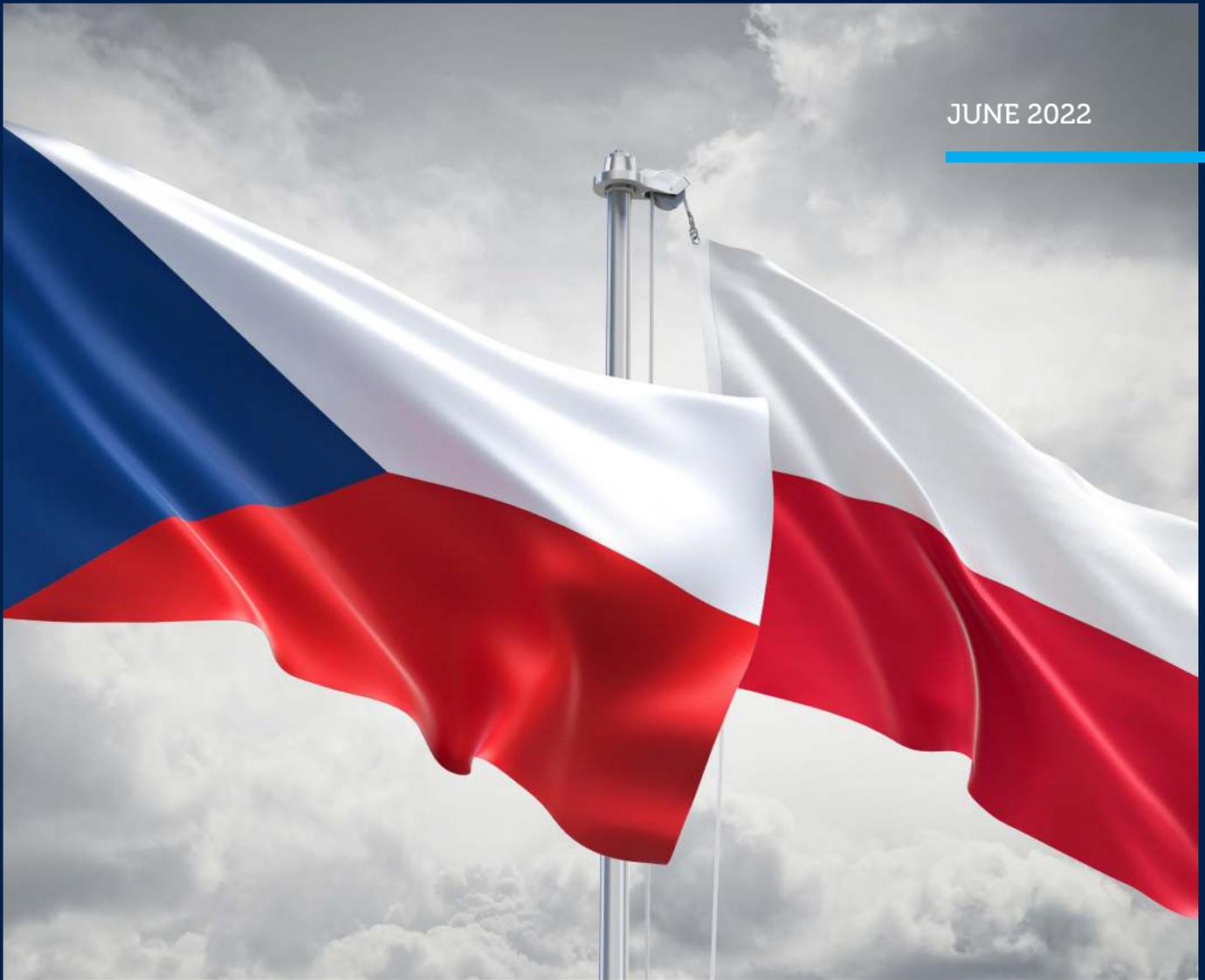


JUNE 2022



THE POLISH-CZECH VISION OF THE FUTURE FOR THE EU

Authors:
Marek Wróbel
Šimon Zajíček

Cooperation:
Dorota Zielińska



FUNDACJA REPUBLIKAŃSKA



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland

Public task financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not reflect
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Republic of Poland

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SUMMARY

POLISH VISIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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From the Polish point of view, the second most important geopolitical question today (after the rather obvious 'Who will win in Ukraine?') is: 'With whom does Poland share common interests?' The turbulent, unpredictable nature of the past decade inclines us to consider this even more carefully.

