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Ukraine:

*a part of Europe or apart from Europe.*¹

The Role of Poland in Advocating Ukrainian Membership in the EU.²

‘C’urrently, Ukraine’s integration into the European Union is not on the Agenda.³ This explicit statement was not made by a political analyst a few years ago, but by the EU External Relations Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, during her trip to Ukraine in February 2005, which was aimed at deepening relations with Ukraine’s new pro-European leadership. ‘Poland supports the European aspirations of Ukraine,’ declared Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski on 11 April 2005 following a meeting with Ukrainian President Yushchenko⁴. It might seem slightly unusual for a member of the European club to give such emphatic support to the future membership of a country when that membership is not even on the club’s agenda. This question of Ukraine becoming a member of the EU could become a more pressing issue, but only if the matter can be more directly brought to the club’s attention, and here the great challenge for Poland lies.

The aim of this report is, firstly, to consider the historical and political circumstances that explain why Poland is advocating Ukrainian membership in the EU. Secondly, it is to analyse the impact of geopolitics and domestic politics in Ukraine on her pro-

pects of EU membership. This report also examines the role of Russia and its renewed strategy towards Ukraine, Poland and the EU. It will look at the reasons behind the attitude of the main EU countries towards Ukrainian membership in the Union and the reasons why Ukraine is important for the EU. Finally, it will answer the question as to what particularly can be done on three different levels to help Ukraine in its European aspirations: the diplomatic, technical assistance and grass-root levels. A broader European and even international context needs to be taken into account in order to understand the role of Poland in supporting Ukraine's European aspirations.

1. Poland and European *Ostpolitik*

Poland's accession to the EU has provoked an animated public debate on the benefits and costs of its membership. As regards the benefits, emphasis is placed primarily on the improved competitiveness of the economy and advantages resulting from the opening of markets. However, little attention is given to the geopolitical context of the EU enlargement and the role which Poland can play in shaping the 'Eastern Dimension' of EU policy. This is possible in particular since the EU--now preoccupied with its internal problems, especially with the fiasco of the Constitutional Treaty--has no clear strategy of its own *Ostpolitik*. The issue of Ukraine's membership in the EU seems to be right at the bottom of the EU agenda. These new political circumstances, although they have pushed Ukraine's European aspirations aside, have nevertheless opened new opportunities for Poland. Polish aspirations go far beyond mere formal participation in the Eastern Dimension of European Foreign Policy. The country's silent ambition is to actively shape and guide that policy. This role in creating the European *Ostpolitik* could consist of Poland performing the function of an advocate for its eastern neighbour in its opening to the EU, exporting to Ukraine the European 'soft' security of democratic values and protecting it against the increasingly apparent signs of Russian imperial policy. This gives a real meaning to the term 'strategic partnership' that was coined in the early 1990s to describe the relations between the two countries.

Indeed, Poland can and even should more actively engage in the process of shaping the Eastern Policy of the EU within the European Common Foreign and Security Policy, the second pillar of the European Union.

This requirement raises a number of questions with regard to Ukraine: Is Ukraine itself determined and consistent in its pro-European choices? If so, does it see any role for Poland in this process? Does Poland want to be and can it be an advocate of Ukraine in its aspirations for membership in the European Union? What specifically can Poland do for Ukraine? How can these states overcome their historical prejudices and build a common future? Does the West recognize the geostrategic importance of Ukraine and does it envision this country within its structures?

Before I attempt to answer these questions, it is worth taking a closer look at the relations between Poland and Ukraine to date and the prospects for further cooperation.

2. Polish-Ukrainian relations: from a history of conflict to a more hopeful future

In the history of every state there are opportunities which should never be wasted. No matter how overblown such a statement may seem, it accurately describes the Polish dilemma with regard to Ukraine. In becoming a potentially important EU member, Poland should make use of the historic opportunity it is offered. Indeed it seems that the spontaneous Polish support for the 'Orange Revolution' and for the European aspirations of Ukraine came not only from the mainstream political elites in Poland, but also from public opinion. According to the TNS Sofres opinion poll conducted between February 24 and March 8 2005, 77% of Poles supported the idea of Ukrainian membership in the EU. The TNS Sofres polling group examined civil opinions of some 6,000 people in the EU's six largest countries: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Britain and Poland. The survey found that all the other countries had smaller percentages of those who wanted Ukraine to become part of the union as compared to Poland. Voters in Poland were overwhelmingly in favour, with only 12% against.

Personally, would you be favourable to or be opposed to the membership of Ukraine in the EU? ⁵

	France	Germany	Italy	Poland	Spain	UK	Total
Decidedly in favour	11	9	28	31	22	17	18
Moderately in favour	47	32	34	46	38	32	37
Total	58	41	62	77	60	49	55
Moderately against	25	34	11	8	7	12	19
Strongly against	12	19	12	4	4	15	12
Total	37	53	23	12	11	27	31
Without opinion	5	6	15	11	29	24	14

The fact that the highest support for the European aspirations of Ukraine was noted in Poland does not seem easy to account for, bearing in mind the history of distrust and conflict between the two nations.

Indeed, history has given rise to enduring negative stereotypes in both countries. In Poland wounds are deep. The history of misunderstanding begins with the Cossack uprisings in the 17th century. These took place within what were then Polish national boundaries, and, to Polish perception at least, were regarded as civil war. The conflict has continued into more contemporary history and much bitterness has been raised, in particular, by the extermination of the Polish population in Volyn in 1943 and 1944⁶. Poland bears a burden of guilt as well. It was responsible for the brutal communist persecutions and forced displacement of the Ukrainian population in the Vistula Operation in 1947⁷. It will be difficult to talk about any true reconciliation as long as the massacre in Volyn is not unequivocally condemned, not only by the Ukrainian elites, but also by the people of Ukraine. Likewise the Vistula Campaign needs to be condemned by the Polish elites and by society at large. In more recent times there have been no shortage of unnecessary squabbles, as exemplified by the dispute concerning the opening of the Cemetery of the Young Eagles in Lvov⁸, which was finally solved in June 2005.

Poland and Ukraine are breaking down their prejudices and building their partnership very slowly. Although both countries have declared their will to create a strategic partnership since the early 1990s, in practice the activities aimed at improving mutual relations have experienced 'ups and downs'. We can distinguish three major periods in Polish-Ukrainian relations: 1990-1991, when Poland supported and recognised Ukraine's independence; 1991-1993, which was a period of stagnation in mutual relations; and the recent decade, in which mutual relations have revived slightly. It is worth devoting some attention to each of these periods.

