

**BETWEEN THE CENTRE AND THE PERIPHERY
OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?
TEN YEARS OF POLISH MEMBERSHIP
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

by Artur Niedźwiecki

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Europe, slowly but surely, appears to be recovering from one of the most damaging financial crises ever, but still our continent dangles in a sort of political suspension. The “Eastern Enlargement” from 2004 has been digested badly by the European Union. Currently, we are witnessing an overwhelming shortage of common ideas for the Community consisting of the twenty eight Member States, which is striking and, is in fact a grievous phenomenon. A number of exclusive political and economic initiatives realized beyond the institutional skeleton of the Union evolve, at least partially, into disruption of pure solidarity and rudimentary concord among nations. The multi-tier Europe, evidently faltering at a political crossroads, is gradually rising from the differentiation of the Community and, in consequence, presupposes some kind of socio-political and economic Centre and Periphery.

Nowadays, a few European undertakings intent on alleviating painful repercussions of the financial turmoil and prevent similar disturbances from occurring in the future. The phenomenon mentioned above offers a unique opportunity to perform, at least to some extent, movement

towards conceivable federalization of the Union. Nevertheless, in Poland such endeavors as the Banking Union or the Fiscal Pact are perceived essentially as fraudulent dumping of various fatiguing burdens arising from the crisis on the “Others”¹. We ought to acknowledge that the demonization of France or Germany as countries utilizing economic storm to conduct unjust distribution of power in Europe is simply unreasonable. As a matter of fact, the major purpose for those legal and political ventures is to create – through the method of federalization – brand new and fairly operative cells of integration. Only the above construction is capable of protecting our continent against destructive re-nationalization, as well as to preserve the interest of dysfunctional Peripheries in the era of economic unrests. It is absolutely clear that, predominantly within the intergovernmental Union, the “power” of Poland, Hungary or Estonia shall always experience “relativization”, while clashing with greater political organisms from Western Europe. In this sense, passionate blaming and criticizing the federalization of the Union, instead of improving our own national imperfections, resembles retreating from the battlefield for a brighter future of a united Europe.

Due to the tenth anniversary of Polish membership in the EU, we should consider the role of our country within the European supranational sphere. It ought to be emphasized that examining the relevance of Poland in the Union, especially nowadays, remains the hostage of vicious circles of national – not necessarily flattering – quarrels. During those ten years, we have perceived the EU as an ideal reference point that was worth imitating. However, the contemporary Poland is floating chaotically apart from the exclusive *avant-garde* of the European innovation, which enjoy a predominant influence on the supranational arena. Instead of the above, our country still appears to be overwhelmed by a feeling of disappointment that arises from endless disputes on rather minor and symbolic matters.

It is obvious that during those ten years of membership, we have scarcely participated in the “mainstream integration”, which seems to be an emanation of inglorious deficit of our internal capacity to conduct

¹ T.G. Grosse, *Gry geoekonomiczne wokół kryzysu strefy euro*, <http://www.sobieski.org.pl/analiza-is-48/>, [accessed: 04.02.2014].

modern and functional European policy. Indeed, frequently expressed and, more or less, exaggerated critique concerning the Community affairs, positioned Poland on the dramatic margins of the European project. Our country has shown, in the course of its membership, noticeable tendency to “splendid isolation”, by playing a misguiding and anachronistic role of “free election” beyond great Community debates. So why could Poland not afford an effective and forward-looking European policy and, as a result, failed to articulate its reasonable interests?

CLARIFYING THE IDEA OF A UNITED EUROPE

According to influential experts, European projects endorse all legitimate attempts of Member States to maintain steerage and maneuverability in globalized international relations. Indeed, it appears that, in spite of severe national egoisms, it is principally the activeness of EU institutions that contributes the most to strengthening Europe’s role in the world. But are we capable, after those ten years of membership, to operate within hereby “post-historical paradise” as a truly functional ingredient, acting for the benefit of the whole Community? It is no doubt that Poland, regardless of many years of mutual reconciliation, is still reluctant to acknowledge Germany as trustful European partners and erase hostility following irrational fear of hegemony in Europe². During its membership, our country has adopted various ephemeral measures to consolidate its internal structures as a sort of remedy for growing international cooperation and competition. Unfortunately, we should critically assess the Polish ability to reinforce the state’s institutional architecture in order to terminate with its semi-Peripheral status. There is an insistent question as to whether “catching up the EU” must rely on the strategy of building barricades between Poland and European integration. A distressing symbol of the above policy was associated with the acceptance of the British objection to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, specifically, to the chapter entitled

