
The Fifth Enlargement of the EU, Five Years On: The Case of Poland and the Czech Republic

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Introduction

In 2009, Europe will celebrate many anniversaries, all of which are of special importance for the new member states. It will be five years since the European Union's (EU) big bang enlargement of 2004; ten years since the first enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to post-communist states; twenty years after the round-table negotiations in Poland and the fall of the Berlin Wall; seventy years since the beginning of World War II. With the exception of the Berlin Wall and the start of World War II, all other anniversaries will be celebrated during a new member state's (the Czech Republic's) EU Presidency: NATO enlarged in March, the EU in May, and the first partially-free elections were held in Poland in June.

After the Slovenian EU Presidency of 2008, the Czech Presidency will hold the second new member state presidency of the 490-million strong bloc. Since the 2004 big bang enlargement, the Union has already experienced the enlargement's short-term impact it is currently undergoing its mid-term impact; and it is still too early to clearly assess the long-term impact.

The widening of the EU coincided with other processes, namely attempts to deepen the Union. First, the Constitutional Treaty was rejected in 2005. Now the new Lisbon Treaty is seriously challenged after a "no" vote in Ireland. The new member states did not have any direct negative impact on the deepening process as none of the treaty rejections happened in any of the new members.¹ However, the indirect negative impact of enlargement existed. Some "no" votes in France, the Netherlands and Ireland have been – to some extent – a result of the EU border extension, either through fears of the previous one (the "Polish plumber"), or of future

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¹ In fact, by the time the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty was suspended, 8 out of 10 new member states have ratified the document (The Czech Republic and Poland have suspended the ratification process). Eight out of 15 old member states did the same, 2 have rejected the treaty, and 5 have suspended the ratification process. Lithuania, Hungary and Slovenia were the first three states to ratify the Constitutional Treaty. The first three states that have ratified the Lisbon Treaty are: Hungary, Slovenia and Malta.

enlargements (Turkey). On the other hand, migration from Central Europe was a non-issue in the Irish referendum.²

The Lisbon Treaty ratification process so far seems to be more streamlined than that of the Constitutional Treaty. To date, 24 out of 27 member countries have adopted the treaty. Apart from the referendum rejection in Ireland, the Treaty still needs to be adopted by the parliaments in Sweden and in the Czech Republic. Yet, underneath this unified position, there are a number of political and legal challenges to a smooth Treaty ratification. The Lisbon Treaty has been legally challenged in Germany and the Czech Republic; those cases are still pending. The political difficulties are most visible in the Czech Republic and Poland. Due to technical arrangements, the ratification in Sweden should be finalized only in November; so far no political problems have been reported. However, none of the challenges is as problematic for the treaty to enter into force as the Irish case.

Still, a few years on, the differences between the new and the old members are becoming more and more blurred. Therefore, the very concept of “new member states” needs to be revisited. Economically, these countries are developing rapidly. The catching-up process of the poorer Eastern countries is progressing much faster than ever anticipated. In 2008 and 2009, new members will reach higher gross domestic product (GDP) per capita levels than some of their older fellow countries.³ Also, other economic indicators are favorable for new members.⁴ Four new members adopted the euro as their currency,⁵ and nine joined the Schengen zone.⁶ As the integration process takes place at a different pace in different countries, in an economic and formal sense some of the new members are already like the older ones.

The political dimension is more difficult to assess. It seems that the new member states, after an initial passiveness, are becoming more assertive in EU politics. As all but one new member are small states, and all of them were economically disadvantaged, at first there was a tendency to react to the European Commission proposals with a positive approach rather than suspicion. The

² See “Post referendum survey in Ireland,” Eurostat, June 18, 2008, where only 1% of respondents claimed that they voted against the treaty in order to “avoid the influx of immigration,” p.8.

³ The biggest progress was made in Estonia, where the country’s GDP in 2004 was 56.9% of the EU27 average; at the same time Portugal’s GDP was 74.7%. Eurostat estimates that in 2008 Estonia’s GDP will amount to 71.7% of the EU27 average, whereas Portugal will remain at 73.2%. See Eurostat for more figures at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

⁴ For example, unemployment in Poland in 2002 was 20.0%; in 2007 it was 9.6%. See Eurostat for more figures, *ibid*.

⁵ Slovenia in 2007; Malta and Cyprus in 2008; Slovakia is to follow in 2009.

⁶ In December 2007, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the zone.

societies of those countries are also quite supportive of European integration and tend to trust European institutions much more than their national governments.⁷

One of the most striking things about the new member states of the EU is that they hardly act as a group, one that would include all, or almost all of the members. The diversity of the EU-10 (2004 enlargement) has been so great, that today it seems that the only unifying factor of those states is that they joined together in 2004, followed by another enlargement in 2007. However, the term “EU-10” is more and more frequently used in a different context. It now means the 10 countries that joined in 2004 or 2007 and had a communist regime before 1989 (therefore excluding Malta and Cyprus from the group).

This paper is an attempt to present some aspects of these – in the general environment that was briefly described above – new member states’ foreign policies since they joined the EU. In doing so, we will (a) take a closer look at the political process of integration of the 10 post-communist states; (b) examine in greater detail the foreign policy of Poland and the Czech Republic since 2004; (c) overview the new member states’ coherence as a group; and (d) attempt to assess the significance of this process for the current and future EU presidencies.