There are a number of responses to this question:

1. Not with Germany, it would appear, or at least not to the extent to which we have become accustomed to think.

2. In matters of **global security**, Poland has just one **super-partner** on which it can realistically rely: the United States, preferably in good old Cold-War fashion.

3. In matters of **regional security**, the possibilities appear to be more extensive. Poland has launched new plans to radically expand its armed forces. Countries in the region are increasing their defence budgets and expanding and modernising their armies, as they see an opportunity in the notion of mutual defence. The flank has never been stronger in its short history, and this is only the beginning.

4. Regional cooperation (with countries to the South) has a big future. A special role – from Poland's perspective – is performed in this case by the **Three Seas Initiative** and the various projects that are associated with it, which include the Three Seas Fund and a common stock index.

5. The war in Ukraine has led to a re-valuation of past certainties. Clearly, the best option today for both parties is to rely on trustworthy neighbours as well as the Atlantic security architecture. The war has not only brought Poles and Ukrainians closer together, but renewed and strengthened many **bilateral and multilateral ties among the countries of our region.**

6. The countries of Central Europe have some of **the fastest growing economies.** We have the industry, location and human potential we need to succeed, while also sharing similar traditions and problems.

The future shape of the EU - resistance to further integration can be expected to grow. **Firstly, Poles value having their own state.** Though they are open to integration, this has its limits. Politicians need to take this into account. Secondly, the benefits are becoming less attractive in relative terms, and our country will soon become a net contributor (some analyses claim it already is). Thirdly, the EU is experiencing multiple setbacks and trying to introduce ever stranger and more harmful policies, which is also lessening its appeal.

It would appear that the most interesting and realistic model for Poland is the **'multi-speed Europe'**, which not only envisions integration at different tempos, but also **the tightening of ties within individual blocs.**

The future is a mystery, but we can be certain that the political, economic and energy arenas, among many others, will be subject to continuous reshuffling. Anyone able to conduct an independent policy has the chance of being among the winners when a new hand is dealt. And one more thing: winners will find reliable allies possessing similar interests.

CZECH VISIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

ŠIMON ZAJÍČEK

Director of CEVRO, CEO of GMVV. Graduated in 2013 from Gymnazium for International and Civic Relations (GMVV) in Prague. He graduated in 2017 from William Jewell College where he majored in International relations and minored in Communication. The same year he received a certificate from The Fund for American Studies (TFAS) in Washington D.C. where he also worked in cyber department at the Institute of World Politics (IWP). In 2017, he started working at his alma mater in Prague as a teacher of international relations, english and geography.

In order to look into the many possible futures and find one that offers the most viable development of the European Union, it is necessary to start by looking into the past. Such an approach has the best chance of not being considered as trivial wishful thinking.

The European continent had successfully endured for over 70 years without a major conflict, in large part due to the project of the European Union which had helped to make Europe arguably the most prosperous, free, and just region in the world.

Some economists and politicians predict a stagflation of unparalleled levels, a rise in unemployment and a global energy crisis. There are two simple reasons for these pessimistic predictions. The first reason is the re-introduction of a long-forgotten enemy of the human race – a **global pandemic**. The second and more recent reason why the European Union is suffering a historic crisis is the **Russian full-out invasion of Ukraine**,

which started at the end of February 2022.

The role of the European Union is substantial, especially in mitigating the effect this conflict will have on the future of the Union, even though, as with the pandemic, the biggest burden is on individual countries.

The future of the European Union is one of the most prevalent topics in Czech society today. The pro-Europeanists and the anti-Europeanists stand on opposite sides of the barricades in Czech politics and there is very little understanding between them. The Euro-realists, the most populous of these three approaches, but not by a large margin, act as a bridge between the two opposing groups.

These three positions, the pro-Europeanists, the Euro-realists and the anti-Europeanists, are nevertheless **not divisible along the lines of left-right politics**, as there are parties on both sides of the spectrum who are members of one of the three positions towards the EU.