² M.A. Cichocki, D. Karłowicz, *Arminiusz patrzy na Europę*, “Teologia Polityczna”, 7/2013–2014, p. 5–12.

“Solidarity”. Perhaps our accession to the so-called “British Protocol” was not a convincing “state-building” endeavor, but just – a quite awkward – manifestation of conservative dogma at that time?

The exceptionality of the Polish predicament depends on the conviction that the process of integration remains the exclusive “vehicle” for modernization of our country. Definitely, we possess the entitlement to feel a kind of pessimism, while examining the Polish potential within supranational areas. So it is absolutely not enough to struggle for merely “a minimum of Europe”, because, in fact, our continent would be clinched within a framework of intergovernmental negotiations. The uniqueness of the Polish historical experience leads to an assumption that “some sort of self-restraint” could be virtually not sufficient to break with various fatalisms of our geopolitical situation. Ten years of membership in the EU has created an outstanding opportunity to protect the Polish national interest in a manner that exceeds beyond traditional understanding of politics. From this perspective, supporting pure intergovernmentalism has become a grave mistake, since keeping Europe at the stage of rather evanescent development infringes our credible concerns.

One of the most important factors contributing to the Polish subjectivity in the EU is the activity of Community agencies, which ensures equal distribution of costs and benefits from the integration³. It should be noted that, as far as historical circumstances are concerned, the Polish sovereignty suffered from the excessive celebration of significance by the greatest European sovereigns, conducted within the classical model of international relations⁴. It is worth considering whether an intergovernmental Europe, which takes decisions by consensus, would be actually capable of safeguarding Poland against current threats arising from the international environment? We have to realize that it is not difficult to dictate demands consistent with national interest and, at the same time, present ambivalence towards supranational phenomenon. Definitely, much

³ A. Niedźwiecki, *Polska polityka zagraniczna wobec integracji europejskiej po 2004 r.*, Łódź 2012, p. 14.

⁴ R. Sikorski, *1 września – lekcja historii*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 28 August 2009.

more ambitious assignment – for Poland in the EU – appears to be the combination of both the determination in deepening the European project and, simultaneously, courageous defense of national matters.

RECALLING THE PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD

The process of accession to the EU is often characterized by influential theorists as adaptive and, in fact, without a real alternative for candidates. Entering to the European project seems to be highly asymmetric, due to the substantial imbalance between Member States and candidates. Unquestionably, Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries had insufficient bargaining power in the pre-accession period⁵. These states were obliged to undertake national adjustment and accelerate internal modernization in order to fulfill the Community standards. Because of substantial structural dilemmas, Poland was expected to perform, as soon as possible, civilizational advancements to comply with the rest of the Union. Evident parallelism of both internal transformations and preparations to the membership had forged rather troublesome circumstances for the Polish locus. Indeed, while operating at Peripheries of the system, Poland acted to join its Centre, so it remained rather a mere subject of the so-called “patronizing Europeanization”, by importing socio-political and economic order from the EU. In this sense, Brussels – as a sort of guidepost for the Polish metamorphosis – utilized its privileged position and performed a sort of pressure to achieve, quite coercively, adaptation of candidates. We have to admit that the “Copenhagen Criteria” – acting as a filter of “entry” to the system – revealed substantial challenges for Poland and other candidates in the pre-accession period. As a matter of fact, the accession negotiations reflected general condition of the Polish state with reference to the European “pole of attraction”. The perspective of joining the EU was actually without any real alternative for Poland, which

⁵ A. Moravcsik, M.A. Vachudova, *National Interests, State Power, and EU Enlargement*, “East European Politics and Societies”, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003, p. 42–57.

eventually contributed to the tangible reduction of its bargaining capacity⁶. In consequence, because of colossal discrepancies in economic potentials, Poland along with other candidates enjoyed petite maneuverability in determining future membership.

