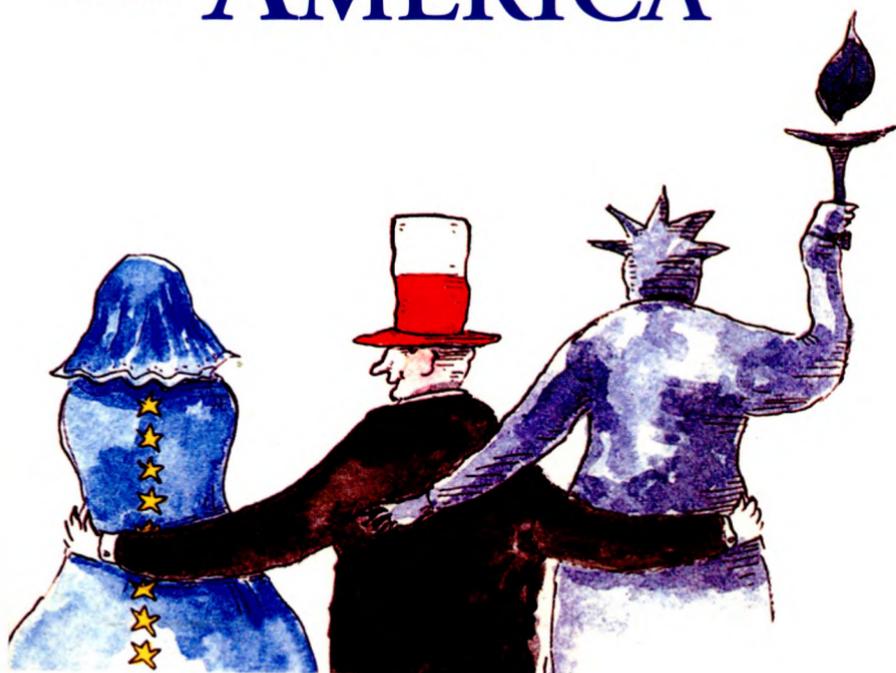


Andrzej Kapiszewski

POLAND:
In EUROPE,
with AMERICA



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**POLAND:
IN EUROPE,
WITH AMERICA**

Kraków

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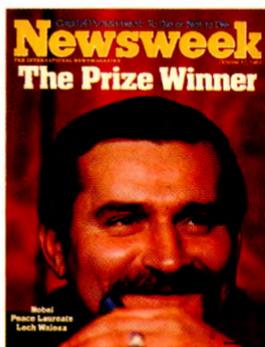
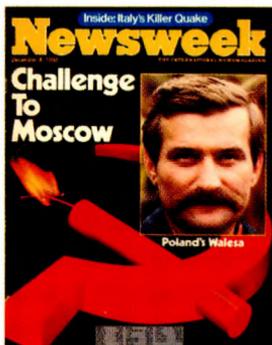
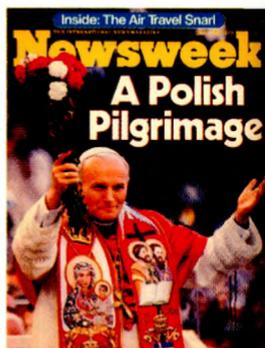
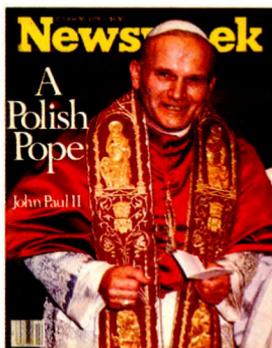
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Poland: in Europe, with America

One of the measures of success in the world is to appear on the front cover of well-known journals. Since the end of the Second World War, Poland had not been at the forefront of the world media until the election of Pope John Paul II in 1979 and the establishment of the 'Solidarity' Independent Trade Union in 1980. During that period Poland would appear in the media relatively often, following numerous clashes of 'Solidarity' and the government, Pope's visits to his native land and the 'Round Table' discussions, which brought down the communist system. In turn, for the next decade or so the world did not hear much about Poland. One can describe that decade as a successful period of uneventful development, since no news often means good news. Or, alternatively, one can say that nothing commendable was occurring in Poland during the nineties. The year 2003 changed this situation again – and surprisingly so, because the poor condition of Polish economy at the beginning of the new century or embarrassing political developments did not make for any worthwhile news. Poland found its way back into the focus of world media for quite different reasons: because the country decided to support America over distant Iraq, against

* A revised version of the lecture delivered at the inauguration of the thirty-fourth annual school of Polish Language and Culture at the Jagiellonian University.