The choice of the Czech Republic and Poland is not accidental, though they are not a group sample. The two countries have a proven track record of being “difficult” partners for their Western European counterparts. To name a few conflicts: the embargo on Polish meat by Russia and the reaction of vetoing the opening of negotiations with Russia; the Czech Republic’s Cuba policy; the leaders of both countries’ criticism of the Constitutional Treaty and some elements of the Lisbon Treaty; and both countries special relations with the United States of America (USA). The two countries also take leadership in promoting Eastern European issues (Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus) and further enlargement of the EU (Croatia, other Western Balkans countries, Ukraine).

⁷ See: European Standard Barometer No. 68, Autumn 2007, December 2007.

Enlargement as a process

Enlarging the European Union is a long process. Its climax is usually the moment of actual adhesion, like May 1, 2004 and January 1, 2007 were for the 10 post-communist states. Yet, the process did not begin or end on those days. It is probably fair to say that for the “10,” the enlargement process began at the moment when the communism regimes fell in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). With the establishment of PHARE,⁸ relations were first established between the European Communities (what would become the EU) and the countries of the region. That followed with the establishment of Association Agreements. Membership negotiations began in 1997 and 1999 and were finalized in 2002. During this time, a socialization process of the political elites of the future member states took place, which eased the negotiations. This process continues to exist, although since 2004 it is probably more even-sided than before.⁹ It is probably justified to hypothesize that for the past couple of years, Western European leaders had to socialize much more with the new members’ leaders than before 2004. Clearly the mutual socialization process is accompanied by the new member states’ elites learning process of the ongoing, multilateral European negotiations.

Westernization and Europeanization

The policy of forced and voluntary Westernization has a long history.¹⁰ In the modern context it means making countries more similar to the Western European cultural, societal and political models. As a political concept, this policy has been applied in a number of countries since 1945. As a societal paradigm, it organized political life in Western Germany after 1945 and the foreign policies of

⁸ EC Program established in 1989. Its initial name (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) contributed to the acronym; the application became much wider and covered the entire CEE.

⁹ Comp. T. Börzel and T. Risse, “When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change”, *European Integration online Papers* (EIoP), Vol. 4, No. 15, November 29, 2000.

¹⁰ For more on this issue in a historical example in Central Europe see J. Szűcs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, No. 29 (1983), p. 2-3.

Greece, Spain, and Portugal before they joined the European Economic Community in the 1980s.

The Central European Westernization process was voluntary as there was no pressure on those countries other than competition with other states in joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and other Western institutions. It was also important to adhere to international agreements such as the European Convention on Human Rights. Meeting these targets (membership in organizations) as well as meeting higher Western standards (such as the removal of capital punishment from the penal codes) was the primary goal of the foreign policies of CEE countries. From a geopolitical perspective, it meant moving away from the Soviet towards the Western bloc.¹¹

The most important element in the process of Westernization was the process of Europeanization, which in principle means making the applicant countries meet all the requirements (the formal Copenhagen criteria and the informal ones) necessary to be considered as “one of us.” However, as the Europeanization process is mainly limited to European integration; Westernization is a broader term. In the Central European context it also includes security questions, which were addressed primarily by the United States. As the CEE states widely considered the USA to be the only power able to guarantee their security, they all eventually became NATO members.

New reality – new challenges

The CEE countries’ transformation brought about a systematic change to European politics. Until 1989, political Europe ended where the Soviet empire begun. Since 1989, some of those fundamentally basic questions have had to be readdressed: If Europe does not end on Elbe, where is its Eastern border? Until 1989 it was clear who could join the EU: you had to be a Western, democratic, European country with a free market economy. But those rules were not explicit. With the Central Europeans’ desire to join the EU, some new definitions had to be formulated. The Copenhagen criteria of 1993 set out some of the requirements. Once we knew what kind of states could join the Western institutions, another dilemma arose. How to assist those nations in their transition so that they are successful? Hence some new institutions were created to standardize elements of

¹¹ For more on the debate on the foreign policy of those countries, see the example of Poland in: “Polska polityka zagraniczna: kontynuacja czy zerwanie,” Warsaw, Stefan Batory Foundation, 2004.

democratic systems, such as the Venice Commission. With the security void east of Berlin and south of Vienna, instability arose. Therefore more questions appeared on how to respond to military conflicts in the Balkans and how to address the “frozen” conflicts in the former Soviet Union.

The new challenges in the post-Soviet area were not only problems for Western European; the newly established European democracies also contributed to the debates.¹² One of the crucial questions for the CEE countries was to face the former colonial power, Russia. Relations with this nation have never been easy for any of the new EU states since 1989; quite to the contrary, they were full of tensions. However, the new members have a quite significant understanding of Russia. They are widely perceived as “Russophobic,” but those countries’ judgment of Eastern Europe has been rather more realistic than the so-called “pragmatic” approach of certain Western European states. In recent years, the Russian cyber-attacks on Estonia, energy conflicts with Ukraine and the most recent military conflict in Georgia only confirm the cautious and/or realistic approach of the CEE states.

The fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe also meant the end of a number of state structures. East Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia ceased to exist. 24 new state structures were established.¹³ This process in the East contributed to the already in place deliberations in Western Europe on the definition of a nation and a state, the autonomy of regions such as Catalonia, Scotland, the Basque Country, Corsica, Flanders, etc. With 24 new structures, other questions arose of how to support nation building in newly emerging states. Answers to most of those questions were aimed at avoiding instability; yet also the issue of what lasting security system could be proposed to guarantee peace on the continent was addressed. EU and NATO membership for post-communist states was not the first idea Western leaders had on their minds in 1989.