One has to underline that multiplicity of derogations, resulting from the accession talks, influenced by the considerable dysfunctionality of Poland within the system. From the very beginning of membership, its political role appeared to be far below expectancies, since costly adaptations had been postponing the entry of our country to the core of the Union. According to respectable theorists, the scale of various challenges after joining the EU remains proportional to the number of transitional intervals obtained by the new Member States in the pre-accession period. Nevertheless, candidates are more willing to apply for derogations, rather than to solve their internal problems exhibiting their miserable competencies. As far as Poland is concerned, numerous transitional periods portrayed its fairly noticeable disproportion with reference to the united Europe. In this sense, we have to acknowledge that fully functional membership seems to be achieved by the Member States usually after decades of its entering to the Community.

As it was elucidated above, joining the EU, at least in political terms, is a one-sided process, because the conditions of accession are determined principally by the Centre. To be frank, entering to the EU is admittedly voluntary, but it requires skillful adaptation to the qualifications of the Union. So because of both derogations and national baggage of unresolved structural obstacles, Poland has been absent in many critical areas of European projects and, in consequence, functioned on the margins of the system with a relatively minor impact on the EU decision-making.

From this perspective, the Union's geographical expansion can be courageously defined as asymmetric phenomenon, where applicants – as *de facto* petitioners – are obliged to make internal adjustments to the Community standards, on the formulation of which they had

⁶ D.A. Lax, J.K. Sebenius, *The Power of Alternatives or the Limits to Negotiation*, [in:] *Negotiation Theory and Practice*, J.W. Breslin, J.Z. Rubin (eds.), Cambridge 1999.

no real influence. We cannot deny an obvious fact that for candidates the accession process remains, at least to some extent, without solid alternatives. Indeed, failure of entering by Poland to the Union in 2004 would mean lingering in the “Moldovan/Belarusian league” and, as a result, suffering scarcity of opportunities to conduct sustainable development in the future. Contrarily, enlargement of the Union is perhaps one of the most effective European policies, because it shifts historical rivals into peacefully cooperating partners. Maybe other parts of the contemporary world could learn from the lessons of the EU, which – as an efficient “pole of attraction” – offers incentives for the modernization upon the principles of democracy, human rights and market economy?

It should be noted that the adoption of *acquis* – in spite of numerous austerities – aims at transforming, as soon as possible, new Member States into prosperous beneficiaries of the integration. However, “Eastern Enlargement” has shown historically great distance between superior Community standards and underprivileged conditions of the Central and Eastern European countries⁷. We can be confident that primarily for those states the EU has developed the so-called “Copenhagen Criteria” as aforementioned “test for entrance” to the Union. The process of “Europeanization” appears to be unconditional and, in consequence, fairly coercive, mainly due to the inevitability of “downloading” European regulations to the national contexts. No doubt that many areas of the public sphere in such countries as Poland or Estonia have been “reconstructed” under influence of political and legal patterns arising from Western Europe. Nevertheless, we are entitled to assume that the new Member States would be structurally incapable of performing transformation without indispensable stimuli from the EU’s modernization potential.

⁷ A. Moravcsik, M.A. Vachudova, *Bargaining Among Unequals: Enlargement and the Future of European Integration*, “European Union Studies Association Review”, Fall 2002.

POLAND IN THE PROCESS OF “EUROPEANIZATION”

In spite of tough and insistent rhetoric, the Polish domain in the pre-accession period and afterwards, during ten years of its membership, has been mainly the adaptation to the specific European context by grasping the political, legal and economic system established by the Western countries as a sort of civilizational framework of the Community’s founders. Poland, along with other Central and Eastern European “outsiders”, has been aspiring rather than permanently entering the strategic core of the Union. Disappointingly, our country, from the very beginning of its membership, has been participating only partially in building the common supranational sphere. However, one has to admit that the political hierarchy in Europe is fairly steady and cannot be easily re-shaped by some kind of other distribution of power among the Member States.