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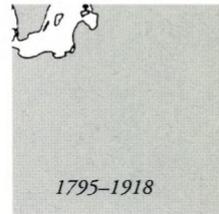
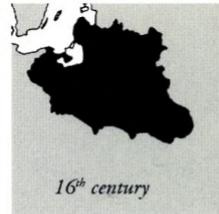
*Poland in the media in
the 1970s and 1980s.*

the policies of powerful European players. It was singled out as the key ally by President Bush, at the same time being called the American Trojan horse by some Europeans. **What is the role of Poland in today's world?** Before trying to answer this question let us recall the country's peregrinations in the twentieth century.

From nowhere back to Europe

The Middle Ages, with several exceptions, were a period of growth for Polish influence in Europe. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Poland was one of the largest and most powerful European kingdoms. The country was the crucial rampart of Christianity, a defender of Europe against Turkish and other invaders. Later, destiny would change that picture. Poland was weakened by external wars and internal political struggle. Finally, in 1795 it lost its independence only to regain it in 1918. For over a hundred and twenty years, Poland was effaced from the maps of the world. Generally, the international community began to forget about Poland. At the beginning of the 20th century, the French author Alfred Jarry stated in the preface to his famous play *Ubu, the King*, that it 'takes place in Poland, which means nowhere.' That statement was unfortunately popularized.

Like a phoenix rising from its ashes, Poland regained its independence after the First World War. Even though it



Poland's changing territory

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emerged as a much smaller and weaker country than in the past, Poles were again very happy and proud to have a state they could call their own. A view their enemies never shared. Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, called Poland 'the monstrous bastard of the Treaty of Versailles'.¹ Then came the Second World War. Poland was occupied again and suffered tremendous losses. Eventually, in spite of being on the winning side, the country was betrayed by its war allies and disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. Located in the communist Eastern Europe it was perceived rather as a part of the Soviet Union than as a country belonging to the old West European civilization. For the prominent Russian-American poet, Joseph Brodsky, Poland was part of 'Western Asia'. In turn, Sławomir Mrożek, a famous Polish writer, described Poland as a country 'which lies East of the West, and West of the East'. Similarly, a Polish joke forged during the communist years tells of the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, going on a train trip from Moscow to Paris while General de Gaulle traveled from Paris to Moscow. When both left their trains in Warsaw, they were convinced that they had reached their final destinations. Brezhnev simply compared the capital of Poland to his Russian cities and saw it a part of the Western world. De Gaulle found it looking much like a Russian metropolis.

Polish geopolitical location started to shift again in the 1980s, as cracks appeared in the communist system. In 1986 another famous Polish writer, a Nobel prize win-

¹ Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1982), vol. II, p. 393.

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ner and now the Jagiellonian University professor emeritus, Czeslaw Milosz, wrote an essay titled “About our Europe” in which he expounded that ‘our Europe’, the Europe Poland belonged to, was not just an Eastern Europe, disjoined from ‘the Europe proper’, but Central Europe – as indispensable as its Western or Southern territories.

Through the election of the Polish Pope, John Paul II, through Lech Wałęsa’s ‘Solidarity’ movement, through Russian dissidents and Vaclav Havel, Eastern Europe again started to move west. Shortly after the 1989 revolution, the US Department of State issued a special directive to its employees reminding them not to use the misleading and prejudiced expression: ‘Eastern Europe’.



*Poland in the heart
of Europe*

The events of 1989-90 transformed Europe. Once oppressed, states regained their independence and nations claimed back their identity. The astonishing scale of changes in Central-Eastern Europe alone is best represented by the fact that the number of countries in this region almost doubled after the collapse of communism,

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their number rising from eleven to twenty-one. Until 1990, Poland had bordered three countries: the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. All three disappeared from the map. A year later, Poland already had seven neighbors: the united Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – now two separate states, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. In the broader European perspective, people also began to try – through the expansion of NATO and the European Union – to mend the rift that for so long had kept the Continent split in two. As a result, the old maps of Europe – based, as they were, on competing ideologies and rival power blocs – started to change again.