In 1991 Poland was the first country to recognise Ukraine's independence. This occurred only several months after the famous visit of President George Bush, who announced during his stay in Kiev that Ukraine should remain an integral part of the Soviet Union. In 1991 it appeared that Poland's gesture of recognizing Ukraine's independence would contribute to a revival of contacts between both nations. Unfortunately, however, the 'honeymoon' was relatively brief.

The reason for the deterioration of relations in the years 1991-1993 was the reorientation of Polish foreign policy towards the West and the desire of Poland to integrate with European and Euro-Atlantic political and economic structures. As early as at the beginning of the 1990s Poland decided to withdraw from its former political and military alliances within the Eastern Bloc and to seek to join NATO and the EU. Ukraine was not sufficiently determined at that time to set its course towards the West. Instead, it declared its will to be a neutral state. This stance was in a sense understandable given the geopolitical situation in which Ukraine found itself, which was still in a state of flux, and its shaky newly-won independence. In addition, the concept of strategic partnership functioned more at the level of diplomatic relations than at the level of public perception.⁹ Therefore, the years 1991-1993 can be characterised as a period in which there was an absence of initiatives on both sides.

Evolution of relations

between Poland and Ukraine was positively affected by the warming up of Ukraine's relations with EU.

Mutual relations revived slightly in 1994 when Ukraine joined the NATO Partnership for Peace programme. The participation of Ukraine in this programme also contributed to changing its previously rather cool stance towards NATO's expansion to the East. Ukraine gradually began to perceive the potential benefits which could result from NATO enlargement. First of all, it was understood that participation in the Partnership for Peace programme would have a positive impact on promoting political and economic contacts with the West, and on good-neighbourly relations with Poland. Furthermore, Ukraine was thereby able to become more independent of Russia and thus strengthen its independence as a nation.

It is worth emphasising that the evolution of bilateral relations between Poland and Ukraine was also positively affected by the warming up of Ukraine's relations with the European Union. The first sign of these changes occurred as early as in August 1993, when President Kravchuk signed a decree 'On an Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation with the European Union'. However, due to the uncertain social and political situation at that time it was not possible to build a comprehensive strategy of cooperation with the European Union. Only in 1998 did the Ukrainian authorities begin to state more loudly that membership in the European Union should be one of the main objectives of Ukrainian foreign policy. In June 1998 President Leonid Ku-

chma issued a decree 'On Ukraine's Strategy for Integration with the European Union'. In the same year, a number of documents were also prepared and issued and many initiatives were taken to adjust Ukrainian legislation gradually to EU requirements. Special attention should be paid to the decree of August 2000 'On the National Council for the Adjustment of the Ukrainian Legal System to the Legal System of the European Union', and to the decree of September 2000 'On the Programme of Ukraine's Integration with the European Union'.¹⁰ Unlike in Poland, however, in the case of Ukraine the objectives of European integration were formulated by a rather narrow group of politicians and were not accompanied by widespread public support and interest.¹¹

In Poland, the process of adjustment to EU membership requirements was clearly accelerated upon the adoption of the National Strategy for Integration, particularly as regards the harmonization of the legal system. Ukraine, however, did not have the determination and political will to transform its political declarations into real changes in a consistent manner.

The situation changed after the Orange Revolution, when the Ukrainian government emphasised its determination to join the EU. Nevertheless, time will show how these political declarations transfer into real changes in Ukrainian politics and economy.

As long as Ukraine is not fully determined to act on its stated intentions to join the union, it is very unlikely that the EU will invite it to join the club, or that Poland can become a credible advocate of its pro-European aspirations. Each party will have to make difficult choices which will shape the future geopolitical structure of our continent. Therefore, it is worth closely examining the respective dilemmas of Poland, Ukraine, and the EU.

3. The strategic dilemmas of Poland

Since the early 1990s, Poland's foreign and security policies have been focused on membership in NATO and the European Union. At the same time, Poland has always intended to maintain good relations with its eastern neighbours. Poland's strategic policy objective has a specific ideological basis. Following its rejection of the socialist system, based on a 'people's democracy', centrally planned economy, and 'social justice', Poland seemed to find itself in an ideological vacuum. But it very quickly absorbed liberal values, which were an antithesis to 'real socialism'. This meant the

adoption and acceptance of the foundations of liberal Western civilisation such as democracy, a market economy, and human rights, including the inherent basic right to private ownership.

At the same time, the Poles began a new search for their European identity, which was clearly visible in the debate on membership. This debate was dominated by symbolic language, including phrases such as ‘Poland’s return to Europe’ and ‘the end of the Yalta system’. The discourse of integration was visible also in the most important national documents, where one could read, for instance, that ‘In the process of NATO and European Union enlargement the last remnants of the Yalta division of Europe are removed’¹². Emphasis was placed on the role of the values represented by the civilisations of the West, as well as the fact that Poland would follow the values, ideas, and principles enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty and the European Treaties¹³.

However, it would be wrong to advance the thesis that Poland’s pro-Western aspirations resulted solely from ideological motives. Poland combined ideological reasons with pragmatism based on political calculation and the assumption that membership in NATO and the European Union would serve the Polish national interest by improving the country’s security, accelerating its economic and civil development, and strengthening its role in the international arena. The case of Poland proves that a symbiosis of ideology and pragmatism in international relations is possible.

In relation to the European Union, Poland declared its active participation in the development of Security and Defence Policy as a supplement to the European Common Foreign and Security Policy. The National Security Strategy declares that ‘Poland, as a member of the European Union, will actively participate in the mechanism of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. We see it as an opportunity to increase our say in international policy as part of common action of the EU. (...) Our priority will also be to achieve development in the Eastern Dimension of the EU and, at the same time, remain actively involved in EU policy as regards other areas.’¹⁴

Poland can have a significant impact on the shaping of the Eastern Dimension of the European Union. This is possible partly because the European Union itself is short of ideas on what to do with its new eastern neighbours, in particular with Ukraine. On the one hand, the European Union, in following through its priority objectives, i.e.

internal reforms, the integration of ten new members, and the commencement of another enlargement stage in 2007, which will most likely involve Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia, is perhaps too preoccupied to make any definitive political declarations concerning the admission of Ukraine. On the other hand, it does not rule out some development in this area.