According to respectable scholars, the process of “Europeanization” appears to be virtually resting on the transfers of particular national provisions to the Community level as the key technique of “seizing” economic interdependences arising predominantly from globalization⁸. Indeed, the fusion of juristic regulations between national and supranational arenas is gradually becoming the clue of Member States’ European policy. The abovementioned observation provokes us to undertake the challenge and examine the impact of Poland on development of the Community legal machinery, after those ten years of membership. It seems that “hard-core” Member States are still occupying the first ranks in hereby competition. The Union can be accurately defined as a multi-regulatory mechanism composed of overlapping subsystems of national and supranational law⁹, so we have to acknowledge that in 2004 our country was poorly prepared, especially in terms of its institutions, to participate in the Community. Poland has been operating practically on the margins of European integration, by merely accepting and adapting provisions from the supranational area to its own legal system.

⁸ R. Keohane, *International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?*, “Foreign Policy”, No 110/1998, p. 62–88.

⁹ N.W. Barber, *Legal Pluralism and the European Union*, “European Law Journal”, No 3/2006, p. 19–48.

During ten years of membership, the values of European order have been infiltrating comprehensively the Polish institutions responsible for managing Community affairs. In spite of the general rule of the so-called “procedural autonomy”, the EU has been endorsing reception of common provisions by coordinating bodies of Member States. So has it been genuinely impossible for Poland to erect functional institutions on one’s own that would allow us to co-manage successfully the process of “Europeanization”? It needs to be emphasized that the phenomenon of a united Europe creates a necessity to participate in activities of regulatory nature, because national administrations, through various juridical instruments, compete to achieve favorable circumstances for boosting their economies¹⁰. After ten years of its membership, it seems rather dubious that Poland is truly predisposed to perform efficaciously a sort of aforementioned “procedural games” at a supranational level.

Definitely, the process of globalization decreases importantly the maneuverability of Member States in the contemporary world. The EU offers a wide range of tools for safeguarding a state’s influence over the economic processes. Nevertheless, we need to notice critically that Poland has failed to utilize the above instruments and performed unsatisfactory progress in the shaping of its external environment (e.g. “Westernization” of Ukraine). Moreover, the Polish government has not managed to jam disadvantageous regulations in terms of their socio – economic impact on national development (e.g. EU climate package). No doubt that Member States, slowly but surely, are shaping the European sphere to gain supranational compatibility with their national systems of capitalism. Has Poland ever, during those ten years of membership, been operative on the hereby arena?

Some influential experts believe that the activities of EU institutions can be defined as meaningless “bustle” and, as a result, without a slice of political significance¹¹. However, beneath the euro-bureaucratic surface, we can easily experience rather evident process of distribution of power.

¹⁰ A. Nowak-Far, A. Michoński, *Krajowa administracja w unijnym procesie podejmowania decyzji*, Warszawa 2004, p. 141.

¹¹ P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Czy i jak Unia Europejska patrzy na Wschód? Czy i jak Unia Europejska patrzy na Wschód? Polityka Unii Europejskiej wobec obszaru postsowieck-*

But Poland, after ten years of its participation in the EU, still suffers from the syndrome of “newcomer”, which is surely apparent due to its strikingly ephemeral feeling of belonging to the wider Community. Perpetual trivialization of the Polish politics, beyond any doubt, undermines our efforts not only to appreciate, but to truly benefit from the European integration. It is rather obvious that becoming the “hard-core” participant to the EU, deeply rooted in various supranational institutions and circles of influence, is the best „anti-missile shield” nowadays. Unfortunately, our expertise on the Community affairs seems to be outrageously backward, since we are often willing to perceive our country as a mere “Euro-Russian condominium”. Finally, we need to admit that the presence of European affairs in the everyday life of the Polish citizens is rather scarce and seriously distorted.