So where does Poland lie? It lies in the center of Europe, and not only in the geographical aspect. Norman Davies, a famous British historian, entitled his well-known history of Poland: *Heart of Europe*. For him Poland is very much a part of Europe. It is a repository of typically European ideas and values. Several years ago, Davies concluded one of his lectures in Poland saying: “Here we are, in the heart of the heart of the Heart of Europe”.²

In turn, Andrzej Olechowski, a former Polish foreign minister, rightly pointed out that Poland’s location varies depending on the situation on the Continent.³ When Europe is united, Poland lies in its heart. When Europe is divided, Poland finds itself in the void, in the gray zone, somewhere on the peripheries of the civilized world.

² Norman Davies, *God’s Playground. On Visiting Alice’s Polish Wonderland*, Jagiellonian University Open Lectures (Kraków, Universitas, 1995), p. 25.

³ Andrzej Olechowski, *The Fourth Grand Reorganization of Europe*, Jagiellonian University Open Lectures (Kraków, Universitas, 1996), p.9.

Poles, however, never had any doubts about their location in the world. Ever since the Middle Ages, through the time of being occupied, and the period of freedom between the two World Wars up until today, Poles felt themselves citizens of Europe and members of the European civilization. It is, therefore, only natural for them to be rejoined with countries of Western Europe. In this Europe, trying to unite itself again, Poles would like to call themselves Europeans – no more, no less. They would also like to be perceived as such by others, but this has proven difficult. Western European countries have displayed various reservations for Poland's admission to their club. And recently, Polish support for the United States has posed additional problems.

Joining NATO



Right after 1989, everything looked easy. The old Warsaw Pact was dismantled, as well as the Comecon. But then problems began. On the one hand, a large number of people in the West – particularly in the US – had asked for a 'peace dividend' and called for the dismantling the NATO as a relic of the Cold War: a step Russia, too, demanded. On the other hand, still afraid of Russia, Poland and other East European countries were very much interested in keeping the alliance alive and so applied to join NATO. Russia strongly opposed the move.

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*Some considered
President Aleksander
Kwaśniewski a suitable
candidate for the next
Secretary General of
NATO*

For a while, the West was hesitant. As a delaying tactic, various 'Partnership for Peace' initiatives were created. But the Balkan crisis, which developed in the meantime, proved the need to maintain NATO. In 1999, after several years of negotiations, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were admitted to the organization. Since then, new members have participated in numerous NATO activities. Polish soldiers now serve in NATO contingents in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. Adam Koberacki became NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations. In March 2004, seven new East European countries join NATO: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The security of these countries, and that of the whole Europe has become further expanded.



Joining the European Union

Parallel to these developments, all former East European countries expressed their willingness to join the European Union. In general, this request received positive response. Yet when actual negotiations started, Western leaders, always keeping one eye on their domestic approval ratings, preferred to support the demands of their constituencies, often contrary to vital European interests. In the turn of the centuries, Europe found itself lacking visionary politicians, such as Winston Churchill who talked about the 'United States' of Europe as early as 1945 – or, for that matter, Charles de Gaulle and Conrad Adenauer, who

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managed to overcome the legacy of the Second World War and reestablish friendly relations between former foes.

When at the Seville Summit in June 2002, the EU finally agreed to bring in 10 new states by 2004, there was little celebration. Timothy Garton Ash called it the ‘grim wedding’. On June 27 he wrote in *The Guardian*: “Imagine a wedding party delayed for 15 years by the meanness and prevarication of the bridegroom. Who would have any pleasure in it when it finally came? Such now is the reunification of Europe: the wedding of the western and eastern parts of the continent divided for decades by the walls and barbed wire of the Cold War. Even the name for the party has become a bore. No longer the reunification or, as we also used to say, the healing of Europe, it is just ‘EU enlargement’” What went wrong? “We did – Ash continued – We, the Western Europeans. For a start, many Western Europeans never really thought of those ‘faraway countries of which we know little’ as part of Europe anyway. Others, notably France, did not want these countries to join our French-led, rich man’s club at all. (...) Anti-immigrant populists from Haider to Le Pen increased the domestic opposition. (...) Then Helmut Kohl and Francois Mitterrand decided that Western Europe had first to make its own monetary union.” So it goes.