What version of the EU do Czechs want? A consensus would be very difficult to reach, especially on topics such as the national currency, military engagements, energy security and the justice system.

✔ The European Union ought not to infringe on national sovereignty, nor should it influence the trias politica – the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

✔ The European Union ought not to create a robust European military force, without the agreement of all member countries.

✔ The European Union ought not to mandate or insist on the adoption of the Euro as the national currency, but should leave this decision exclusively to the citizens of each country.

✔ The European Union ought to control migration at the point of entry through the European Border and Coast

Guard Agency – Frontex, and ought not to apply quotas to redistribute migrants, but should rather use financial and material aid to those affected countries.

✔ The European Union ought to add atomic energy to the Green Energy List and support the development of new technologies in this field.



**POLAND IN THE UNION:
THE SUN IS STILL
SHINING.**

**AND WE CONSTANTLY
HEAR THAT A STORM
IS GATHERING**

Poland's 18 years as a member of the European community has been a period of rapid development, modernisation and increasing prosperity. But also a period marked by a gradual withdrawal from various relationships of dependency: economic and political, as well as mental. There has also been a gradual change in our understanding of Europe.

When we signed the Accession Treaty, and for years afterwards, integration was mainly perceived in Warsaw as cooperating with Berlin and maintaining a presence at the Brussels forum. Today, we view things differently:

We increasingly see Europe in other European capitals, including Prague. And in other places that need not even be the capitals of EU countries. The days when Poland only looked towards the West are no more. ●

At the same time, no one in Poland has failed to notice the changes in the Union itself, conceived as both a political construct and collection of societies. Generally speaking, these changes are commonly perceived as being of questionable benefit to Poland, the oth-

er countries and Europe as a collective entity. It is common to hear in the public debate that 'this is not the EU we joined', a catchphrase in wide circulation that also happens to be true.

Nevertheless, Poland has high expectations and hopes connected with the European Union. None of the major political forces, even the right-wing opposition to the right-wing Law and Justice government, are waving the banner for Polesxit. Whenever it does appear in political debate, it is as an accusation aimed against opponents supposedly plotting to attain it. Poland appreciates and benefits from the free movement of people, goods and capital, wisely uses EU funds and does not allow a very diverse array of frictions and conflicts to prevent it from feeling good in a united Europe and implementing EU policies. At the same time, we have been trying – at least for some time – to preserve a measure of autonomy: for example, there are no plans to introduce the EU's common currency or progressive social solutions (such as civil partnerships, not to mention same-sex marriage, or abortion or euthanasia on demand). Poland has come out against the common migration policy and is also trying to repo-



lonise the economy. However, in regard to other issues, such as energy policy, Poland's position is much closer to the EU standard than it would appear to be at first glance.

In any case, contrary to appearances and opinions widely held in the West, Poland is not one of those countries

threatening European unity. Simply put, the Polish political class and Polish society both regard current membership of the EU as a favourable state of affairs. And our attachment to our own state and own values is another matter. And anyone familiar with Polish history will understand that.

2.1 SUCCESS AND RESENTMENT

According to the latest Eurobarometer survey, 50 percent of Poles claim to have confidence in the European Union (compared to 48 percent of Czechs and the EU average of 49 percent). The survey, which was carried out last year, recorded a drop of 6 percentage points from 2020, the largest decline in confidence among the surveyed countries, turning Poland from one of the most Euro-enthusiastic countries to one averagely well-disposed towards the Union.

It would be asking a great deal to expect this result to improve in the next survey because the current stance of the EU, or rather its leading members after the war broke out, hardly inspires confidence. This particularly applies to their position on the issue of military aid, their ambiguous attitude towards Putin and their reluctance to support the countries helping Ukraine the most. These include Poland. To make matters worse, there are problems agreeing a National Reconstruction Plan and any further delays in payments will certainly not boost confidence in the EU.

Poland – especially with Law and Justice

in power – is sometimes presented in the media and places like the European Parliament as a country that is sidelined by or even hindering the advancement of integration. And even a backward and nationalistic country. Or at the very least one that only wants EU money.