The new reality of those and other questions made Western Europe look for new formulas: hence the Copenhagen criteria. The Balkan wars clearly contributed to the Europeans thinking about security and European defence capacities; therefore it had an impact on the way the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was first formulated in the Maastricht Treaty and developed together with the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in the 1990s. Official

¹² See i.e. L. Wałęsa’s idea of “NATO-bis” of 1992.

¹³ Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Yugoslavia split into seven new states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Czechoslovakia’s end brought the creation of the Czech and Slovak Republics.

publications of the EU highlight the role that the “lessons from the Balkan wars” had in shaping the ESDP and establishing the Petersberg tasks.¹⁴

Of special importance was the launch of a discussion on the Eastern border of Europe, which started in the 1990s and continues to this day.

¹⁴ See website of the European Commission's delegation to Korea:
<http://www.delkor.ec.europa.eu/home/worldplayer/commonforeign.html>.

In the new Europe

The CEE states and societies prepared themselves for accession to the EU-15. They hardly anticipated that once in it would be a different kind of Union. By acceding they changed the very nature of the EU. A similar “surprise” was present in Western Europe. The EU-15 societies were so surprised by enlargement, that it manifested itself in fears like the “Polish plumber.” This materialized in the negative approach to further EU deepening in 2005. The surprise came as a result of not being prepared for enlargement. After all, why should they be, since it was the new members adhering to the EU, not the other way around?

It seems therefore, that the EU enlargement was a shock to the system, but the newcomers were better prepared to face it for two reasons. First, they expected something to change, while Western Europeans expected the EU to remain unchanged. Second, post factum, they did not experience much of the “enlargement fatigue,” brain drain or economic slowdown. Quite to the contrary, economic growth was substantial in most of the new member states. The older members were forced to adapt to the changed system on day one, May 1, 2004. That necessity was combined with some leaders’ feelings of frustration over the Eastern countries, such as Jacques Chirac words on a missed opportunity to remain silent.¹⁵

Obviously, the general readiness to face the profound socio-economic changes and the positive expectations for the upcoming systematic change does not imply that the CEE states are better prepared to function in the enlarged EU or to face all the challenges of globalization. The political classes remained largely alienated from the international community; their economies were substantially weaker (though catching-up) than those of Western Europe or Eastern Asia; some regions of Central and Eastern Europe are depopulating; there are many long-term unemployed populations and societies are ageing. Public and private investments in educational, research or health systems were not satisfactory. A lot remains to be done for these states to become fully competitive on the economic and societal levels and fully integrated into the political system.

¹⁵ Jacques Chirac’s reaction to the information that many of new member states were supportive of the then-upcoming US led intervention in Iraq in 2003.

New member state foreign policy

The new EU member states' foreign policies for 15 years had been almost completely directed towards one objective: integration into Western and European institutional frameworks. For 15 years, these countries had to respect the rules of the club they wanted to join without having any say in shaping those rules. In fact, they were second-class aspirants. On May 1, 2004 a major shift in the status of those states took place. Its significance was comparable only to the liberalizing shift of 1989. Politically, May 1, 2004 begun on December 13, 2002, when the final negotiations on EU accession with eight CEE countries and two Mediterranean countries were finalized. From that moment on, membership became a technical, not a political issue. Since then, a certain assertiveness arose in the EU policy of some new members, especially that of Poland and of the Czech Republic.

Until 2004, the CEE countries' foreign policy meant relations with all the other countries in the world. The division between the "domestic" and the "foreign" was rather clearly defined. EU accession began to dismantle this differentiation, as EU affairs are neither exclusively domestic nor foreign. However so far, the political classes of the CEE states have hardly realized this new reality; for many politicians, reforms to trade policy, the future of the common agriculture policy and the industry policy – as long as decided on the EU level – are foreign affairs.

The Czech Republic

Czech foreign policy is a combination of pragmatism and ideology.¹⁶ Both of these attitudes are rooted in Czech history. The pragmatic approach can be observed in Czech-German relations. The WWII memory does not result in anti-German sentiments, even though there are some bilateral issues still to be addressed (such as the expulsions from Sudetenland and the Beneš decrees). The Czech Republic did not challenge the texts of the Constitutional and the Lisbon Treaties during negotiations in the Convention or the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs); the problems started with the ratification procedure. Similarly, even if the Balkans is one of the most important areas of Czech foreign policy activity, politicians in Prague eventually decided to recognize Kosovo's independence. Finally, the Czech Republic is next to Slovenia, the only post-communist country – an EU member since 2004 – that does not have a common border with any of the post-Soviet Union states. Czechs like to point out that Prague is more Westward than Vienna, which has a geopolitical

¹⁶ See more on the issue in: D. Kral and L. Plachta, *Enlarged European Union and its Foreign Policy: Issues, Challenges, Perspectives*, Prague, Europeum Institute for European Policy, 2005.

implication: Czechs seem, more than other Central European countries, to undoubtedly recognize that they are a true European country; therefore there is no need for strong anti-Russian sentiments, nor is there is a need for a strong feeling of threat coming from Moscow.

At the same time, this pragmatic approach is coupled with a certain ideological approach of the current Czech leadership. Two Czech Presidents, Václav Havel¹⁷ (1993-2003) and Václav Klaus (since 2003) have at least one common feature, which has strongly contributed to the way that Czech foreign policy has been organized since 2004: anti-communist. Václav Havel was an anti-communist activist, a leader of the Czechoslovakian opposition. Throughout Central Europe, former dissidents tend to be pro-American on issues such as freedom, democracy and security; Václav Havel is no exception.