Intriguing deliberations, due to our tenth anniversary of membership in the EU, trigger reasonable investigation on directions of “Polish modernization”. For many years, our debates on the European matters has been clinched by endless disputes conducted between the „Enlightened” and the „Sarmatians”, which has captured our attention so powerfully, that it appears almost unattainable to exceed beyond hereby quarrels nowadays¹². Undeniably, we have a remarkably noxious manner of excluding other fellow citizens from our arguments on public matters. But perhaps a pessimistic diagnosis on the European policy of Poland is too harsh, because, due to “realistic minimalism”, we have achieved some measurable successes in the Community? For instance, reaching and holding various official jobs within the EU bodies (e.g. President of the European Parliament) should become, at least a partially, positive exemplification of the chiefly desirable “enlightened egoism”. Indeed, the EU institutions – especially after normative shift introduced by the Lisbon Treaty – seem to be alternative battlefields for national interests. Perhaps, for the sake of realization of ambitious European assignments, we ought to abandon “historical costumes” of our diplomacy and engage more eagerly in the modern “institution-building” policy? Thus, the aforementioned performance, felt by some theorists as

iego a interesy Polski, http://www.natolin.edu.pl/pdf/analizy/Natolin_Analiza_6_2013.pdf, [accessed: 02.04.2014].

¹² R. Matyja, C. Michalski, R. Krasowski, J. Rokita, *O Polsce w Unii*, “Dziennik”, 5.02.2009.

not only unreflective but, in fact, detrimental, could be acknowledged as ensuring real political influence on the EU bodies¹³.

Contemplating Poland as an autonomous and self-determining entity within global politics is a rather recent experience for Poles. It needs to be emphasized that the pre-accession period was abundant with various determinisms resting upon the necessity to implement incontestably *acquis communautaire*¹⁴. For quite a long time, our country was internally incapable of reaching a national consensus on the strategic directions of Poland in the Union. We should acknowledge the crude fact that, nowadays, realistic concept of international relations is being manifested through the “Renaissance” of state’s idea. The so-called “indirect legitimization” of the European project underlines, to a great extent, the role of Member States as the so-called “Masters of Treaties”. Bearing in mind the above, we have to take into consideration the “systemic position” of our country. After ten years of membership, Poland is responsible only for one of the twenty eight legitimized narratives within the Union. During its participation in the Community, our country has failed to present a convincing vision of the future of Europe, because all Polish concepts were perceived as parochial and, in fact, disappointing. According to respectable thinkers, for Polish politicians it is predominantly an internal arena that remains the true source of power, whereas the European policy seems to be just another field utilized to express immature visions of a fraudulent and hostile world. Perhaps we could, once and for all, drop this “anti-European” approach of demonization as handful but, at the same time, inglorious method and introduce modern attitudes aimed at truly supranational cooperation?

Sailing on one’s own through the restless ocean of world politics resembles “pretty infantile” dreaming on unconditional sovereignty¹⁵. We are proud of our splendid tradition of conducting diplomacy “as if Poland was a superpower” arising from the Second Polish Republic. However, delusory an impression on the possibility to “box above one’s own weight”

¹³ M.A. Cichocki, *W pułapce minimalizmu*, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, 11.10.2009.

¹⁴ B. Lippert, G. Umbach, *The Pressure of Europeanisation. From post-communist state administrations to normal players in the EU system*, Cologne 2005.

¹⁵ S. Konopacki, *Problem suwerenności w Unii Europejskiej*, “Studia Europejskie”, 3(47)/2008.

in recent years has led to bitter disappointment and a feeling of powerlessness. Unfortunately, currently observed praise of “minimalism” in the European policy is the outcome of a fairly pessimistic diagnosis on the Polish potential. Our unfinished political transformation in conjunction with the accession negotiations and, subsequently, ten years of membership in the EU, has become an eloquent illustration of the Wallenstein thesis on the durability of the relationship between Centre and Periphery. Indeed, the specificity of the Polish geopolitical position within the Community seems to be fatal suspension between a “post-historical paradise” by Kant and “state of nature” by Hobbes¹⁶.