Poland is perceived on two levels. On the one hand, the stereotype continues to function of 'the Polish plumber' working in the affluent countries of the West, where he arrived from a poor, cloistered and corrupt country mainly maintained by EU subsidies financed by – who else? – the Germans, while Poland itself does nothing other than cause problems. On the other hand, however, the following aspects of our country are positively perceived: the economic and infrastructural development, order and security, and the decisiveness of the Polish authorities on certain issues such as defence and migration or their attitude towards Russia. Paradoxically, these two currents are flowing alongside one another. And both are spreading outwards...

Poland looks at the Union in a similarly contradictory way. No one of sound mind would deny the advantages of being in the EU. The follow-

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ing are quite visible: the boost given to business from being in the common market, an infrastructure incomparable with that of a dozen or so years ago, a more substantial influx of investment and the freedom to travel that Poles still value so much. Others are less obvious – for example, a significant drop in the level of corruption can also be partially credited to the successful adoption of European standards. And it is quite clear that the aforementioned advantages are associated in Poland with the

wealthy and well-managed countries of the West. However, on the other hand, we clearly see the minuses as well. The following have cast a particularly long shadow: the imposition of multiculturalism, political correctness (which has moved on from the use of uncontroversial vocabulary to the promotion of LGBT ideology or cancel culture), EU bureaucracy, the exploitation of economic advantages by states and corporations and the unequal treatment of weaker as opposed to stronger states.

2.2 A LEAP TO THE WEST, A BREAK, A LEAP INTO THE UNKNOWN

In 1989, Poles embarked on a new era with great spirit. Their widespread conviction that they had made the right choice seemed almost incontestable given Poland's earlier and more recent historical experiences, culminating in the night when martial law was imposed in 1981 and subsequent economic collapse on a scale unimaginable in Czechoslovakia (or any other commu-

nist European country with the possible exceptions of Albania and Romania). The Poles forcefully spoke out against the rule of Jaruzelski's regime. In the first free elections to the Senate, Solidarity took 99 out of 100 seats.

Incidentally, the elections for the lower house were not free because it had been established in advance between the communist authorities and



some (I stress, some) members of the opposition that that there would be parity of seats between the two sides. Such an agreement over the heads of the nation did not, however, provoke major protests. People wanted to move forward as quickly as possible and such a contract between elites was deemed barely worthy of notice. The first truly free elections did not take place until 1991.

These were followed by an era of reform and a clash with painful realities.

Young capitalism was unleashed and the people began to discover that it looked different in Poland to the idealized West of their dreams. We entered a decade and a half involving the arduous, and sometimes rapid, construction of a new system.