In such circumstances, Poland can play the role of Ukraine's advocate in EU structures, provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. Firstly, Poland must build its own position within the EU, which has been weakened in connection with the war in Iraq. The process of strengthening Poland's position in the European Union may last several years. However, Poland should already begin lobbying for Ukrainian membership in the EU and NATO structures, seek to develop economic cooperation, and support common social, educational, and cultural initiatives and the activity of non-governmental organisations.

In order to exert influence on the shaping of the Eastern Dimension of European Union policy, it is important that Poland build its own strategy for acting within the European Union, together with a plan of cooperation with its eastern neighbours. It must present to both the European Union and Ukraine concrete proposals which go beyond the diplomatic language of 'good-neighbourly relations' and 'building a strategic partnership between the two nations'.

The case of Poland's
policy vis-à-vis Ukraine
proves that a symbiosis of ideology and pragmatism in international relations is possible.

There are several threats to cooperation between Poland, Ukraine and the EU. Poland's membership in the EU has brought about certain restrictions in human and economic contacts, resulting, *inter alia*, from the more stringent visa and customs regulations that were forced on Poland by the European Union in an effort to protect its internal market and to tighten its borders to prevent the smuggling of goods and an influx of illegal immigrants from the territories of the former Soviet Union and Asia. But in order to prevent a decline in cross-border movement and trade after Poland's accession to the EU, the Polish government decided to 'liberalise' the visa regime by granting free short-term visas virtually to anyone who applied. Even though this solution prevented the decline in cross-border movement and trade, it can be re-

garded as a provisional measure, since in 2007, when Poland is hoping to join the Schengen Agreement, the country will have to tighten the existing regulations. Therefore, the government should work on introducing alternative solutions, e.g. middle-term visas for employment or educational purposes¹⁵. Such new measures are not only of economic importance but also play an important role in improving communication between the nations and breaking down stereotypes. Stereotypes and the ingrained mutual distrust between the two countries constitute a major obstacle. It appears that neither party is free from them and many Poles misguidedly allow their 'Europeanness' to take the form of a supposed 'Western civilisational superiority' over their eastern neighbours.

In order for Poland to play its role it is necessary to overcome threats, strengthen mutual ties and give real meaning to the strategic partnership between both countries. Deepening cooperation will be a stabilising factor for the entire region and will contribute to building common security. It is worth noting here that the concept of security needs to be broadly understood. It is becoming increasingly necessary to distinguish between the concepts of hard and soft security. Poland can build up its soft security, which is not only military security, but also security involving elements of political, economic, social, and cultural cooperation. The conditions for such security involve coordination of actions, consistency, and maintaining mutual support, with both partners having agreed to a common, long-term strategy of cooperation.

If Poland succeeds in building a strategic partnership with Ukraine, the EU will see that Poland can constitute a bridge between the European Union and Ukraine, thanks to which Poland will acquire real influence in the shaping of the Eastern Dimension of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Ukraine, on the other hand, must be consistent in its pro-Western orientation so that Poland can play the role of Ukraine's advocate for its membership in the EU and NATO. This requires Ukraine to remain consistent in her geopolitical choices.

4. The geopolitical dilemmas of Ukraine

President Kravchuk once described Poland as the 'gate to the West'. The question is whether Poland is prepared for such a role and whether Ukraine still perceives Poland as its gate to the West. Ukraine itself must make the decision whether it will seek guarantees, security, and stabilisation in the European Union and NATO and

whether it will treat cooperation with these organisations as a source of its economic development, or whether it wants to rely in this respect on the structures of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The answer to this question, leaving aside pure political strategy, should be sought in the Ukrainian identity. In Poland, the language of the integration debate itself suggested a strong feeling of European identity, whereas Ukraine is torn between the need to absorb European values and its links with the civilisations of the East.

Even though Ukraine's bid to join the EU is driven by both national interest and national identity, former Ukrainian governments have by and large failed to implement policies in line with the Copenhagen criteria of membership¹⁶. Such policies would ensure that there are stable institutions that can guarantee democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights and ethnic minorities. Economic reform was subverted by state-sponsored rents that created an oligarchy dependent on its political connections. Democracy degenerated into presidential authoritarianism. The judiciary remained a tool of the executive. Freedom of the press suffered with a series of killings of investigative journalists and a systemic assault on the independent media. In short, Kiev's 'return to Europe' rhetoric was almost completely defeated by domestic policies¹⁷. Hence, even though rhetorically European, Ukraine practically remained under post-Soviet influence.

The reasons for this geopolitical dilemma can be identified with the geopolitical division of Ukraine into the more European West and the East, which is more inclined to advance its ties with Russia. This way of putting the question is perhaps an over-simplification, but it does roughly reflect the major dilemma of Ukrainian policy, which is either to seek closer ties with the EU or to deepen economic and political cooperation with Russia.

Nevertheless, the assumption of the geopolitical split should not lead us to the conclusion that the disintegration of Ukraine is inevitable. Indeed, such a far-reaching thesis

Ukraine: basic data

Population: 48.4 million

Population per sq. km: 80.2

Population growth: - 0.7%

Life expectancy: 68.2 years

Population below national
poverty line (2003) : 17.9%

GNI per capita (Atlas
method): US\$1.260

GDP: US\$64.8 billion

GDP Growth: 12.1%

*2004 data sources: National Statistical
Offices, IMF, IFS, WDI 2005, and
Staff estimates. Source: World Bank
Ukraine Country Brief 2005,
www.worldbank.org*

was mainly raised by the Yanukovych supporters and by some Russian experts. They argued that the victory of the Orange Revolution could bring such destabilization that it would result in the disintegration of the country. This proved to be a myth sellable to the West. Unlike 13 years ago, the disintegration of Ukraine and annexation of its parts by Russia is now rather unlikely. However, Ukraine's intransigent trade and energy dependence on Russia has made the country susceptible to Russian economic pressure. A scenario which is more probable than disintegration is Ukraine's full economic dependence on Russia, leading towards a new form of hegemony.

5. The domestic situation in Ukraine

In the process of building good relations within the Ukraine-Poland-EU triangle there are many obstacles and potential threats. For Ukraine, the weakening of its determination to follow through with its political choices constitutes a real threat. Nevertheless, the major

problems are: a split within the Yushchenko camp; poor organization and coordination in governmental branches and public administration; and the ambitions of particular political leaders within the new government¹⁸.