Once the EU leaders made political decisions concerning enlargement, another question, namely, who should pay for this, immediately sprang up. The net contributors to the EU budget, and especially Germany, began to worry



*So, as we agreed. We give you morality, you give us the cash.
Cartoon from Polityka
by Andrzej Mleczko.*

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*Where do the eventual boundaries
of the European Union lie?*
The Economist, March 13th, 2004.



*The forward march of European
integration seems in peril,*
The Economist, 28th, 2004.

about a possible new recession and are unwilling to pay even a single euro more. The net benefactors protest against any projects that could curtail their subsidies even by a mere fraction. As a result, the net sum that the EU proposes to transfer to its ten new members over the first three years after enlargement, from 2004 to 2006, has been set at about €25 billion. Is it much? One can compare this both to the Marshall Plan, under which the US transferred the equivalent of €97 billion (at today's prices) to Western Europe from 1948 to 1951, and to the unification of Germany in the 1990s, when West Germany transferred about €600 billion to East Germany. "So much for the great solidarity of Europeans with Europeans." According to current plans, Polish farmers are to receive just a quarter of the direct subsidies that their French counterparts do, although they will have to compete on the same single market. "This is insulting nonsense," writes Ash. What should happen is that all EU farmers should receive only a quarter of their today's subsidies, since the common agricultural policy of the EU is the longest-running scandal in the developed world, forcing up the price of the food we eat and disadvantaging farmers even further. "But France and other beneficiaries won't stand for that. In Europe's name, of course," concludes Ash. We will see in what way changes to these agricultural policies, adopted by the EU in June 2003, will alter that picture in the years to come.

The end of 2002 did bring some successes for Poland: Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller's risky gamble to

win advantageous concessions in the final stage of negotiations with the EU infuriated some while taking others by surprise. The dramatic negotiations in Copenhagen at the end of the EU expansion talks on December 13 confirmed the opinion about Poland being the new tough guy the EU will have to deal with in the future. Poles generally won the battle and obtained the most favorable conditions for accession among the ten candidate states. It is true that the negotiations did not win Poles many friends, but at the same time many countries became convinced about the importance of Poland. Poland began to be perceived as the leader of aspiring post-communist countries, and also as a promoter of further eastwards expansion of the Union, and especially the inclusion of Ukraine.

*

Poland was greatly successful in the 1990s: democratization of the country, rapid economic transformation, and freedom – and at the same time, paradoxically, growing frustration with the European Union. Poles expected to be welcomed as long-awaited brothers. Instead, they were greeted with arduous negotiations. Romantic enthusiasm clashed with tough politics and cold calculations – a case entirely different than NATO accession, where the dominating language was close to Polish hearts⁴: the language of shared values, fight for freedom and democracy against dictatorial regimes, terrorists, etc. Thus, NATO became the personification of Polish nostalgia for the West. And NATO meant America. And it was the US which agreed for Poland to join the organization.

⁴ “Stary kontynent i nowe kłopoty”, interview with Aleksander Smolar, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, March 1-2, 2003.

Transatlantic divisions

Some 40 years ago, while visiting Frankfurt, President John F. Kennedy suggested that ties between the United States and Europe were so close and so essential that both sides should consider not only economic cooperation, but possibly even a political union between these two pillars of the West.⁵ That idea did not materialize. What did unite Europeans and Americans at that time was the threat from the Soviet Union. Today, they stand divided, especially by Middle East affairs: attitude to Palestinian-Israeli relations, Iraq, Iran and Turkey – in spite of the fact that Western nations on both sides of the Atlantic do not have fundamentally conflicting interests in that region. Today, both sides are repeating (albeit on a larger scale) the mistake they made in the Balkans in the 1990s: similar interests, different politics.

Or maybe the real issue is not Middle East politics, but a general divergence in perspectives between Europe and America. Robert Kagan in his famous article “Power and Weakness” wrote that Europe is turning away from exercising power: it is moving into a self-contained world of laws and rules, and transnational negotiation and cooperation.⁶ The United States, meanwhile, continue to believe in power, in a world where international laws and rules are unreliable, and where true security, defense and promotion of liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military power. This is why, as far as major

⁵ Martin Walker, “The European Problem”, National Review Online, June 10, 2003.

