onyszkiewicz, Janusz: "O tym jak poprawić polskie sąsiedztwo. Z Zachodem na Wschód!", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 October-1 November 2004. The author is an eurodeputy and former Minister of National Defence of Poland.