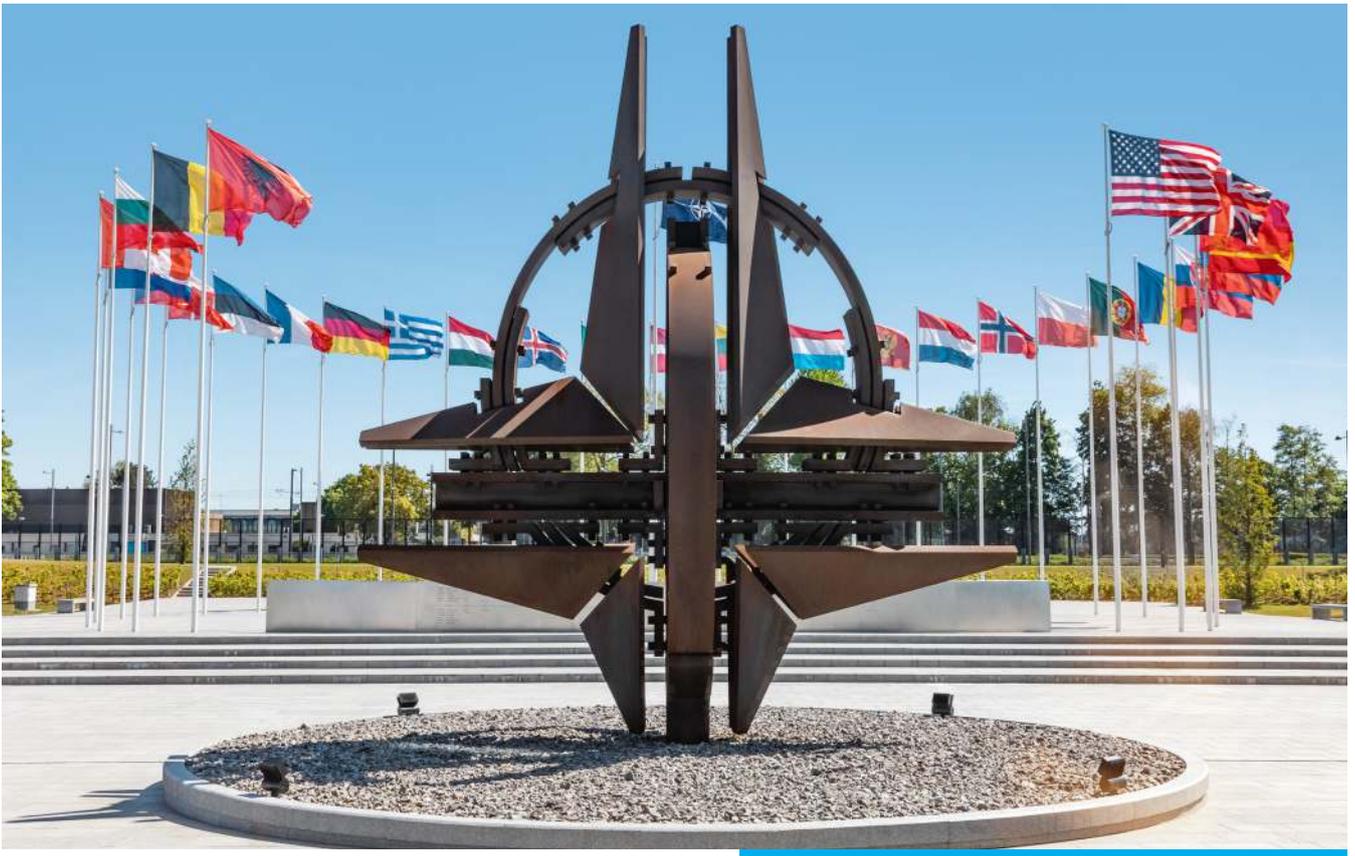
The first period was characterised – briefly speaking – by several processes and phenomena.

- ✓ **The establishment of the political order.** The preliminary system of government of the Third Republic was conserved, with a few amendments, in the Constitution of 1997. This was accompanied by the emergence of the main political camps (leftist-nostalgic, liberal-modernisationist, conservative-sovereignty and national), which still exist and function as normal, with their continuity of leadership largely intact despite setbacks and the formation of numerous different parties.
- ✓ **The economic order:** the initial laissez-faire approach (whose legendary origins could be traced back to the 'Wilczek Act' of 1988, i.e. to the People's Republic of Poland) offered massive opportunities to aspiring entrepreneurs.

However, it was the powerful who benefited most: foreign firms and the postcommunist nomenklatura. Fortunately, the latter were not able, for various reasons, to build the extensive oligarchic system so characteristic of postcommunist countries. Polish oligarchs are few in number and have accumulated modest wealth and influence for the size of the country.

Mass privatization, despite its scale, bypassed many of the largest state-owned companies, which are still controlled by the government today. However, those restrictions on free market forces enabled the development of a new private sector.

- ✓ **In social life** – the first burst of enthusiasm was followed by a **lull in activity** that would not really be broken until the past decade. Disillusionment with the new Poland was palpable and hardly surprising given how the promises (and even more so, illusions) clashed with the grim reality of three million unemployed, the closure of work establishments, numerous scandals and the rapid disengagement of the political class from the life of the nation. It should be remembered that the gloomy aspects of freedom and capitalism flooded in from the beginning, but its sparkle – so evident today – would not appear for at least another ten years. Anyway, Poland was still grey and in a foul mood, and people just got on with their own business.
- ✓ The first period was also notable for the quite clear-cut and almost **unanimously-agreed geopolitical course** that the Polish elites (with the participation of their foreign partners) chose to take



towards the Western community and its main institutions, e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. Admittedly, ideas also surfaced about Poland retaining its status as a linchpin between East and West, but they ultimately never attracted enough supporters.