⁶ Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness”, *Policy Review*, (June 2003).

strategic and international questions today go, at least according to Kagan, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: they have little to agree on, and less and less understanding for each other. When this picture is complemented with the growing economic competition across the Atlantic, we may even come to a very pessimistic conclusion, that the end of the West is approaching⁷. On the other hand, that may never happen.

Let us return to Poland. Upon reentering the world arena, unexpectedly, the country became deeply involved in these European-American tensions.

Entering global politics. Poland-American Trojan horse in Europe?

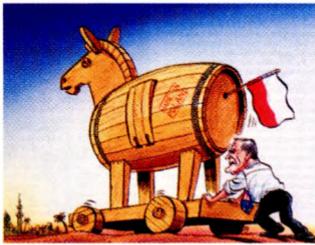
Shortly after the Copenhagen Summit, the Polish government awarded the contract to supply fighter aircraft for the Polish army to the American Lockheed Corporation. Lockheed's F16s won a tough contest with their European competitors. The several billion dollar deal was, of course, welcomed in America but irritated the defeated European partners: France in particular. The US offer was clearly the best, and European ones could simply be no match for it. Nevertheless, Poles were accused of making a purely political decision with no economic justification, of violating European solidarity, of striking

⁷ Charles A. Kupchan, "The End of the West", *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 2002.

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a blow to the interests of the European military industry, of impairing credibility of Poland as future EU member, and of embarking upon a road of subjugation by the US. Tensions between Poland and some of its EU partners grew considerably.

Then the Iraqi crisis developed.



Poland as the American Trojan horse in Europe. Cartoon from The Economist, May 8th, 2003.

In March 2003, as the political strife in the Security Council between the US and the French-German-Russian anti-intervention alliance was entering its final phase, Poland – along with seven other European countries – sent a letter to President Bush supporting his policies towards Iraq. The letter was signed by British, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Czech, and Hungarian prime ministers as well, but France and Germany decided to single out Poland for criticism. They were infuriated by the fact that a country so dependent on their support for EU admission, decided not to follow in their footsteps but instead proclaimed its own independent, pro-American foreign policy. Several media commentators in France and Germany labeled Poland as the American Trojan horse in Europe, a country supposedly bought by the US to advance the White House interests in Europe. (Of interest: forty years earlier the President of France, Charles de Gaulle, accused Britain of being America's Trojan horse in Europe.) French politicians quickly followed suit. Jacques Chirac undiplomatically criticized Poland, saying that in serious debates, as a new-

comer to world politics, it should keep quiet. The German *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* described Poland in even more derogatory terms as a 'Trojan donkey'. *The Economist* published a well-known cartoon on the matter.

Poland, however, decided to stay on the course and sent its soldiers to Iraq. In effect, throughout the war, White House politicians – President Bush in particular – often praised Polish participation in the 'coalition of the concerned'.

By the way, recent Polish-American cooperation with respect to Iraqi affairs was not without precedent. When in 1990 Saddam Hussein unexpectedly attacked Kuwait, American CIA operatives in Iraq were caught by surprise and failed to evacuate to safety on time. Their lives were at tremendous risk. Washington asked all its traditional Western allies for help, but received little assistance. In desperation, the Americans turned to Poland. That was not an obvious move at that time – the communist system had merely started to come apart; Poles already had 'their' Prime Minister, but the President of the country as well as crucial Ministers of Internal Security and Defense were still Russian-educated communists. Nevertheless, the Polish intelligence apparatus decided to help the Americans. With Polish passports in hand and together with Polish construction workers, CIA agents were smuggled out of Iraq. Following that, Poland supplied Americans with detailed maps of Baghdad, once created by Polish cartographers on Iraqi request, thus helping to

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Can Poland succeed in Iraq? "Poland as a desert empire". The ironic title on the cover of one of Polish magazines.