The major domestic problem is an inevitable split within the Yushchenko camp. One has to remember that



this group came into power as the result of a revolutionary situation. In such circumstances, it is easier to build a coalition against the status quo than to build a consistent programme of economic and political reforms. The government consists of different groups with many different, often conflicting interests. Even though most of these

groups respect Yushchenko, it is becoming quite obvious that the Prime Minister, Tymoshenko, is playing her own game, in particular with regard to privatization, where there is no clear political line from the government. We still do not know, for example, what will happen if the steelworks are privatized. It is difficult for Yushchenko's opponents within the government to raise their heads above the parapet now. The President enjoys enormous respect not only within the new Ukrainian elites, but also with the general public. Nevertheless, when the President starts to lose public support, major opposition may unfold. The balance of power will be decided in the next parliamentary elections in March 2006, which will obviously raise the temperature of the debate, and a major split within the Yushchenko camp could be the result.

The second key problem is the chaos and the lack of proper coordination within the branches of government. There are basically a few key players having major influence on Ukrainian foreign policy. Yushchenko is obviously the most important one. One of his closest allies is Oleh Rybachuk, the Deputy Prime Minister and minister responsible for European integration. However, his room for manoeuvre is rather limited: he does not have enough staff to implement his policy. What is more, he is competing with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Borys Tarasyuk, who in contrast to Rybachuk, is less in favour of Ukraine following the Polish path of European integration. Oleksandr Zinchenko, Head of the Presidential Secretariat and a close friend of Yushchenko, is another important player. Zinchenko together with the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, Petro Poroshenko, controls the appointments within the government and in the public administration. Their prerogatives, contrary to the president's declarations, copy the solutions known from Kuchma's Presidential Administration. Tymoshenko, even though she has been appointed prime minister, has no decisive influence on ministerial appointments. This obviously creates room for potential conflicts.¹⁹

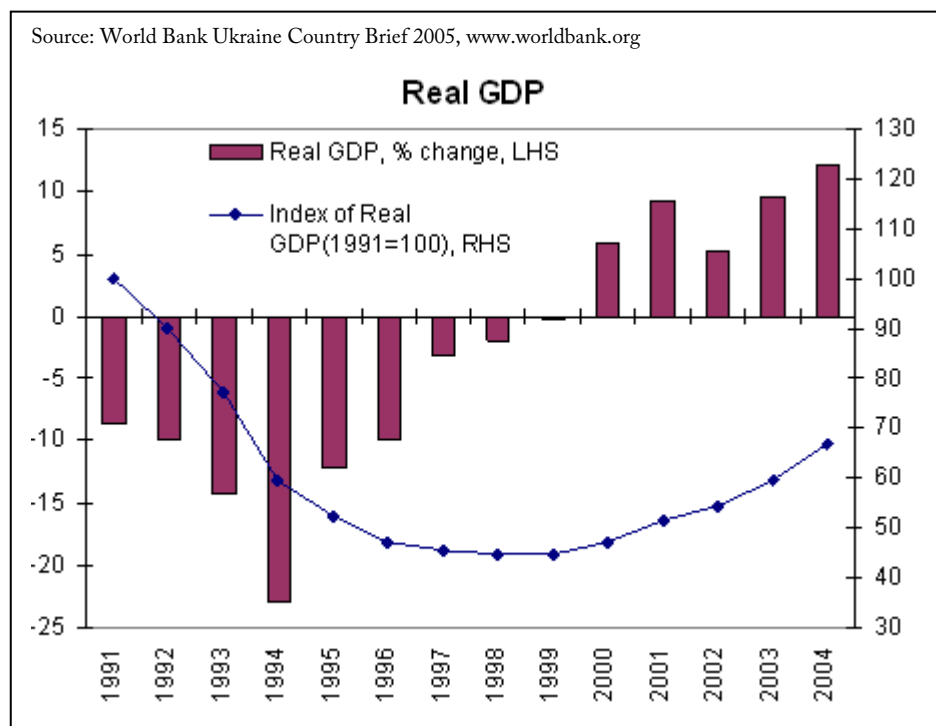
There are also many other institutions which have some input on the issue of European integration. There are EU departments in other ministries apart from that of foreign affairs, e.g. in the economy and justice ministries, and these are all working out EU policies in their particular areas. But these seem to be being worked out largely independently of each other. One of the biggest obstacles is therefore a poor

coordination within the government. This government is understandably often characterised as having good intentions, but no strategy as to how to achieve its goals.

With regard to the Ukrainian economy, even though it is still booming, economic growth in Ukraine continued to lose momentum in the first quarter of 2005. According to news reports citing preliminary calculations from the Ukrainian State Statistics Committee, GDP increased by 5.4% (year-on-year) in the first quarter and this follows 8.8% (year on year) in the final quarter of 2004. This is not to mention two-digit growth rates in the previous few years, as indicated on the graph below.²⁰

In addition, Ukraine suffers from problems of internal division, which contribute to weakening its political, social, and economic potential. It also lacks any developed structures of civil society. The economic and political turbulence, the fragmentation of the political scene, and the poor organisation and coordination within the government

branches have adversely affected the internal security of the state. Ukraine is still threatened with social, political, and economic destabilisation and an escalation of ethnic conflicts, all of which would create conditions conducive to the



assumption of control over Ukraine by an imperial Russia.

6. The Russian game

An alternative to the clearly pro-Western course is a desire to reconcile the two extremely different elements, i.e. to establish closer cooperation with Russia as part of the Commonwealth of Independent States while at the same time maintaining good

relations and dialogue within the European structures. The supporters of this bipolar concept of cooperation, even though not currently present in the Ukrainian government, do however still enjoy strong support in eastern and southern Ukraine. The advocates of this approach point to the economic, cultural, and social links between Russia and Ukraine, visible particularly in eastern Ukraine. Although these arguments are not unfounded, the fact is that if Ukraine seriously considers membership in the European Union, pursuing a bipolar policy any further will become impossible²¹. The supporters of the bipolar concept sometimes emphasise the need for a joint march of Ukraine and Russia towards the European structures, but this raises the question of how far Russia is interested in such a variant of European integration. In fact, there is no shortage of incentives in Russia for regarding Ukraine as a partner in building common relations with the EU, but a realistic analysis of the situation indicates that the EU would sooner agree to admit Russia than Russia itself would decide to become an EU member. The policy of President Putin aims, rather, at a gradual involvement of Ukraine in a network of economic ties with Moscow. This was seen in Putin's declarations on establishing a free trade zone between Russia and Ukraine, which is particularly in the economic interest of Ukraine. It appears that Russia's consent to such a project is of a political nature and is aimed at weakening the European aspirations of Ukraine. Thus it can be said that Putin's policy is very well-thought out and aimed at strengthening the Russian sphere of influence. Russia's offer is all the more tempting in light of the economic development in Russia, driven primarily by the high prices of primary fuels on world markets.

