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### **RELATIONS OF POLAND AND BELARUS IN THE PERIOD 1990-2003 AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES.**

The Polish accession to the European Union will undoubtedly influence the political and economic relations with the eastern neighbour Byelorussia. Poland has played an important role in the co-operation's development between the EU and the eastern outskirts. Polish membership in the European Union inclines to reflections on the state and perspectives of relations between the Polish and the Belorussian.

The history of the international Polish and Belorussian relations can be divided into two periods. Polish historians regard that the turning point is 1994. It is the year of Alexander Lukashenka's election, who has started different from the one led by the republic parliament internal and foreign policy.

Whereas Belorussian scientists consider that the crucial moment in the Byelorussia's history on international scene was the constitutional opinion poll in November '96. After that event Poland, like other European countries, did not approved the score of the survey.

Although there are two different opinions connected with crucial years for independent relations between Poland and Byelorussia, we can assume that the period 1994 - 1996 has changed the targets of internal and foreign policy of Polish eastern neighbour.

The Declaration of Belorussian Republic Sovereignty was accepted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1990. [4, p. 34] The Polish government approved the Belorussian independence on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1991. [3] On the state level, Poland accepted it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1991. In 1992 both countries reached many co-operation's agreements (for example checkpoints connected with the border; transport's organization; co-operation in steel industry and car industry; investments' protection; research, cultural and educational co-operation). [7, p. 19] Above agreements became the legal base for future Polish and Belorussian co-operation. There was also the proof that both countries were eager to develop mutual relations in all areas.

However the beginning of the official Polish and Belorussian relations caused many difficulties. The first visit of Polish Foreign Minister - Krzysztof Skubiszewski in Minsk in November 1990 did not bring any expected result. Belorussian Foreign Minister - Piotr Krauczanka refused to sign the declaration of rules and basic directions of mutual relations' development proposed by

Skubiszewski. Contentious issues were regulated during the next year. In October 1992 Polish-Belorussian declarations about good neighbourhood, mutual understanding and co-operation were signed in Warsaw.

Although there was stabilization in political relations, there were fluctuations in business co-operation. In 1992 Poland became the main business partner of Byelorussia (out of countries outside the Commonwealth of Independent States) and it was the third partner after Russia and Ukraine in general. However the trade turnover reached only \$ 300 mln. In 1993 the turnover level decreased by one third and in 1994 by one and a half. In 1995 Byelorussia held only 0,9% of the Polish turnover. [7, p. 19]

While the positive Polish and Belorussian political relations were being created slowly, fast Russian and Belorussian relations' development were seen on the international scene. In relatively short period (since 1996) 'Association of Russia and Byelorussia' was transformed into 'Union of Byelorussia and Russia' and in 1999 after the ratification of proper contracts State Union was created.

Byelorussia is dependent on Russia from economic point of view. Russia supplies Belorussian Republic with 80% of crude oil, 100% of natural gas, and 100% of coal. Russian market is also the main consumer of the Belorussian export. Russian capital is actively invested in Belarus and it has a significant share in the most important enterprises (like Bieltranzhaz). [6, p. 42] Considerable dependence exists also in institutional and personnel areas.

Poland was and still is interested in Belorussian independence to be strengthened and democratic and market reforms to be accelerated. However significant Byelorussia's relationships with Russia have always bothered Poland. Polish Prime Minister - Hanna Suchocka gave voice to it during her visit to Minsk in November 1992. Byelorussia's integration with Russia has been continuing during Alexander Lukashenka's rule.

Another difference of opinion between Poland and Byelorussia appeared in period 1993-1994 because of an international security's issue. At the beginning of 1994 Byelorussia joined Collective Security's Agreement. Poland and other countries treated that move as departure from the independence postulate, which was included in the Belorussian constitution, and also as a signal of rising military and political Byelorussia's dependence on Russia. Poland in that period was applying for NATO membership. Byelorussia (either before or after Lukashenka's presidency) criticized NATO expansion in the Eastern Europe.

The first and the only meeting of the Belorussian and Polish Presidents - Alexander Lukashenka and Alexander Kwasniweski was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1996 in Bialowieza National Forest. Unfortunately, no important agreements were conducted there.

After the constitutional opinion poll from the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1996, Warsaw began a new policy against Byelorussia - so called policy of "critical dialog". It represented the negative assessment of breaking human rights and democratic principles. Nevertheless, the Polish government still kept international contacts with Belorussian authorities.

The economic incentives were the main aspects of the efforts to have good relations with the eastern neighbour. After the drop of a trade turn-

over in 1994, next year there was an increase lasting till 1996. In period 1997-1998 the amount of Polish-Belorussian trade turnover decreased again below \$ 500 mln. At the end of 1998 Polish share in the Belorussian trade totaled 2,9%. Poland became the fourth business partner of Byelorussia after Russia, Ukraine and Germany. [7, p. 22]

The US and European international organizations also began the policy of "critical dialog" against Belarus. In that period Poland became the mediator of relations' stabilization between Byelorussia and the USA. In January 1997 Poland presented the initiative of an economic help for Byelorussia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia, which could be undertaken thanks to the international financial institutions' and the European Union's support. Unfortunately, the project called "The full independence of Byelorussia" has never been realized. [2, p. 26-27]

Differences in Polish and Belorussian attitude to foreign policy still existed. Poland was concentrated on the co-operation with the West (NATO membership) and Byelorussia concentrated its attention on relations with the East (co-operation with Russia). Besides, the Belorussian authorities did not accepted Polish attitude to The Belorussian 'High Council of the thirteenth terms' in office with which Warsaw maintained interparliamentary relations (The Council was dissolved by the president - Alexander Lukashenka after the opinion poll in November 1996).

