

**Address by Radosław Sikorski**  
**Stefan Batory Foundation**  
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May I first thank Chairman Aleksander Smolar for his invitation. The subject matter of the debate, as indicated in the invitation, is rather extensive. I fear that to address all of the issues included in it would require a mini policy address by the Foreign Minister. Since today I am particularly interested in debating with you, I will focus on Eastern issues, setting aside other matters for further discussion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland's return to the map of Europe after the years of the Partitions and the stormy period of struggle for state frontiers was accompanied by dreams of a strong Poland, which would gradually evolve into dreams of a Poland with the status of a power. Some people at the time, including diplomats who by nature should have been sober in their judgments, believed that "Poland is a power".

This is illustrated by the words of the Polish Ambassador to Paris **in October 1938:**

*"Our victories are beautiful and **shall last forever**, for they are victories in a noble cause, for wherever Polish soldiers trod and the resolute voice of the foreign minister of the Republic resounded, unquestionably Polish lands or the honor of Poland were at issue. For the interest of Independent Poland has always been sincerely founded on the legitimate right of nations to freedom and respect, backed by the robust faith of the whole nation in the future of Poland and its own might".*

There are those who have said that Poland should be driven by a sense of power and an invincible conviction of the one's rightness: **some still believe that those who speak of the Homeland in lofty terms serve it best.** The logic of compromise and negotiations is supposedly below the dignity of Poles. Patriotism is supposed to justify maximalist expectations towards one's partners. And it is best to turn your back on your neighbors, seeking allies far away...

Our government's foreign policy over the last two years, particularly its Eastern component, has evoked some strong emotions amongst its critics. Here are some of their accusations: passivity towards Ukraine; placing Germany and Russia above the Eastern neighbors; a betrayal of the ideals of Mieroszewski and Giedroyc; unilateral concessions to Russia; a fear of irritating Russia by

“intruding” into the post-Soviet space; acquiescence to the loss of Eastern Europe; insufficiently vigorous defence of Poland’s honour against the accusations of specialists in historical “hatchet jobs”, neglect not only of the Caucasus, but also of Moldova.

Ladies and Gentleman,

These are the accusations, but what are the facts?

The first decision I took after assuming the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs was to reduce visa fees for the citizens of Ukraine. Today, we are conducting a lively political dialogue with Ukraine, based on regular meetings between the prime ministers and joint sessions of the leaderships of the two foreign ministries. Economic co-operation is also developing. We signed an agreement on local border traffic, which has alleviated the adverse effects of Poland’s accession to the Schengen Agreement on the movement of persons between Poland and Ukraine.

At the Budapest summit of the Alliance, I worked closely with the President to implement Ukraine’s aspirations to NATO membership. We consistently support Ukrainian politicians who represent a pro-reformist and pro-European orientation, engaging our Weimar partners in these efforts. For example, we have given strong backing to Ukraine during work on the association agreement with the European Union. Together with the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, I took a Union message to Ukraine containing information on what needed to be done and when for the agreement to be finally concluded. The rest depends on the endeavours and prudence of the Ukrainian authorities and the country’s elite.

Two years ago, we had no contacts whatsoever with **Belarus**. An isolated Belarus was drifting away from Europe. Today, we are conducting dialogue with the Belarusian authorities, designed to infuse more balance into Belarusian foreign policy. At the same time, we are not neglecting support for the opposition and civil society. We have managed to halt the deterioration of the Polish diaspora’s situation in that country. The number of Polish investments there is growing, and regional and cultural contacts are developing. We have managed to influence a revision of Belarus’s historical policy.

I was the first Polish foreign minister to pay a bilateral visit to **Moldova**. I sent letters to the heads of key international institutions: the Union Presidency, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the ODIHR, the heads of the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, calling for tangible support for democratic processes and

economic development in that country. I have also held dozens of meetings, amongst others with senior representatives of the International Monetary Fund, pushing the same cause. On behalf of the European Union, I conveyed to the Moldovan authorities an appeal for the observance of European values and principles during the parliamentary elections, and that has happened. We are also working on a bilateral loan for Moldova, to fight the effects of the economic crisis. Moldova's political forces have responded with gratitude for Poland's engagement.

We support **Georgia** in coping with its internal and external problems. This support is facilitated by numerous high and top-level contacts. We are principled in our calls for the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity, actively participating in Union missions. We are also working for Georgia's approximation to Western structures, particularly the European Union. We want to see a resolution of the internal political conflicts in that country, and the elaboration of constructive solutions between the authorities and the opposition. If both sides consider it desirable, we would be prepared, as in the past, to undertake mediation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have presented a catalogue of bilateral undertakings in our relations with our Eastern neighbours. However, our efforts aimed at the elaboration of European Union policy goals in relation to the countries of Eastern Europe are even more important. This approach has found practical realisation in the **Eastern Partnership**. This Polish-Swedish initiative has become a programme for the Union as a whole in record time, considering EU standards. And Poland has proven that just a few years after obtaining membership, it can build coalitions and thus be effective in persuading the Union to undertake initiatives in accordance with our own interests.

I do not believe that those present here today need a detailed description of the Eastern Partnership. So I will give just a few words about its logic: it is a political project, which envisages economic integration within the European market of six post-Soviet countries, anticipating the creation of a deep free-trade zone and the introduction of substantial visa facilities. It initially assumes the expenditure of six hundred million euros on co-operation projects with the countries covered by the Partnership, in the sphere of legislative and normative harmonisation. However what really matters is that the Partnership is not merely an idea or a verbal promise, but a programme for concrete action. **The goal is to narrow the gap between the participating countries and the European Union**, and that is increasingly the perception of the countries taking part in the programme.