Unfortunately, at this stage of events the European Union--which is preoccupied with the discussion on the reform of its structures, the accession of new members (the question of Turkey in particular), and the failure of the Constitutional Treaty--is not able to present any concrete membership proposals to Ukraine, which does not aid Ukraine in trying to steer a pro-European course. In fact, the European neighbourhood policy was aimed at postponing the discussion on the prospects of membership rather than accelerating this process.

Nor is the idea of neutrality, put forward particularly in the early 1990s, an alternative for Ukraine. The historical experiences of this part of Europe demonstrate that it is impossible to maintain neutrality over the long term. The Orange Revolution brought certain challenges and opened new possibilities. Putin's political defeat during the Or-

ange Revolution forced him to reconsider his previous political strategy. However, it would be naive to assume that Russia has given up on its efforts to influence Ukraine: the goal has remained the same, with strategy and short term tactics changed.

In an attempt to characterise the new strategy, we may observe three main approaches in Russian foreign policy. First, Russia is deliberately making the post-Soviet states dependent on Russia's primary fuels.

The leadership understands that real political influence can be achieved by strengthening economic power, by taking state control over the primary fuels, and utilizing them as a foreign policy tool. Germany and Russia have reached an agreement to build a gas pipeline across the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, bypassing Poland and Ukraine. It is Chancellor Schroeder who is primarily advocating connecting Russia to European energy markets and thereby 'nudging' Russia into the EU. This policy of Schroeder is also supported by French President Chirac.²² President Putin, on the other hand, with a peculiar sense of humour once declared 'We are ready to cooperate with Ukraine if it does not steal gas from us'.²³

This strategy of Putin has meant that he has had to strengthen his grip on the Russian oligarchs. By penalizing Khodorkovski and destroying the Yukos empire, Putin has sent a clear message to this group: either you remain absolutely loyal or you will be severely punished. His control of the domestic market of primary fuels, in order to use it as a lever in an international game, has meant the introduction of a powerful new factor in Russian foreign policy.

Second, Putin is using diplomacy to achieve his goals by making a distinction between important and unimportant partners within the EU. Putin puts more emphasis on establishing closer ties with the major EU players with whom Russia has special relations, namely Germany, Italy and France, rather than the EU itself. It should be emphasised that these countries are less critical towards the Kremlin than Brussels and the new EU countries, Poland in particular. This 'special relationship' has been demonstrated in Russia's close ties with Schroeder and Chirac, not to mention the words of Silvio Berlusconi, who has praised Mr Putin's Chechen policy and his attitude towards the oil giant Yukos, in direct contradiction of Brussels' views²⁴.

What is more, Putin is using political provocation against his neighbours: Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania, and trying to cast them in a bad light. The most obvious

provocation was Putin's behaviour during the Orange Revolution, when he accused the neighbouring countries and the West of fomenting 'permanent revolution' in Moscow's backyard. He was especially critical of Western election observers, mainly Polish, whom he accused of being prejudiced and irrelevant while at the same time he praised observers from Russia and other former Soviet states, who had declared that the voting in Ukraine was free and fair. As he emphasised, 'It's extremely dangerous trying to resolve political problems outside the framework of the law.'²⁵

It does not come as a surprise that in such circumstances the Kremlin was accused by the Yushchenko fold of acting in a highly provocative manner. However, some of these accusations were indeed difficult to prove. A leading member of Mr Yushchenko's coalition, MP Yuriy Pavlenko, voiced the suspicion, held by many of his colleagues, that Russian intelligence was involved in the poisoning of Yushchenko.²⁶ What is more, many Ukrainian commentators claimed Russian involvement in spreading rumours about the presence of Russian special forces (Specnaz) in Kiev during the Orange Revolution, who supposedly were moving about armed and ready to shoot. The claim was impossible to verify and was dismissed out of hand by the Russian government. Simultaneously, some Russian analysts claimed that these same rumours were stirred up by the Yushchenko camp.²⁷

Furthermore, political provocations were used by the Kremlin against Poland and other CEE countries. A good opportunity occurred during the sixtieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazism in Moscow, which was regarded by most commentators outside Russia as an attempt to justify in some measure the Soviet dominance of Central Europe. What is more, the Polish and Lithuanian presidents were not invited to the 750th anniversary of Konigsberg, whilst most other EU leaders were invited. Most commentators have interpreted this as being a way to punish the neighbouring countries for their support of the Orange Revolution²⁸. The last example of Putin's political tactics is his calculated overreaction in demanding that Poland apologize for an attack on the teenage children of Russian diplomats by muggers in Warsaw on 31 July 2005. Moscow declared that this incident was an example of strong anti-Russian sentiments in the country and the Russian press also helped to foment this interpretation. This incident was also followed by a series of attacks on Polish diplomats and a journalist from the *Rzeczpospolita* daily in Moscow in September 2005. The Polish Embassy in Russia sent a note to the Russian Foreign Ministry, expressing 'grave concern'

over the continuing threat to the security of Polish nationals in Moscow and urging Russia to take appropriate steps to guarantee their security.

It would seem that the goal of Putin's policy is to provoke a more emotional response from Poland. Putin has tried once again to show the European Union that Poland cannot be treated seriously, since the country is obsessed with an anti-Russian phobia. The Union, in this calculation, would be more inclined to come to the conclusion that Poland ought not to participate in shaping the Eastern Dimension of EU foreign policy and that it would be much better for the EU to relate to Russia without the involvement of Warsaw. This incident came just a few days after the brutal Lukashenka repressions against the Polish minority in Byelorussia. Even the Russian media observed that Lukashenka's repressions against the Polish minority and his diplomatic war with Poland could not be conducted without the consent of president Putin.²⁹ Not surprisingly, just a day before the drastic action against the Polish minority, Lukashenka was hosted by president Putin. Byelorussian dependence on Russian oil and energy can justify the hypothesis that Lukashenka may be being used by Putin to prevent 'the Orange disease' spreading and to test the Polish position within the EU. Obviously such a 'disease' is not only hazardous for Lukashenka, but potential changes in Byelorussia could cause a chain reaction that could end Putin's era in the Kremlin.