In Poland the concept of deepening cooperation with its European partners, frequently, has been implying allegations on the assumed servility. Nevertheless, we are currently witnessing an increasing number of Community affairs settled by the qualified majority voting, which leads us to the unresolved riddle of the Polish potential alliances in the EU. Neglecting our special appreciation of the Polish image, which is perceived by some experts as “crybaby attitude”, appears to be not only imprudent, but even destructive. The metaphorical “hijacking of Europe” ought to be performed through the properly understood “seduction” by application of Polish “soft power”. We need to acknowledge that the usage of instruments from the above repertoire does not necessarily determine waving of the “white flag”. It should be noted that one of the major successes of Poland in the Union was connected with attainment of true solidarity from European partners in the middle of bilateral commercial disputes between Poland and Russia. One has to elucidate whether Polish preferences have actually contributed to the evolution of EU’s Eastern policy, or was it rather hostile assertiveness of the Kremlin that has been disturbing Western countries for several years? However, no doubt that only by acting in broad coalitions, we are capable of sustaining desirable funding from the EU budget.

The European integration, arising from the civilizational framework of the Western countries, is being perpetually stretched on the Eastern

¹⁶ B. Sienkiewicz, *Wojna w Europie (czas przyszły)*, “Tygodnik Powszechny”, 4.08.2009.

and Southern part of our continent¹⁷. One has to acknowledge that Member States, which entered into the Community upon the “Eastern Enlargement”, for many years before membership, had been developing their internal structures according to different (non-Western) rationality. After the accession to the Union, Poland has been performing the process of modernization quite insufficiently and, in consequence, failed to meet various criteria of the European pattern of subjectivity which act as a genuine “filter” for functional membership. For instance, as far as the Polish Presidency is concerned, we cannot deny that hereby occurrence gave the assumption to promote substantially our country in Europe. But after a six-month perspective, this institution seemed to be responsible only for mere administration of the EU’s decision-making. Nowadays, in the era of the Lisbon Treaty, “super-strategic stance”, is shifting, slowly but steadily, from the Presidency to the President of the European Council, who – as a supranational official – enjoys stable cadence and access to critical information.

While discussing the tenth anniversary of our membership in the EU, one has to examine manifestations of the Polish political position during the EU’s treaty reforms. It seems that the methodology of those normative alternations endorsed, to a great extent, crucial interests of Member States from the Centre. The Treaty of Nice was concluded in the time of accession negotiations of Central and Eastern European countries. As a result, hereby reform, intending to prepare the Union for its historical extension, was accomplished without the real influence of candidates. Thus, some sort of exclusion of Central and Eastern European countries raised justifiable questions on their future political position as Member States. But deliberation on the Constitutional Treaty, as far as the relevance of its signatories is concerned, was characterized by considerable inequality as well. It appears that both France and Germany defined impassable boundaries for European Convention and Intergovernmental Conference 2003/2004. Core provisions of the Constitutional Treaty, namely the section devoted to the EU decision-making, were potentially reducing the position of the new

¹⁷ M. Le Barbier-Le Bris, *L’Union européenne et la gouvernance mondiale – Quel apport avec quels acteurs?*, Bruylant 2012, p. 21.

Member States. Finally, the last alternation (i.e. the Lisbon Treaty) seemed to be far from Polish interest, because of the method of distribution of votes in the EU Council, diminishing presumably significance of the most likely coalitions for Poland. We ought to take into consideration that our country took part in the aforementioned negotiations as a legitimate Member State. Furthermore, its executive was led by the formation manifesting special attention to the Polish *raison d'état*. Obviously, our attitude to the Community should not be “naïve pro-European”. Nevertheless, during those ten years of membership, Poland could have made an additional effort to follow the principle of loyal cooperation with Brussels.