Byelorussia and Poland opened the new century with unsatisfying state of mutual relations. Warsaw was still continuing the policy of "critical dialog". On the one hand Poland was not satisfied because of the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections, which were held in Byelorussia in the period 2000-2001. On the other hand president Kwasniewski regarded that Byelorussia should not be isolated. It was very important for Poland to have good economic relations with Byelorussia.

The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared also a program of Byelorussia, Ukraine, Moldavia and Russia support, which was presented in 2002 for the EU members, the EU candidates and also for the EU future neighbours from the Commonwealth of Independent States. [8, p. 78] That document (non-paper) shows Polish proposals of principles on which European Union's policy against the eastern neighbours should be based. It also contains the list of the crucial areas of co-operation and the aid tools. The authors of that document propose to create "Eastern dimension", which would determine the uniform policy rules against Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Moldavia. The "Eastern dimension" would also define medium-term and long-term targets and it would make easier to coordinate actions' plans, which would be created for an individual country.

It is in Byelorussia's best interest to develop relations with the European Union in all possible areas and in the widest range. On the one hand it has positive influence on Byelorussia's economic situation, on the other hand it improves the Byelorussia's position in relations with Russian Federation.

The Polish accession to the European Union will also bring relations' improvement between Poland and Byelorussia. Poland will obtain the aid tools, which could activate the policy against Byelorussia.

Moreover, Poland has registered recently good economic indicators (although they have not been noticed by Polish society yet). In longer perspective faster economic growth of the Polish economy will contribute to looking for new markets (also on the territory of Byelorussia). It will influence on Polish- Belorussian economic relations' intensification.

The Trade exchange between Poland and Belarus, which was registered in 2003, reached \$ 500 mln. However, that amount does not make the most of trade possibilities of both business partners. It is predicted that if all existing reserves are involved, the indicator will increase up to \$ 1 mld within the next few years. [1] Higher trade exchange and better conditions for entrepreneurship's development could cause growth of direct investments and modernization of the Belorussian economy. Significant economic and social changes in Poland and first of all improvement of Polish standard of living, would also be the point of reference for free market reforms introduced in Byelorussia.

The priority out of Polish-Belorussian relations' perspectives is also the regional co-operation. Crucial areas of such co-operation are Euroregions like "Niemen", "Bug", "Bialowieza National Forest". Either Poland or Byelorussia's places its faith in those places.

Poland will also be the Byelorussia's "window" for the rest of Europe. European market will be more available for Belorussian entrepreneurs. On the territory of Poland enterprises with Belorussian capital will be created. Such firms could spread their output to other European countries.

However attitude of Polish media to political and social situation in Byelorussia influences negatively on realization of those perspectives. Critical opinions of journalists discourage Polish entrepreneurs from taking part in many promotional events and Belorussian firms from contacts with Polish businessmen. As a result Hungarian and Czech firms often take over the Polish share on the Belorussian market.

On the other hand a lot of ventures, which could improve Polish-Belorussian co-operation and make it easier, have already appeared in the economic area. One of them is an introduction of the uniform exchange rate of Belorussian 'ruble'. It influences positively on mutual accounts between Polish and Belorussian entrepreneurs. Moreover National Bank of Byelorussia accepted Polish 'zloty' as an exchangeable currency. Polish zloty can be used for trade's accounts between both business partners. Furthermore there are the representatives of four main Belorussian banks on the territory of Poland. Byelorussia is the only country from the Commonwealth of Independent States, which has banks' representatives in Poland. [5, p. 150]

A lot of tax relieves for foreign investors have also a significant influence on Polish investments in Byelorussia.

There are also some barriers, which interfere with realization of existing perspectives of economic co-operation. One of them is a Byelorussia's decision, which introduces import's limitations on some products (mainly agricultural products and groceries). It influences on slowing down the Polish-Belorussian trade exchange. The high customs and a high VAT, both of which reduce Polish competitiveness, also restrict the Access of Polish goods to Belorussian market.

The barrier in the trade exchange from Polish side is an introduction of visas from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2003. According to the Schengen's treaty these documents are obligatory for neighbouring countries, which does not belong to the European Union.

The Polish accession to the Uniform Market demands also an acceptance of specific limits of Belorussian goods' import according to the procedure of antidumping action. It is when goods are sold abroad below the normal value (so below the price of comparable products). Another requirement for Belorussian exporters is a duty to reach the CE certificate. Because of that fact additional requirements regarding the quality of products sold on the Uniform Market will appear.

Polish and Belorussian relations underwent different stages over the past 13 years. However, the neighbourhood of both countries, the nearness of their markets creates good conditions for development of the trade exchange, which is the incentive for political relations' improvement. The Polish membership in the European Union opens new area of Polish and Belorussian relations. If the existing perspectives of co-operation are properly used, they will bring significant benefits for both countries.

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#### СНГ-ОВСКИЙ ВЕКТОР ВНЕШНЕЙ ПОЛИТИКИ ХРИСТИАНСКО-СОЦИАЛЬНОГО СОЮЗА В БАВАРИИ.

Объединение Германии совпало с нарастанием центробежных тенденций в бывшем СССР. Социальные христиане, как и другие партии правящей в ФРГ коалиции, высказались за признание Бонном независимости балтийских республик. Важно отметить, что ФРГ предприняла данный шаг до того, как на это решились США. Коалиция сделала сильный ход, который вскоре привел к первому серьезному результату. Уже в сентябре 1991 г., когда Государственный Совет СССР официально признал независимость Литвы, Латвии, Эстонии, можно было констатиро-