Ukraine must be *consistent in its pro-Western orientation so that Poland can play the role of Ukraine's advocate*

Finally, there appears to be an increase in Russian intelligence activity in the neighbouring countries. Russia is likely to continue to use underhand provocations against the neighbouring countries, including Ukraine and Poland. Its policy will be directed towards discrediting Poland as a reliable EU member and towards interfering with the possible candidacy of Ukraine. Russian policy tends to employ both official and unofficial means to achieve its goals. This process is helped by the fact that the Russian energy sector is penetrated by the Russian intelligence services.

To summarize: Putin understands that the only way to achieve his goals is through taking control of the energy sector and using it as a political tool. These considerations should make the EU re-consider its previous strategy towards Russia before it is too late to intervene.

7. The dilemmas faced by the EU

Cooperation within the EU does not have to mean that Ukraine will turn its back on Russia. In fact, the West expects Ukraine to maintain friendly relations with Russia.³⁰ In this context, the role of Ukraine as a bridge between the West and Russia is interesting. Poland can play the role of a bridge between the West and Ukraine in the European Union, but it will never be the link between the West and Russia. This is where the geopolitical potential of Ukraine lies.

Therefore, the arguments frequently raised by Russia that the potential membership of Ukraine in the European Union will be directed against the Russian state are not convincing. At best, its membership might check the expansionist tendencies of some politicians, and this subtle difference should be noted.

The West, understood as European and Euro-Atlantic structures, is faced with a very serious dilemma. It is trying to decide whether to extend its geopolitical influence to the East while attempting to maintain good relations with Russia, or whether to draw back and let Russia gradually resume the status and domination it has lost in the region.³¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski put it openly: 'without independent Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire'³². But maintaining geopolitical influence is costly, and the West must be prepared to provide Ukraine with significant assistance in its adaptation to membership in the European Union. On the other hand, 'giving in' may entail much higher costs, involving an unpredictable situation as well as political and economic instability.

As for the attitude of the European Union, since the signature of the EU-Ukraine Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1994 a number of documents have been issued and for several years top-level meetings have been held at which 'the strategic and unique partnership between Europe and Ukraine' has been emphasised. But one can hardly talk about any major breakthrough.

Even the 'Neighbourhood Policy' published last year by the European Union does not mark any significant breakthrough. This document declares that the policy objective is to avoid new divisions in Europe and to give states an opportunity to participate in EU initiatives through deepening political cooperation in security, economic, and cultural policies³³. At the same time, the neighbourhood strategy clearly emphasises that

such cooperation is not designed to lead to the membership of these states (including Ukraine) in the EU, which they could apply for under Article 49 of the European Treaty.³⁴ Nevertheless, it is worth emphasising that an earlier EU document entitled 'Wider Europe – Neighbourhood' clearly indicates that the European Union does not rule out the membership of countries such as Ukraine and Moldova. The European Union also proposed, among other things, easier access to European markets and a preferential trade policy. It also announced the implementation of the so-called Action Plans drawn up on an individual basis for each neighbouring country.³⁵ They usually contain a long list of 'priorities for action'. The action plan for Ukraine was finally approved on 21 February 2005. As the EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, rather vaguely declared: 'The Action Plan, together with ten extra proposals we have made to maximise the benefits of the plan for Ukraine, set out a wide-ranging agenda rich in possibilities'³⁶. These would include an agenda in individual areas of cooperation for the next three to five years, and this, as vaguely described 'would be monitored on the basis of existing procedures'. In the action plans the EU will set out the values and standards that the neighbours should adopt, with detailed objectives and 'precise' priorities for action.

Nevertheless, Karen E. Smith has argued that assessing each neighbour's progress in following these priorities is less than straightforward, for three reasons.

First, sometimes it is not clear who (the EU or the neighbour) is supposed to be carrying out the action. For example, in the action plan for Ukraine, the exhortation to 'develop possibilities for enhanced EU-Ukraine consultations on crisis management' presumably applies to both sides. But who is to 'undertake first assessment of the impact of EU enlargement on trade between the EU and Ukraine during 2005 and regularly thereafter as appropriate'? Second, even when it is clear that the neighbour should be taking the action, it is not always equally clear how progress will be judged. (...) Third, no time span for meeting particular objectives is given³⁷.

This vagueness of the action plans seems to be in the interest of the EU, since it opens possibilities for varying interpretations, which is usually an advantage for the stronger party. If the EU wants to give clear incentives for Ukraine to reform and introduce

some economic, political and legal changes as drafted in the action plan, it should obviously be clear in setting the objectives and the way of accessing them.

The draft declaration of the Ukraine-EU Summit in December 2004 stressed the strategic importance of Ukraine as 'a key neighbour and partner of the EU'. The EU leaders therefore underlined that 'the EU aims at an enhanced and distinctive relationship by making full use of the new opportunities offered by the European Neighbourhood Policy'. However, this was rather disappointing for the Ukrainian side, which expected the EU to go much further. In a statement issued by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry on December 14, Kiev declared the envisaged Action Plan 'does not comply with Ukraine's vision of the future of relations between our state and the European Communities'. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry said: 'We believe the next logical step in this direction has to be the elaboration of a new long-term EU strategy of relations with Ukraine, which will give our country a clear European integration perspective'.³⁸

Nevertheless, as EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner emphasised just before her February 2005 visit to Kiev, 'the European Neighbourhood Policy is not about membership'. She also added that the three-year action plan had no bearing, either positive or negative, on Ukraine's future EU aspirations and that, realistically speaking, there were two main obstacles blocking Ukraine's path to membership. The first reason was a deficiency in the capacity of the EU to absorb new members and the second one Ukraine's failure to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria. At the same time, Ferrero-Waldner rejected suggestions that the EU's cautious approach on Ukraine could encourage Russia to reassert its influence there or that Kiev would threaten closer ties with Moscow if Brussels failed to speed up its path to accession.³⁹

Even though a certain progress in mutual relations between Ukraine and the EU can be seen, it is too slow and there seems to be a lack of will on the part of the EU to accelerate matters. An invitation issued to Ukraine for EU membership could constitute such a breakthrough. Unfortunately, in the document 'European Neighbourhood Policy' the opportunities for Ukraine's quick integration into the EU were wasted.