Anti-communism, which evolved into pro-Americanism (sometimes presented as pro-Atlanticism) has been complemented with a radical liberal approach in the economic affairs of President Václav Klaus. Václav Klaus' views are often compared to the economic ideology of Margaret Thatcher. The Czech President also shares the British views of the 1980s on European integration. Václav Klaus is one of the best-known public critics of the European Union and EU climate change policy. However, his views are not fully shared by the government or the population.

Table 1. Opinion of Czech population on (in %)

	Czech Republic			EU Average		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Image of the EU	43	16	40	48	15	35
EU Membership	48	11	38	52	14	29
Czech Rep. has benefited from EU membership ¹	64	25	11	54*	31*	15*
EU is going in the right direction	50	16	26	42	25	19

1. In the Eurobarometer the question was about "Your country," therefore EU Average does not refer to Czech Republic, but citizens' opinion about their member country.

Source: Eurobarometer 69, June 2008.

¹⁷ Before that V. Havel was President of Czechoslovakia 1989-1993, until the country disintegrated into two states.

Czechs' opinions on the European Union present the nation rather as Euro-realist than Euro-sceptic. The results of the Eurobarometer 69 show that Czechs are a bit more cautious about the general questions than the EU public average. On the other hand, they are much more positive when asked about the Czech Republic's benefits from membership and the direction of EU evolution. It seems that the government of Miroslav Topolánek has also applied the "Euro-realistic" approach. Miroslav Topolánek and President Klaus are both politically affiliated with the centre-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS). Yet in recent months, there have been a number of issues on which the politicians disagreed. First, the government supported Kosovo's independence, while the president criticized the government for it. Second, in the legal case on the constitutionality of the Lisbon Treaty, the government's opinion was that the treaty was in line with the Czech Constitution. President Klaus was of a completely opposite opinion. Thirdly, both politicians disagreed on the fate of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty after the Irish referendum in June 2008. Prime Minister Topolánek supported further ratification; President Klaus officially proclaimed the document "dead."

Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty was seriously challenged in the Czech Senate, dominated by the ODS party, which referred the document to the Supreme Court. Once the ruling is given, and as the president has many allies in the Senate, obtaining the three-fifth majority needed for it to pass might be difficult. That should not be as difficult in the lower chamber, where Prime Minister Topolánek keeps the ODS under control, and where the pro-treaty opposition is more present than in the Senate. However, the ultimate problem might be with President Klaus, whose signature is necessary for the treaty to enter into force.

The Czech Republic is a member of the European Union, and a country with about 10 million citizens. This fact has a limiting impact on the Czech foreign and European policy. Sometimes it is even perceived as a "small country." This reality is commonly accepted among the Czech political class. This unity helped in establishing priorities of the Czech foreign policy: (1) engagement in the Balkan region; (2) promotion of democracy; and (3) strong pro-Americanism. All these priorities have been recently manifested in European forums.

The Czech Republic's priority in the Western Balkans, especially Croatia, is the result of several factors. First, there is general support for further EU enlargement. Second, close societal ties have a long history, going back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and communist times. Third, there are well-established economic contacts; in 2007 about 1 million Czechs visited Croatia during the summer months. After the Irish referendum, the Czechs were hesitant on whether to continue the ratification process – until leaders of France and Germany openly stated that no future EU enlargement is possible without the Lisbon Treaty. That argument played a major role in convincing the Czech Republic to continue with ratification, as the country is a strong supporter of Croatian accession.

The democracy promotion goal is best visible through the Czech Republic's Cuba policy. The Czech Republic on the one hand and Spain on the other, have almost completely opposite perspectives on what the EU policy towards the Castro(s) regime should be. The Czechs support a strong anti-regime policy with sanctions and limited engagement, while Spain and most of the other EU states prefer a more engaged policy with sanctions used only in extreme situations.

Czech pro-Americanism is the result of a combination of several historical facts, such as the Western European decision to give Czechoslovakia away to Nazi Germany in Munich; or the ambivalence towards the Prague Spring in 1968, and Soviet military intervention. The United States therefore is the only credible and capable partner able to provide the Czech Republic's security. Hence the decisions such as to allow for the American radar as part of the US missile defence system; or the agreement to share data, which broke the EU-US negotiations; or support for the US intervention in Iraq.

Lastly, after Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in 1993, the Czech policy towards Slovakia was based on pure pragmatism. The decoupling of the state was called "the Velvet Divorce," because there was no blood or conflict between the two states. Both leaders of the Czech Republic (Václav Klaus as Prime Minister at the time) and of Slovakia (Vladimir Meciar as leader of the victorious Slovak party after elections at the time) were in favor of splitting the state for their own political objectives: it was easier to become a prime minister of an independent country than to agree who should be the prime minister of Czechoslovakia. Ever since the "Velvet Divorce" there was no close political relationship or rivalry between the two states, even though the societies remain in close interaction.

Poland

A few days after the conclusion of the accession negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2002, the Polish government made a decision to buy American F-16s over the European Mirage (French) or Grippen (British-Swedish). This was the first bold decision of many that created consternation among the Western European capitals. The following months also saw strong Polish support for the US-led "coalition of the willing" in the Iraq war and a tough stance during the negotiations on the Constitutional Treaty at the Intergovernmental Conference.