In the past there have been too many worthy pronouncements that affirmed the need for co-operation with the countries of Eastern Europe. But while others engaged in lip-service, we are engaging in practical measures, and because nowadays we mean more in Europe than we used to, there is much more that we can achieve.

Six hundred million euros is just the beginning. Poland would not be able to spend that much money on its own. **Thanks to the adoption of the programme by the Union, we have multiplied the impact of our policies.** Working through the Union boosts our effectiveness and our attractiveness in the eyes of Europe's Eastern neighbours.

As in the European Union at large, we do not think in geopolitical terms. In Europe, we think and act in terms of institutions, procedures and standards. But the stimulation of modernisation and democratisation might, in time, mean geopolitical implications.

True to that logic, in developing cooperation with our Eastern neighbors - whilst rejecting a "zero-sum game" approach - we have made great strides in our relations with Russia. **We have abandoned the policy of a permanently raised drawbridge.** And we have not only revised contacts at the top executive level such as Premier Donald Tusk's visit to Russia in February 2008, or the return visit by Premier Vladimir Putin to Poland on 1<sup>st</sup> September. On that occasion, we managed to expand the range of issues that have been resolved in relations with Russia. Trade has risen sharply, we signed an agreement on navigation in the Vistula Lagoon and made substantial progress, from our point of view, concerning the restitution of post-Soviet property in Warsaw, as well as the settlement of a number of related issues.

Key institutions of Polish-Russian dialogue have been invigorated. The Group for Difficult Issues has made evident progress in its work, a tangible effect of which was the adoption on 1<sup>st</sup> September by the heads of government of the two countries of decisions on the establishment of a joint Polish-Russian institute concerning the Katyn problem, and on access to archive materials connected with the case. Two sessions were held of the bilateral Forum of Civic Dialogue. In May, after a long break, Minister Sergei Lavrov and I co-chaired a plenary meeting of the Committee on Polish-Russian Co-operation Strategy. Earlier, the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Co-operation resumed its work, after years of inaction. And last month Moscow hosted the Forum of the Regions - an innovative undertaking, chaired by the speakers of the upper chambers of the two parliaments.

All of these events point to a normalisation of Polish-Russian relations. In this context it would be appropriate to cite Vladimir Putin, who said in a recent article for Gazeta Wyborcza that bilateral relations were assuming a shape suitable for relations between two great European nations.

These are not easy relations. We do not avoid difficult issues, including historical ones. We try to address them in a spirit of justice, with evil called evil, but, simultaneously, in a spirit of empathy and reconciliation. We react properly to attempts at the falsification of history, defending our principles. An example of this was provided by the speeches in Gdansk and Sopot on 1<sup>st</sup> September of the President and Premier – speeches that were complementary in tone and message.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have made repeated references to two grand ideas - that of the Piasts and of the Jagiellonians - which have historically shaped the thinking about Poland's place in Europe. However each epoch requires a new reading of these ideas.

In our striving to become firmly anchored in Europe, we have implemented the "Piast idea". The deepening of European integration, including the expected entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, offers new possibilities of advancing this vision. It also creates a conducive context for the development of the "Jagiellonian idea". In its updated guise, it implies sharing the gains of European integration with our Eastern partners. The only practicable form of implementing the Jagiellonian strategy consists in the approximation of the European Union to the countries of Eastern Europe, and assistance in their striving for integration with the Union. With that assumption, it is not only a viable project, but also one that is attractive to our partners. **After all, they do not want to become integrated with Poland, nor do we with them. But we all want to become integrated within Europe.** It is a beautiful, ambitious, and epoch-making vision: the Jagiellonians would have been proud.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Józef Piłsudski is described as saying: "I can do enough thinking for five Polands, but I can only get done as much as this single one can achieve". We do not need pseudo-big-power rantings. As a country aspiring to a place amongst the six largest states of the European Union – a Union that is working to enhance its global role – we are capable of conceiving, translating into the language of concrete measures and attaining ambitious foreign policy goals. This is our guiding logic, and it is producing results. We have the Eastern Partnership, which is extending institutional ties with Europe to our Eastern

neighbours. We are pursuing a vigorous bilateral and European Eastern policy, and are winning the engagement of the whole Union and of the major Member States, including our Weimar partners.

We are also elevating our relations with Russia to European standards, securing tangible benefits. We openly defend our principles, both in bilateral and historical policy, and at the European level. We are involved in building a strategic partnership between Europe and Russia. In doing so, we are not sacrificing our interests, and will not hesitate to apply any available means, taking special care to ensure that our actions are comprehensible to our partners, and not rooted in the misconceived politics of honour.

We are capable of building effective coalitions together with our regional partners, as evidenced by our activity in the East, our increasing success in persuading the Union to think and talk about energy security using our language, and the negotiations on the climate-energy package. Our policy magnifies the effects of our input. **This is not a policy that seeks to minimalise Poland's ambitions and is not motivated by a fear of disaster - this is the realistic use of our opportunities and potential.**

I am convinced that results will be even better, thanks to the recently conducted reform of our diplomacy and establishment of a diplomatic service worthy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By improving as a European team player, we will become even more skilled in harnessing the power of the European Union as a whole for the implementation of both our own and European interests. For the Poland we have, this is an ambitious and realistic task.

Thank you.