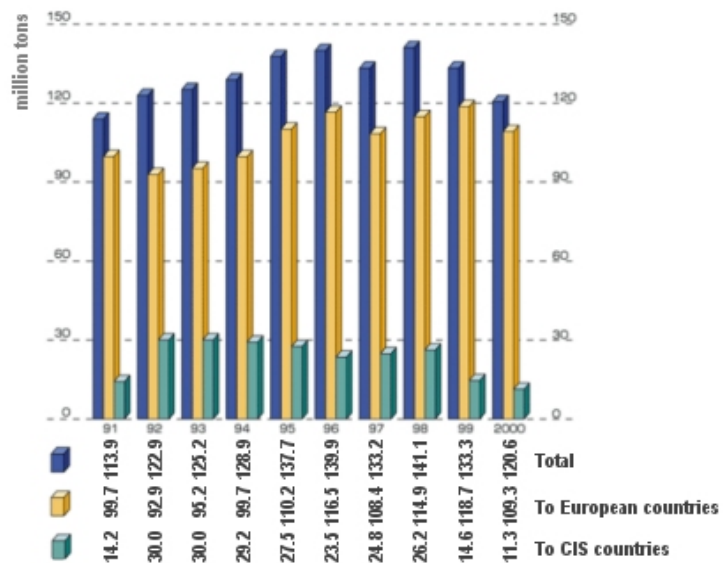
As a result, Ukraine's accession has not been ruled out, but it has been postponed for at least a dozen or so years. Of course no one claims that Ukraine is already prepared for EU membership, but an invitation to negotiations would be a clear political ges-

ture and such a decision would most probably accelerate the pace of necessary changes and give an impetus to economic and political reforms. Instead, the EU's temporary giving-up on Ukraine may result in much higher costs, an unpredictable situation, and political and economic destabilisation. It may also lead to disappointment among Ukrainian elites and society, and, consequently, to Ukraine's turning away from the West or, in the worst scenario, even to its isolation.

8. Why is Ukraine important for the EU?

One may ask, however, why an independent and strong Ukraine is important not only for Poland, but for the EU as a whole. There are basically three main reasons. First and foremost, because it is the key energy supply corridor to Europe. It is worth noting that over 90% of Russian gas exports to Europe transits via Ukraine (with the exception of Finland and Poland, importing the gas delivered through the Yamal system). This means that Ukraine is the gateway for

Natural Gas Transit via Ukraine

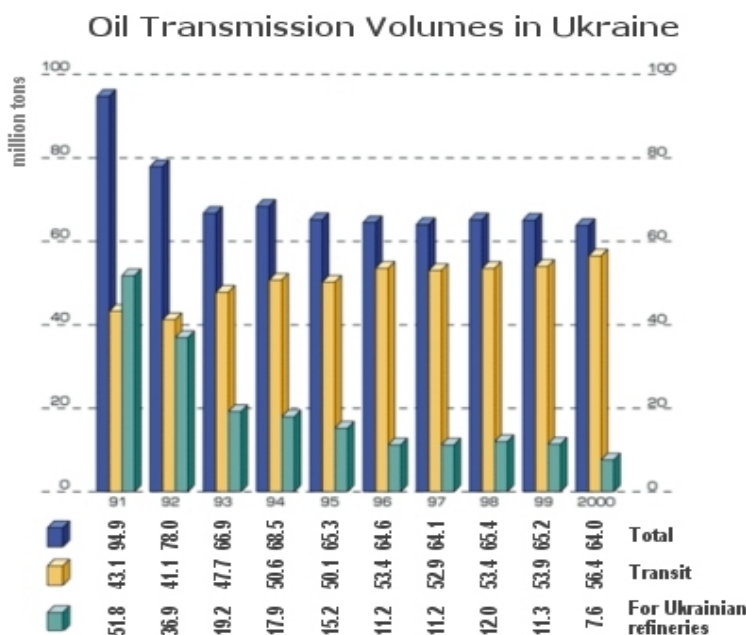


Source: Interstate Oils and Gas Transport to Europe, www.inogate.org

some 25% of total European gas supplies.⁴⁰

What is more, as indicated in the graph, Ukraine is also an important corridor for oil supply.

Ukraine is important to world energy markets because it is a critical transit centre for Russian oil and natural gas exports to Europe, as well as a



Source: Interstate Oils and Gas Transport to Europe, www.inogate.org

significant energy consumer in its own right. In seeking to diversify crude supply, Brussels should actively support Ukraine and Poland as well as other transit countries in their use of the Odessa-Brody pipeline so as to establish a route out of the Black Sea to the heart of Europe.

Second, independent Ukraine is a great market for goods from the EU. The EU became Ukraine's largest trading partner when it enlarged to 25 countries, representing more than one third of the country's trade. In 2003, Ukraine's exports to the 25 countries that are now members of the EU were worth 5.7 billion Euros, and the country's imports 8.8 billion Euros. EU-Ukraine trade accounted for 35% of Ukraine's total trade with the world. EU-Ukraine trade has grown on average by 12% annually since 1995⁴¹. Therefore, trading with Ukraine has a great potential for the foreseeable future.

Third, political and economic stabilization in Ukraine is vital for regional security. In terms of 'hard security', political stabilization in Ukraine is particularly vital to stop the spreading of conflict in Transnistria⁴². In April 2005, Yushchenko offered a proposal for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria. Surprisingly enough, his proposal was more appreciated by the US than by the EU⁴³.



Source: US Energy Information Administration, www.eia.doe.gov

Stabilization in Ukraine is important for the 'soft' security of citizens threatened by cross-border crime and terrorism. The EU cannot ensure the security of its people without the co-operation of the neighbouring countries in combating these non-military threats. Nevertheless, it also has to allow legitimate travellers to move freely between the enlarged EU and the wider Europe if it is to achieve deeper economic

integration with the neighbouring countries. To accomplish these goals, there is no alternative but to work closely with the neighbouring countries.⁴⁴

8. The Franco-German *Ostpolitik*

Even though some EU countries, mainly the new members, understand the strategic importance of Ukraine, there is still a major split on this matter within the EU. Most EU countries are ambivalent about Ukrainian membership in the EU. This means, in practice, that having other, often internal problems on the agenda, the EU countries are not in favour of giving the idea immediate consideration, and try to postpone the possible accession of Ukraine. However, there are a few key players who want to influence the European *Ostpolitik*. For France, good relations with Russia are one of the top foreign policy priorities. The role of France in the European *Ostpolitik* was indeed understood by the Ukrainian authorities and therefore, especially after the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in May 2005, a Ukrainian diplomatic offensive was made.