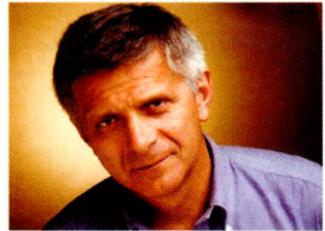
plan 1991 operation Desert Storm. America began to trust Poles. Former communist heads of Polish security agencies received high American honors and Washington decided to sign off 50 percent of the Polish debt incurred during the communist years.

Let us, however, return to 2003 affairs. When Poland joined forces with the US, criticism of Poland returned in European media. *Frankfurter Rundschau* wrote that Poles became 'Uncle Sam's mercenaries' while *Tageszeitung* labeled Poles as 'American hirelings'. It was, of course, not true at all. Poland decided to participate in the war in Iraq not because of its own marginal role in the war with terrorism, but because it would increase its standing in the European Union and in the region. And because they were asked to do so by their US allies. The fact that the majority of Poles opposed American intervention did not influence the decision. British newspapers, such as *The Times* and *The Guardian*, compared Polish policy towards the US to those of Tony Blair: acceptance of a leading, but not dominant role of the US in the world, convergence of values and interests and a readiness to cooperate, which, however, stop short of subordination.

Then, Americans charged Poland with the task of running one of the four administrative zones in Iraq. It was decided that Polish generals would command an international division of stabilization forces in that zone. In turn, professor Marek Belka, the former Polish Minister

of Finance, was appointed deputy head of the American-run Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and the head of the International Coordination Committee for the Reconstruction of Iraq. These were important appointments, although they were received with contempt in Germany and France. Granting Poland such tasks was seen as confirmation that Poland's position in the international community was indeed growing, and Germany and France were discontented to see such growth. When the Polish Minister of Defense asked his German counterpart to provide soldiers for the international division in Iraq under Polish command, the German Minister was unable to conceal his fury that Poles had the nerve to propose such a deal.

These reactions exposed one of the deceptions of EU enlargement, namely, that Poles and other Central Europeans would be treated as equal partners.⁸ The truth is that Germany and France have not been unanimous supporters of Polish entry to the EU and NATO: Russian sensibilities in particular were usually awarded priority. It was assumed that, in an enlarged European Union, Poles and other new members would always pursue a policy of gratitude to their Western partners. Yet it soon became apparent that new members decided to look rather to the US and NATO for their security. They realized that they could not always count on the support of Germany and France, and that their economic and political power was weakening. Washington opted for



Marek Belka, Prime Minister of Poland, head of the International Coordination Committee for the Reconstruction of Iraq 2003-2004.

⁸ Roger Boyes, "Poles wax as Germans wane in new Europe", *The Times* May 19, 2003.

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awarding Poland a special status in recognition of the new geopolitical situation in Europe. The crucial strategic problems of the Continent during the coming decade will be connected to the status of Ukraine and Belarus left outside the new EU frontiers. Here, the intelligent and energetic Polish foreign policy tries to pull these countries westwards, to the benefit of all. The US understands the importance of that move and encourages Polish endeavors.

Old and New Europe

In January 2003, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, for the first time used the now famous juxtaposition of the 'Old Europe', which balked at war in Iraq, against the 'New Europe', which backed the fight for the good cause against Saddam, terror and the like.⁹ The terms Old and New Europe have since then been widely adopted to distinguish the founding Western states of the European Union, particularly Germany and France, from the new members from the East, led by Poland. The division was furthered by the widespread belief that the newcomers are post-communist converts to American ideals.

The truth is that there is nothing Old Europe should fear, because there is no separate entity called New Europe. The new EU members are a very diverse group

⁹ Rana Foroohar, "What New Europe", *Newsweek*, June 23, 2003.

with varying agendas. Among them, there are relatively rich countries (Slovenia), and poor ones (Latvia); large (Poland), and small (Estonia). Poles are likely to join forces with France against the majority of EU countries to maintain the current system of agricultural subsidies. The President of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, is an EU admirer while the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus is Euro-skeptic. Estonians are aggressive free traders, while Poles and Slovaks are protectionists. So it goes. As far as such critical economic matters as key transatlantic trade disputes, tax subsidies for exporters, and laws regarding genetically modified foods, are concerned – New Europe is likely to vote hand in hand with Old Europe.