At first, many of those decisions came as a surprise; Poland's actions were not understood in Western capitals. Hence there were even accusations of being a "US Trojan horse" in the European

Union.¹⁸ Still, this in fact was only a prelude to what was to come during the autumn of 2005, when Lech Kaczyński won the presidency and the Jarosław Kaczyński-led conservative PiS (Law and Justice) party won the parliamentary elections. In late spring 2006, Jarosław Kaczyński formed a government that also included extreme-right-wing-nationalist and populist-radical parties. Ever since, new areas of conflicts between Warsaw and Western European countries have emerged. With Germany there were quite a few arguments over history (restitution of property on post-German territory and the creation of the Centre Against Expulsions), the treatment of Polish nationals in Germany, the debates over the Russian-German pipeline under the Baltic Sea, and on EU issues, where Poland and Germany usually found themselves on opposite sides. Relations with France were frozen for about a year, beginning with President Chirac's statement on the "missed opportunity to remain silent" back in 2003. After that, tensions eased. This situation improved significantly only with the election of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, when relations were fully normalized. The Warsaw-Madrid axis on the Constitutional Treaty evaporated with the new Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero. Relations with other new member states were conditional to the Polish-German relations. With lack of support in many of its battles, the Kaczyńskis' Poland started to invest more in closer relations with the Czech Republic and Lithuania (with mixed success).

With the EU, the relationship was never one-sided. On the one hand, the Polish President was one of the most vocal opponents of the Constitutional Treaty. Yet on the other hand, Poland played a quite constructive role in the negotiations over the EU budget 2007-2013. The Polish public have also been strongly pro-European.

¹⁸ See A. Chambris, "Czy Polska jest koniem trojańskim Ameryki w Europie? Uwagi o francuskich stereotypach na temat stosunków polsko-amerykańskich," *Zeszyt Polska w Europie*, No. 2 (46), 2004.

Table 2. Opinion of Polish population on (in %)

	Poland			EU Average		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Image of the EU	58	6	35	48	15	35
EU Membership	65	6	25	52	14	29
Poland has benefited from EU membership ¹	77	11	12	54*	31*	15*
EU is going in the right direction	63	9	14	42	25	19

1. In the Eurobarometer the question was about "Your country," therefore EU Average does not refer to Poland, but citizens' opinion about their member country.
Source: Eurobarometer 69, June 2008.

In all the questions presented above, Polish answers are more positive than the European average or the Czech respondents'. The general public's pro-Europeaness was usually the factor that (1) has limited the anti-European behavior and rhetoric of the president or government officials; and (2) created a puzzle: "how could pro-European Poles elect anti-European leaders?" As for the latter, Polish internal political life and electoral decisions are rarely organized around the European agenda (which seems to be a pattern in most national elections in the EU); therefore, the reasons for electing those leaders in 2005 were not related to their European views.

Nevertheless, there were quite a few conflicts between Poland and the European Commission and other institutions during the rule of President Lech Kaczyński and Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński. To name a few: milk quotas (2005-06), the pan-European merger of banks (2006), "Nature 2000" programme application (2006-), public support to shipyards (2005-), the situation of sexual minorities in Poland (European Parliament resolution in 2007), the veto on the EC-Russia new agreement negotiations (2006-08), opposition to climate change policy (2007-), refusal to accept the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2007, hence the Polish opt-out from the document), the double majority voting system in the Council (2007), and the recent problems with ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in Poland (2008-).

In autumn 2007, early parliamentary elections were held. The liberal-conservative Civic Platform (PO) party won and formed a new government led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The new government's cohabitation with President Kaczyński, who's brother's party is the main opposition party, was never easy. The division of competences in EU affairs is also not clear-cut. On day-to-day issues in the Council the government is responsible for the actions taken (hence, the issues related to the shipyards state aid, or the "Nature 2000" programme application are the government's responsibility).

The cultural and societal criticism of Poland (on abortion, attitude on the death penalty, the situation of sexual minorities) has not stopped, but since 2007, it has significantly diminished.¹⁹ The strategic decisions and international treaties are a joint responsibility of the government and the President.

Poland is larger and more populous than all the other new member states of 2004 put together. Yet the Polish population is less than 50% of the size of the German population and the Polish economy is less than 25% of the size of the German or French economies. All those basic facts contribute to the ongoing Polish dilemma in European affairs: is Poland a big or a small state? If it is big, then it is the smallest and poorest of them. If it is small, then it is by far the largest of them.

This Polish geopolitical dilemma leads the country to test itself in international affairs; to somehow measure itself and see if something has changed since the previous test. There are three points of reference: Moscow, Washington and Berlin (Brussels). The rivalry with Russia has a long history; though it is not true that Poles are anti-Russian; they would like to see Russia become a Western-style liberal democratic state. As long as this is not possible, they are suspicious. So far, even if the rhetoric is sometimes too strong, they are often proved correct about Russian actions: in the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution," in the energy crises since 2005, during the Estonian crisis over monuments, and most recently in Georgia in 2008.

Self-identification with Berlin and Brussels is a part of the same – Western European – test. Some of the examples presented above are part of this process. Yet if in relations with Moscow a lot of tests are passed, a large part of the cases in relations with Western Europe did not succeed at all. The government of Donald Tusk has clearly changed the Polish EU and German policy: there are fewer conflicts, which are addressed not through confrontation, but through negotiations. The adoption by the EU of the "Eastern Partnership," a joint Polish-Swedish plan is probably the first offensive test passed. Not only was this proposal adopted in June 2008, but it was invoked by the EU Extraordinary Council on September 1, 2008.

Testing the United States did not take place before Spring 2008, and the negotiations over a US missile defence element to be installed on the Polish territory. Until that time, Polish US policy was oriented to improve (compensate?) its position in relations with other poles: Eastern and Western Europe. Hence the Polish involvement in Iraq was supposed to make Poland "a global player that other reckons with." The same could be said about the contribution to the

¹⁹ To illustrate the criticism, see i.e. *Poland targets 'gay' Teletubbies*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6698753.stm>.