In spite of the outbreak of the financial crisis, the political core of supranational system is still located within the “Eurozone”. It is widely acknowledged that Members States from the “Eurogroup” occupy privileged positions in the institutional architecture of the EU¹⁸. Operating in the above structure appears to be the condition *sine qua non* for crucial influence on the European economic policy. Sadly, after ten years of membership, there is no evidence that Poland could join the “Eurozone” in the predictable future and, as a result, increase its relevance in the EU decision-making. Adversely, both poor economic development and inadequate real convergence, manifesting through a shamefully low level of GDP *per capita*, resulted in transfiguring Poland into a leading *nett* beneficiary to the EU budget. According to some theorists, Member States – functioning outside the “Eurogroup” – are recognized as Peripheral, so they function on the margins of the supranational arena. From this perspective, extension of the “Eurozone” would presumably create a new distribution of power within the political heart of our continent¹⁹.

During ten years of its membership, Poland has been preoccupied with energy security problem. The above – for Western Europe – is closely correlated with the issue of climate change, global warming and/or environmental protection. No doubt that energy security – as it is understood by the Centre of the system – plays an imperative role while debating on

¹⁸ T.G. Grosse, *Eurogrupa: między logiką resortową a polityczną*, “Nowa Europa. Przegląd Natoliński”, 3(16)/2013, p. 342–370.

¹⁹ A. Nowak-Far, *Konstytucja Gospodarcza Unii Europejskiej. Aksjologia*, A. Nowak-Far (ed.), Warszawa 2010, p. 31–38.

the EU's forums. However, in Poland hereby phenomenon grants exceptional opportunity to conduct ritual disputes expressing well-known fears about traditional geopolitical challenges. In our analysis a sort of sinister presumption of German-Russian agreement over the heads of Poles is constantly prevalent. Indeed, the problem of "diversification" becomes a handful excuse in the next phase of historical discussion about the unequal struggle with fatalisms of the Polish geopolitical position. For some national politicians, energy security is associated with narratives on the ruthless foreign corporations willing to acquire the Polish critical infrastructure. Notwithstanding, a substantial threat for the Polish interest appears to be connected with both many years of negligence in the field of energy framework and excessive emissivity of our economy that violates rudimentary standards of environmental protection. Perhaps a measure of patriotism would be the honest adaptation to provisions of the Union, lack of which remains true ballast for Polish sustainable development to those days. For this reason, the issue of climate change should not be interpreted as a mischievous attempt by our European partners that aims at suppressing the Polish economy, but rather authentic concern on the conditions of living for future generations.

CENTRE OR PERIPHERY OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

While examining the system of Europe, we can distinguish its Centre, which ought to be defined as highly developed, with efficient political institutions and a significant position in the EU's bodies, as well as with extensive experience in supranational integration. In this sense, no doubt that during ten years of its membership, Poland has hardly ever occupied, even temporarily, a place in the above, rather exclusive, circle of the so-called "European policy-makers", who actually do perform fusion of norms from national to the Community level²⁰. It appears that – during participation in the EU – Polish regulatory mechanisms have been fre-

²⁰ *Le droit international, le droit européen et la hiérarchie des normes*, T. Olson, P. Casia (eds.), PUF, 2006, p. 76.

quently ineffective and, in consequence, deprived from solid relevance in the management of “Europeanization”. Without a truly global perspective, Poland has been substantially incapable of shaping strategic trends of the European project, deeply rooted in the patterns of modernity originating from the Centre.

Bearing in mind the above, we are entitled to ascertain that process of the EU enlargement resembles a legal and/or political transfer from Centre to Periphery of our continent. So the period of accession to the Community usually determines the scale of civilizational alterations, which the new Member States are expected to implement under pain of fairly dysfunctional membership. What we have learned from the history of integration is that Peripheral countries are just mere recipients of financial and juridical “radiations” emanating from the core of the system²¹. Their poor institutional viability, expressing mainly through remarkably insufficient quality of executives, is becoming a crucial factor in determining predominantly their dysfunctionality in comparison to the Centre.

One has to acknowledge that the “Eastern Enlargement” did not contribute eventually to a sort of “the end of history” by spreading an idealistic vision of supranational polity through our continent. Yet, according to some researchers, we can actually observe, ten years from the above occurrence, a kind of “the end of Europe” with various symptoms of disturbing disintegration. For Poland, membership in the Union became both a “vehicle” for modernization and the only existing tool of maintaining, slightly but steadily, control over the phenomenon of globalization. One should regret that we have been literally not determined enough to break with various pessimistic diagnoses arising from realistic exegesis of world politics.