In Europe, with America

Being in Europe, feeling European and strongly supporting European integration, Poles are at the same time very much in favor of maintaining close ties with the US. There is a history of friendly mutual relations between the two countries and its peoples. Every Pole is proud of Polish national heroes: generals Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski who also fought for American independence. Poles remember well that Poland regained its statehood in 1918, owing this fact, to a great extent, to the politics of President Woodrow Wilson. Nor do they forget the support given by President Ronald Reagan and

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the American people to the 'Solidarity' movement. Moreover, according to the last census, in the US there are over 9 million people with Polish roots. And where, in post-communist Poland, does one find people waiting in the longest lines? They appear in front of American consular offices. Thousands of Poles are eager to go to the US. Poles, therefore, do not see any point in West European attempts to construct a Europe which will keep the US, its traditional ally, out, and Russia, its former enemy, in. They see no contradiction in embracing both sides of the Atlantic. Poles fully agree with what President George W. Bush said recently, that "Poland is good citizen of Europe and Poland is a close friend of America and there is no conflict between the two."

Being as much pro-European as pro-American, Poles are at the same realistic about international relationships, knowing only too well that Poland is supported by others not for altruistic reasons but because of their particular

*Aleksander Kwaśniewski,
Jacques Chirac and
Gerhard Schröder in
Wrocław, May 2003.*



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interests in certain situations. Poles remember that Europe did not help Poland several times, because the Continent feels real respect only for Russia. They also remember that the democratic United States (as well as Great Britain) signed the shameful Yalta treaty which, in 1945, sold the country for 50 years to the Soviet Union. This is why, today, Poles try to pursue multilateral politics – their best security for the future.

In the case of the Polish-European-American-Iraqi issue, as time was going by, all forces of the crisis in the allied camp made some attempts to mend fences. In particular, the meeting of Polish, French and German Presidents in Wrocław in May, during the meeting of Weimar Triangle countries, calmed down the situation. The media followed the change of the mood of Western politicians. Commentators began to stress Poland's right to its own independent policies and the importance of Poland's involvement in world politics. *Handelsblad* wrote that Europeans have to accept the situation where 'Poland joins the club of world's powers'.

To stress Poland's new role on the international arena even further, President George W. Bush decided to visit Poland during his last European tour. In Kraków's, Wawel Royal Castle, he delivered an significant speech to America's European partners. He also applauded Polish participation in the battles of Afghanistan and Iraq, where Polish forces served 'with skill and honor' — "America will never forget that Poland rose to the moment. Again



President George W. Bush speaking at the Wawel Castle in Kraków, May 2003.

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you have lived out of the words of the Polish motto: 'for your freedom and ours'".

These visits, and some other developments in the year 2003, made most Poles happy. On April 17, Prime Minister Leszek Miller signed the EU accession treaty in Athens. In a national referendum held on June 8, almost 80 percent of Poles voted for integration with Europe. Polish politician, Piotr Nowina-Konopka commented it in the *Wprost* magazine: 'Alleluia and forwards!'

The second half of 2003, however, brought new, unexpected conflict between Poland and "core" European countries. France and Germany decided to change the agreement reached in Nice in the year 2000 related to the voting power of members of the EU Council of Ministers. Paris and Bonn came to the conclusion that after the enlargement, smaller EU members, Poland in particular, could have too much influence on the EU affairs. But Poland and several other states did not like to allow big EU members to concentrate too much power in their hands and threatened to veto the new European constitution proposal if the Nice agreement is not kept. Lack of agreement on this issue caused the collapse of the EU October 2003 summit in Rome and of the following in Brussels in December. Poles were unhappy again. Jacek Magala wrote in *NRC Handelsblad* in January 2004 the article "Good by in Europe. European Union it's

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a house where new tenants were send to the basement”.Only in the Spring of 2004, after numerous meetings between leaders of the interested EU countries, the possibility of reaching a compromise eventually emerged.

On May 1, 2004, Poland with nine other countries became a full member of the European Union. Europe's eastern frontier shifted once again, several hundred miles further east. For the first time in modern history Poland finds itself no longer between two big states, Germany and Russia, which was always a worrying situation, but in a union with 24 other nations sharing similar ideals and trying to achieve same goals. In Europe.



Some enjoyed the enlargement...



...some worried about the consequences.

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Poland



Let's embrace Europe and the US, and advance together.

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