NATO forces in Afghanistan. Participation in EU-led operations in Africa (Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo), in the former Yugoslavia and in Lebanon has a slightly different objective: to show other European nations that it is worthy investing in military strength and to perhaps convince them to spend more on their militaries, so they are better prepared to face 21st century challenges and better prepared to cooperate with the technically advanced US forces.

There are a few crosscutting issues in Polish foreign policy, such as security, history, promoting democracy or strengthening economic relations. It seems however, that the most important of them is energy security. This has been one of the driving motives for stronger involvement in the Caucasus since 2006: strong relations with Georgia followed and attempts to engage with Azerbaijan are more visible. There were energy security dimensions in relations with all Polish neighbors: (1) the energy bridge with Lithuania, Polish involvement in the Ignalina nuclear power plant and Polish investments in the Mažeikių refinery; (2) the Yamal pipeline going through Poland and Belarus; (3) the oil pipeline project from Ukraine to Poland, Odessa-Brody-Płock; (4) a Polish company's attempts to invest in the Slovak pipeline infrastructure; (5) Polish oil company investments in the biggest Czech oil company; (6) the criticism of the Nord Stream pipeline project, directly linking Russia and Germany under the Baltic Sea, the interconnectors between Poland and Germany and other pipelines between the two countries. The Nord Stream pipeline has a security (less so environmental) dimension: Polish energy security is based on the fact that Russia transfers its gas supplies to Western Europe through Poland; the Baltic pipeline would create alternative routes and Poland would become more vulnerable to Russian actions.

In pursuing this "dilemmatic" foreign policy, a lot of emotions have been employed, especially in 2006 and 2007. Many of them were historical references to World War II (such as during the June 2007 summit). Such attitude have had an opposite effect for Poland: it has lost a lot of allies and has started to be perceived as – in the best case – unpredictable, or – in the worst case – irritating and unreliable. This alienation eradicated the 1980s idea of "idealistic" Solidarity-Poland, with the idealistic foreign policy of the 1990s.

New Europe is not a coherent group

As observed above, new member states do not form one, coherent group within the European Union. In fact, what united this group was a joint wish to join the EU. Once the objective was reached, there was little reason to stay together. All new members wanted to join the Union without much reflection on the fact that by simply joining they would also change it because of the scale of the 2004 enlargement. With the 2004 and 2007 enlargements the number of member states grew by 80% and added 103 million new EU citizens. Once in, each new member's policy in the EU was a combination of a pre-accession attitude of a second-class member, a will to be like any other older member state, and a rare attempt to contribute positively to EU affairs. For different countries, different elements were more important or more visible. Clearly the assertiveness was more vocal in the Polish and Czech cases.

Also with this accession, a new "malaise" spread out in Central and Eastern Europe.²⁰ Many newly installed governments turned out to be populist, unpredictable, at times possible even endangering the democratic Copenhagen accession criteria. The governments of Jarosław Kaczyński in Poland, Ferenc Gyurcsány in Hungary, and Robert Fico in Slovakia were very controversial in those states and criticized in Western Europe. The 2003/2004 Rolandas Paksas impeachment case in Lithuania, and the Czech problems in electing a new government for several months in 2006 also contribute to this process. Some commentators take these arguments to prove that the EU enlargement was premature.²¹

This internal instability coalesces with the fact that six out of 12 new member states became independent nations only after 1989.

²⁰ See more on the issue: I. Krastev, "The new Europe: respectable populism, clockwork liberalism," OpenDemocracy, 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-europe_constitution/new_europe_3376.jsp.

²¹ The debate on the "prematureness" of the 2004 enlargement is organized, however, around the economic issues and the effectiveness of the EU institutions. See i.e. W. Kohler, "Eastern enlargement of the EU: a comprehensive welfare assessment," *Journal of Policy Modeling*, Vol. 26, No. 7, October 2004; and A. Verdun and O. Croci (eds.), *The European Union in the Wake of Eastern Enlargement*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005.

In those states, the transformation also meant nation building, including the institutions-building process. Also, the two Mediterranean states are former British colonies.

Over the past few years, the new member states have been preoccupied with their internal policies and problems. Among the most important new phenomena are the rapidly growing economies of most of the states, emigration to Western Europe from certain new members, internal political divisions, and in some cases difficult relations with Russia. Throughout the region, there was very little forward thinking about the Union as a whole. Those countries were mainly reactive to new ideas coming from the institutions or Western Europe as well as rather protective of their economic interests. However, in the case of the CEE states, “protectiveness” means openness and liberalization rather than restricted market access. The political initiatives, if any, were poorly prepared and rejected, even if the idea was potentially interesting. This happened with the so-called NATO-like energy pact proposed by the Polish government in early 2006.

It seems that only now, after some exercises in “learning,” the possibility for new member states’ forward-looking initiatives for the EU is emerging. Yet, these are not, will not be, and probably should not be, solely new member state initiatives. As was observed in the case of the recent Polish-Swedish proposal on the Eastern Partnership, both old and new members are looking for the best partners to launch a proposal without being concerned if a partner is new or old.