As Alexander Zinchenko, the state secretary, insisted, Kiev would not change its policies in response to the 'no' votes in the French and Dutch constitutional treaty referendums. As he declared 'We have decided it is better to remain consistent and we have not changed our working plan. We will not be beggars at the European door . . . we will develop our road map so Europe will see a decent country and will welcome us in.' He concluded that 'even if the EU turned its back on Ukraine, the political change involved in the Orange Revolution and its aftermath was irreversible. Kiev would never look to Moscow for direction.'⁴⁵ This is, however, a good example of romanticism and wishful thinking in politics. A similar political declaration was made, however, by the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Tymoshenko, while on her official visit to France in June 2005, when she declared that Ukraine would ultimately join the EU⁴⁶.

Tymoshenko's visit was followed a week later by a visit by Victor Yushchenko, who declared after meeting his French counterpart Chirac that Paris backed his country's international ambitions. France 'supports Ukraine's European aspirations and its wish to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO),' he said. Chirac was however less forthright, saying only that 'he understood the aspiration of Ukraine to move towards Europe'⁴⁷. In fact, the French declarations did not go beyond diplomatic rhetoric and,

contrary to what was suggested by the Ukrainians, Chirac distanced himself from giving firm support to Ukrainian membership in the EU. Obviously, the traditional French policy of building good relations with Russia prevailed.

As regards German relations with Ukraine, Chancellor Schroeder invited Yushchenko to Germany immediately after the latter's victory in the re-run presidential election in late December 2004 and urged the new leader to steer the country on a 'course towards democracy and a market economy under the rule of law'. In fact, this invitation was a severe test for Schroeder's close relationship with Putin. Yushchenko visited Germany in March 2005 and the discussion between the two leaders focused on German-Ukrainian relations and Ukraine's ties with Russia, the European Union and NATO. However positive these signs might seem, the truth is that they really only amount to diplomatic gestures.⁴⁸ The EU countries are very cautious in making far-reaching political declarations. In fact, Poland remains the only large country in the EU to strongly and openly advocate Ukraine's European aspirations and this is indeed understood in Kiev.

9. The three levels of cooperation

Poland has made the strategic choice to support Ukrainian membership in the EU. The obvious question is, therefore, how Poland is going to set about achieving this goal. Obviously, the EU, Poland and Ukraine need a detailed strategy of achieving membership that goes beyond the action plans drafted thus far.

There are three different levels of cooperation. Firstly, there is the diplomatic level. Polish diplomats and politicians, as has already been shown, have been very active in advocating Ukrainian membership in the EU. Such pro-Ukrainian lobbying should be directed at the European level, that is to say within the European Parliament and at the EU Commission. Polish MEPs are among those most actively involved in the pro-Ukrainian lobbying in the Parliament, but at the EU Commission Polish diplomacy is less active. Finally, such advocacy is also vital on the bilateral level with the most powerful EU countries, such as Germany, the UK and France.

The second level of support is in expertise and technical assistance. Poland should be more actively involved in helping Ukraine to achieve its goals set out in the action plans. In fact, Poland should share her experience gained during the accession negotiations, and its know-how of systemic and economic transformation, by sending ex-

perts and advisers that will help the Ukrainian government and public administration. Ukraine is indeed expecting such assistance. Within the Ukrainian government there are many proponents of the Polish model of accession, such as the deputy Prime Minister Oleh Rybarchuk. However, this does not mean that Ukraine should uncritically follow the Polish pattern, but rather that it should follow the achievements and try to avoid the mistakes. What is more, Poland should encourage such technical and expertise assistance from other EU member states.

The third level is the grass-roots level, which touches on the problem of the 'human dimension' of international relations. The policies formulated at the state level should be reflected in concrete activities at the local level. It is therefore necessary to involve non-governmental organisations, local governments, and the mass media in this process. The role of the governments on both sides of the border should be to create favourable conditions for the development of such initiatives and, if possible, to lend them political and financial support.

Cooperation among non-governmental organisations and exchanges of experience can also affect the development of such institutions. Positive examples of activities at the local level include, for instance, the involvement of the Warsaw School of Social and Political Leaders in building civic society. They have organised training sessions for activists of non-governmental organisations in Ukraine and also training in Poland for the Ukrainian staff of non-governmental organisations. They have also promoted programmes popularising Ukrainian culture in Poland. A large contribution to building up community and understanding between the nations was made by the Foundation College of Eastern Europe, established on the initiative of Jan Nowak Jeziorański. The establishment of a Polish-Ukrainian University on the initiative of Bohdan Osadchuk, an ardent advocate of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, can also be deemed to be a positive sign of cooperation between the two countries. While such initiatives have only limited influence, they are small bricks in the process of building a structure for a real strategic partnership. It is best to build this strategic partnership through educational and scientific exchanges and through scholarships and student programmes. These 'grass-roots' contacts may be said to be of a much more lasting nature than the diplomatic declarations of political leaders. These and many other initiatives could give real meaning to the words 'strategic partnership'.

10. Beyond the political rhetoric

The partnership between Poland and Ukraine is of key importance not only for the security and economic development of both countries, but also for the stability of the entire region. It should be a priority objective to include Ukraine in an Eastern and Central Europe designed to be a zone of security and prosperity. Therefore, Ukraine's membership in the EU is becoming increasingly important. On account of their territory, demographic potential, and geopolitical conditions, Poland and Ukraine should constitute the key pillars of this zone. The worst-case scenario would be another iron curtain separating the European Union from its eastern neighbours, and the eventual sealing of the border for fear of an influx of illegal immigrants. Poland, acting jointly with Ukraine, should convince the EU that without a strong and integrated Ukraine it is impossible to build a lasting zone of security and prosperity. We can only hope that Ukraine will remain consistent in its pro-European aspirations and that Poland will ever more strongly emphasize the need for Ukraine's integration, and will prove successful in its role as Ukraine's advocate while simultaneously contributing to its influence in building the 'Eastern Dimension' of EU policy. The European Union, on the other hand, must understand that a strategy of cooperation and integration with Ukraine is the best solution for Central and Eastern Europe and, consequently, for the entire EU.

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² The author is grateful to Professor Alan Mayhew, advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, for his helpful contributions at the research stage of this report. He kindly consented to give me an interview, which was conducted on 29 June 2005.

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⁷ The 1947 massive resettlement of the Ukrainian population within the borders of Poland is generally known as 'Operacja Wisła'. The operation intended mainly to terminate the military activities of the Ukrainian partisans from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (the UPA), but its practical outcome meant the oppression of the Ukrainian minority.

⁸ The Young Eagles' Cemetery in Lvov contains the graves of Poles killed during the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-1919. Local youths were heavily involved in the fighting, and sometimes even children fought for the city with great courage and patriotism. Lvov, Western Ukraine's biggest city, was historically part of Poland.

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