It is rather self-evident that modernization of Peripheries conducted in firm opposition to the integration is a sort of “Utopia” within the political practice of the contemporary world. We cannot be surprised that both Paris and Berlin are the most “functional” participants to the system, because,

²¹ Ch. Knill, A. Lenschow, *Compliance, Competition and Communication: Different Approaches of European Governance and their Impact on National Institutions*, “Journal of Common Market Studies”, Vol. 43, No 3/2005, p. 37–59.

after all, the German “ordo-liberalism” became an ideological cornerstone for the Economic and Monetary Union, as well as the French traditions of bureaucracy, of those days, establishing a practical model for the EU’s supranational institutions. Without a doubt, axiology of the Community arose from the “constitutional traditions” of the Member States. The above observation raises profound questions on the number of Polish ideas that have been contributed to the European dialogue, during those ten years of membership in the EU?

Preparation of internal structures for effective participation in the supranational system remains definitely challenging for the modernization of Central and Eastern European countries. Hereby the assignment does not imply thoughtless adaptation to the order established by the Community, but advanced policy aimed at shaping a sustainable and coherent project in our continent. However, Poland – alongside its anachronistic law-enforcement and law-creating structures – is able to operate only to the limited extent as truly “functional subsystem” in the architecture of the EU. Certainly, both shortcomings in the implementation of the Community law and apathetic attitude to the EU decision-making formulate an eloquent example of the semi-Peripheral status of our country²².

Nevertheless, For Poland membership in the EU denotes the only possible external stimulus for desperately needed civilizational advancement, since it grants a unique opportunity to experience “refreshing shock” from the post-communist period, that distorted and diminished fundamentally its internal potential. From this perspective, special preservation of distinctive Polish identity, mainly for the sake of splendid patriotic traditions, cannot result in wasting our historic chance that the Union offers nowadays. However, Polish attempts to moderate the European affairs by multidimensional export of domestic legal regulations to the supranational level is not satisfactory and, in fact, astonishingly profitless.

²² A. Niedźwiecki, *Is the Division between Centre and Periphery of European Integration Inevitable?*, “Jindal Journal of International Affairs”, Vol. 2, Issue 1, August 2012, p. 38–57.

CONCLUSIONS

As far as political subjectivity is concerned, Poland remains suspended immensely somewhere between Centre and Periphery of European integration, without any real capacity for joining the “hard-core” of the EU in the predictable future. However, we perfectly know, after those ten years of membership, that demonizing European partners, as well as accusing them of hostile attempts to create a sort of severe hegemony in our continent is absolutely groundless. Seeking impure intentions and the will to dominate in the EU seems to be the emanation of the Polish prejudices arising from the mistakenly understood historical analogies, because ascendancy in the contemporary Europe occurs only in rudimentary forms.

Currently, the “post-heroic” citizens of France or Germany are opting more eagerly for securing social aspects of their own existence, rather than conducting absolute expansion throughout our continent. The image of “warrior” in the European culture simply does not exist, so building an identity in opposition to the “Others” appears to be honestly “national treason”, within the conditions of the globalized world. During those ten years of membership, Polish politicians have been using European matters to express their own – rather provincial – vision of the world. Unfortunately, their statements have been duplicating harmful stereotypes and prejudices based on historic provenances. However, the European integration should not be perceived as a mere source of “photocopying modernization”, but a rather accurate tool of giving the proper response to the challenges of the future.

SUMMARY

The major propose for this article is to examine ten years of Polish membership in the European Union. This paper analyzes characteristics of the system of Europe, as well as the process of “Europeanization”. It also covers the depiction of relations between the Centre and the Periphery of European integration and investigates the Polish role in a process of diffusion of norms and procedures within our continent. The main hypothesis of this paper is that nowadays Poland remains suspended somewhere between Centre and Periphery of European integration, without a real capacity of joining the “hard-core” of the EU in the predictable future.

Keywords: European integration, membership, modernization, system of Europe, Centre and Periphery