New EU presidencies and EU foreign policy

In the past, France held its EU presidencies in 1989, 1995 and 2000. The 2008 French presidency is the last moment for the current generation of leaders to hold this valuable position, as the next occasion will not take place before 2020. Since 1995, when Jacques Chirac took office as the President of the French Republic, he presided twice over the European Council meetings. Similarly, Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, chaired those meetings in 1997 and 2005. The next opportunity for a Luxembourgian leader will come in 2015. On average, the EU rotating presidency was held by the same country every 7.5 years among the 15 states and will now be held every 13.5 years between the EU-27. This change has significant consequences for the very nature of rotating presidencies. First, the six months are becoming very precious, as not every European leader will have an opportunity to hold the presidency even if he or she led their country for two 5-year terms. Therefore, the presidency is becoming a rarity rather than normality and should be treated as such. Second, because of this rarity, the EU presidency now presents more opportunities to promote national interests rather than working on potential pan-European interests. In the past, a country holding the presidency could launch a new process during one six-month and then contribute to a smooth finalization during their next presidency. Right now it seems unimaginable that any of the 2008 French presidencies' initiatives will be finalized only in 2020. Third, therefore, countries are more inclined to promote their ideas even without holding the presidency. In short, in the EU-27, the presidency loses much of its past direct impact on the legislative process, which has become longer.

In order to meet these challenges, an idea of trio presidencies was initiated in 2007 with Germany, Portugal and Slovenia preparing a joint work programme. The problem of the following troika (France, Czech Republic, and Sweden) was that the states could not agree on their program; hence the General Secretariat of the Council – not the concerned member states – largely prepared a quite laconic text. The main disagreement was in the approach to the trio presidency. The

French presidency motto is “protective Europe,” while the Czech presidency objective is “Europe without barriers.”²²

The new member states, with the exception of Slovenia, which held its presidency in the first semester of 2008, and the Czech Republic (during the first half of 2009), will take over the Council for the first time under the rules of the Lisbon Treaty (provided it enters into force). The document essentially limits the political (but not policy) dimension of the rotating presidency as it introduces a permanent European Council president and envisages the External Affairs Council to be chaired by the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The policy area in which the new member states (though individually rather than as a group) have been most active since accession is the external relations. The greatest activity and focus has been laid on (a) relations between the EU and Russia; (b) relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbors; (c) relations with the Western Balkans and (d) relations with the United States. A crosscutting issue related to both internal and external policies is energy security.

In 2004, the new EU was internally split over Russia. There were countries with a very positive approach, like Germany and France. On the other hand, some new member states were perceived as “Russophobic.” However as time passed, the extreme positions came closer together. Today the EU seems to have a much more coherent approach towards its Eastern neighbor than they did a few years ago. To a large extent, this was possibly “thanks” to Russia’s new assertive foreign policy. The new member states have strongly contributed to the EU’s approach. Some of many issues dealt with include: Polish-Russian arguments over the so-called meat embargo and the Nord Stream pipeline; cyber attacks and Soviet-memorial-removal demonstrations in Estonia; situation of the Russian speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia; border disputes between Estonia and Latvia on the one hand and Russia on the other; and the privatization of the Mažeikių refinery in Lithuania. The biggest fear among the new member states is over energy security, as many of the CEE countries are fully or almost fully dependant on Russian energy supplies. This attitude has a very important impact on drafting Europe’s energy policy.

The most visible clash between the new members and Russia took place in Eastern European countries grouped in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). First was the Polish and Lithuanian engagement in solving the political crisis in Ukraine in fall 2004, the so-called Orange Revolution. EU sanctions against the Belarusian

²² “The CER guide to the French Presidency,” *CER Briefing Note*, London, July 2008, http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/bn_french_presidency_4july08.pdf, p. 1.

regime seem to have started working only during summer 2008 with the release of all political prisoners in Belarus. So far the EU has not been successful in working with or on Russia to contribute to solving territorial disputes in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The newest of the new, Romania and Bulgaria, proposed with Greece a new initiative called the Black Sea Synergy (BSS), targeted towards the Eastern European ENP states. The Polish-Swedish proposal for an Eastern Partnership is situated in the same geographical dimension. Both ideas as well as the framework of the ENP allowed for a significant improvement in relations between the EU and Eastern Europe. If the BSS and ENP serve as technical instruments and bilateral (EU-concerned country) tools, the Eastern Partnership has the potential to become a multilateral regional political process of dialogue between the EU and the countries of the region.²³

This debate is linked to the question of future enlargement. Ukraine and Moldova would like to become members of the EU one day. This aspiration is largely supported among the new member states, especially by Poland (Ukraine) and Romania (Moldova).

Many new member states invest their time and energy in external policies in the Western Balkans, i.e., the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. This engagement takes on three different forms. Firstly, there are the peacekeeping and international policing missions in the region. Secondly, the new member states play a very important role in providing technical and institutional know-how in the transformation of the Western Balkans. Thirdly, the new members are also engaged politically in the region. They are among the strongest protagonists for Western Balkan membership in the Union, though they were divided on the issue of Kosovo's independence.²⁴

Security issues dominate the new member states' bilateral and multilateral relations with the United States. Other dimensions are not of great importance. As the US is the beacon of all new EU members' security, all of them eventually became members of NATO. Many countries have sent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan in order to emphasize their commitment to transatlantic security relations. Poland and the Czech Republic have negotiated for the installation of elements of the US Missile Defence system on their territories in a different context. For both countries the new system constitutes an opportunity to increase their security by having a bilateral agreement with the US government outside of a multilateral (NATO) arrangement.

²³ For more on the Eastern Partnership, see A.K. Cianciara, "Eastern Partnership – opening a new chapter of Polish Eastern policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy?," *Analyses & Opinions Series*, No. 4, June 2008, Warsaw, Institute of Public Affairs.

²⁴ Until August 15, 2008, 8 out of 10 CEE countries recognized Kosovo's independence. Romania and Slovakia did not follow.

Conclusion

The 10 countries of Central Europe, which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, redefined the European integration process. They achieved this not so much through action or launching new political ideas; they did it through scale. Today, they hardly cooperate exclusively with each other. It is somewhat a cliché to say that politics in Europe works through endless and numerous multilateral negotiations and coalition building, consensus reaching and linking issues that at first seem non-linkable. “New Europeans” are learning the game on a daily basis, trying to find room for themselves, their interests and objectives. At the same time, they try to define or redefine their interests and objectives. This dynamic situation sometimes leads to defensive situations and it at times takes an inexperienced new member to clumsily veto. Yet, in general they seem to be moving towards a constructive consensual approach.

The question is “how” the new members learn their lesson. It seems to be a general process applicable to all (or most) new members, as well as those states that adhered to the EU before. Any new country at first tries to “defend” its national interests: this means that new states apply defensive, not offensive tools. The most visible of them is the veto power. As time passes, state officials learn that vetoing is sometimes counterproductive, sometimes alienating and rarely successful, especially in areas where there is no consensual decision-making. They learn that the veto power is rightly labelled “the nuclear weapon” of EU decision-making. One should avoid inflating a nuclear weapon because its use brings unexpected consequences. Therefore, the lesson that the veto power is absolutely the last resort is to be learnt by all new members, be it Sweden in 1995 or Poland in 2004. There was a serious domestic debate in Poland following the veto against the opening of new agreement negotiations with Russia. The result of the debate is a better understanding that veto use should be limited to absolutely necessary situations only.

The 2008 cases prove that the CEE countries learnt their first lessons and are now trying to be more effective through positive action. This includes the Czech drop-out to unilaterally sign a bilateral agreement with the US on data sharing of travelers to the United States; seven Central European states forming a coalition to propose alternative CO₂ targets; and the Eastern Partnership initiative of Poland and Sweden. The recent conflict in Georgia has shown how important it is for the new members to keep the issues of post-Soviet

areas high on the EU's agenda. The Baltic States and Poland contributed to the EU's involvement (if it is successful remains to be seen) in the peaceful resolution of the military confrontation.

It is also clear that so far, the 2004 Eastern enlargement has not resulted in any major EU policy shift. The reason for this might be due to the enlargement of scope and that the diversity of issues changed across the board in all policy areas. The only noticeable qualitative change is in EU foreign policy, especially towards the Eastern European nations.

Another important element, which is only beginning to evolve, is the new member countries' vision of the world. After four decades of being locked-out of the international system, the CEE states were finally able to open up. For the next 15 years they began to participate in the globalization processes. The processes of increasing globalization coincided with transformational changes in their economic, political and social systems. For this reason it was very difficult, or impossible, to differentiate globalization from other aspects of public life. Central Europe is probably the only region where the work of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is largely appreciated and there was little criticism of it.

It is only since 2004 that the larger picture of the world has begun to take shapes in Central Europe. It is still too early to draw conclusions on what these societies' vision of the world will be. So far, the political classes seem to still believe in the unity of the West (the United States and the European Union), remain skeptical about the role of Russia in international relations and are dedicated to European integration. However, there is still little debate about other regions of the world.

At the same time one must remember that most generalizations about the region are to some degree very likely to be wrong due to the great differences among the various Central European states, i.e., the small nations' vision of the world differs from the Polish one. The more religious societies' perceptions differ from the secular ones. Of special importance are the evolving patriotic feelings. In some cases there is a national awakening, or self-identification (especially in newly created nations). In the Balkans, "the ghost of the past" came alive. Not all "ghosts" have been eradicated, the recent Hungarian-Slovak debate might be especially worrying. Yet some other nations (i.e. Poland and the Czech Republic) did not face major changes in national perceptions.

The Polish and Czech social particularities are nothing new. In fact, all EU nations have their particular issues, interests or historical nuances others have to deal with: EU referenda in Ireland, and even stronger than Polish anti-abortion legislation; Belgium's continuous political crisis; the Spanish affection for bullfights; the Swedish monopoly on the alcohol trade; etc. – all EU nations have to keep their local "edges"; the difference is that those of Poland, Estonia or the Czech Republic are new.

The political dimension, however, has a different significance. It could be predicted that with time, both the Polish and Czech elites will become even more socialized; they will learn even better the way EU politics is done and they will accept even more profoundly the rules of the EU and the limits of changing them. They will not give up their interests; they will instead adapt their methods of achieving objectives. This may take a change in leadership, or maybe even a new generation of politicians. The Polish President's first term ends in 2010, and his Czech counterpart's in 2013.

All the post-2004 presidencies of the European Union will be successful only if they adapt themselves to the rules of the EU-27, and do not try to apply the EU-15 rules. The Lisbon Treaty rejection in Ireland is one of the most important challenges ahead for the French and Czech presidencies. It seems now that the appropriate solution to the problem is expected to come from Dublin. But the real political responsibility lies with the EU's leadership. In the past it was Germany and France who largely provided Europe's leadership. Should the Lisbon Treaty enter into force or not, new leadership will be expected in order to implement the Treaty, or to deal with the political consequences of the Treaty's final rejection. It is unknown today who will provide this kind of leadership, but it is expected that the leaders of France and Germany will play a vital role. It might be interesting to try to look into a possibility of expanding this duo, as it seems that it is no longer a sufficient "motor" for European integration. This however, would require a higher degree of responsibility for the entire EU, among other EU nations' leaders, especially those of the new member states. This lesson is still to be learnt.