The second period can be symbolically defined as the years between Poland's accession to NATO (1997) and a time of breakthroughs, i.e. events that combined with slow processes (like economic development or successive steps to economic integration) to change Europe and the world. This caesura is more difficult to characterise, but it comprises various events such as the great economic migration after 2004, the death of John Paul II in 2005, some scandals in Poland, the war in Georgia in 2008, and finally – the traumatic Smolensk catastrophe in 2010 and the whole series of events that ensued.

This period was characterized by the following phenomena:

- ✓ **A crystallised vision and concrete steps on the path to Western structures.** Little was said about ideas, but a great deal about technicalities and money. A vision still unrealistic a decade ago was already within arm's reach and ended up becoming a reality.
- ✓ **Building strong economic and political ties with Western powers, and Germany in particular.** It would be difficult, however, to call these ties symmetrical, as differences in potential and the far-from-sovereign stance of the Polish elites led to Poland being a very unassertive partner. At the same time, the political and infrastructural dimensions of relations with other countries in the region were particularly neglected.

✓ **Rapid economic growth** driven by rising labour productivity and foreign investments. The latter were often criticised for their 'predatory' nature and the way in which they benefited from the 'selling off of Poland's assets' by unfairly exploiting their market position. This criticism was partly justified, but it should also be remembered that these investments meant an inflow of much needed capital that Poland did not possess itself, a rapid reduction in unemployment, an increase in real wages (foreign firms still pay better than Polish ones today) and improvements to the organisation and efficiency of work practices. The standards of public life also improved, which eventually led to improved public services and – very importantly – lower levels of corruption.

✓ **Changes related to Poland's accession to NATO and the EU.** While nothing spectacular happened in the initial period following NATO accession (the Russians had evacuated their bases in Poland by 1993, the Western allies arrived in Poland much later and the Polish Army slowly underwent reform, mainly downsizing), accession to the European Union changed a great deal almost immediately. Structural funding became visible in the form of numerous investments (sometimes senseless, but mostly needed and appreciated).

A great deal of legislative work began on Polish law to bring it in line with EU law. For many years, 'the Union requires it' was one of the most abused arguments in public life. ●

Poles became better acquainted with the West by travelling there

more frequently. A great wave of economic migration took place, initially to Great Britain. At first, these opportunities were widely welcomed, but it quickly dawned on the public that the loss of 2 million citizens was hardly beneficial. In later election campaigns, promises appeared that 'Poles will return home'. Later, net migration reversed, but mainly due to the arrival of Ukrainians...

Today we are in the next period, which was preceded by a short prelude in 2005–2007 when Law and Justice held power for 'half a term'. However, the phenomena that characterise this period first surfaced in the second half of Civic Platform's eight years in power, with the very obvious catalyst being the Smolensk Catastrophe of 2010, which became a symbolic game-changer. Since then, a great deal has happened in Poland:

✓ **Widespread discussion on the form Poland should take and numerous ideas for reform.** The vast majority of the political class (including those in power since 2015) have acknowledged the need for change – both in the construction and central tenets of the state, and today's politics. An endlessly debated example of this need is the reform of the judiciary: no one questions that the current efficiency and practice of the courts are seriously hindering the whole country's development. The effectiveness of the most recent reforms is open to question, but all sides agree that a problem exists. Another example are the 'forgotten', i.e., millions of people from deprived areas devoid of infrastructure, public services and opportunities, and even worse, the will to improve

matters. They have been forgotten about and are not benefitting from the significant widespread rise in the standard of living and numerous opportunities that the new Poland has created. They are a minority, but a large one. Only over the last decade have they been noticed, as they begin to become more active.

- ✓ **Initiatives and conflicts.** The 'Getting up off Our Knees' policy was not an unmitigated success. The first phase failed to meet expectations, but our diplomats later began to learn that the in-

ternational situation was actually favourable – despite opposition politicians and publicists' claims to the contrary – to the Polish position and ideas.

Of these, the most deserving of attention is the Three Seas Initiative, in which Poland plays a crucial role (with support from the United States but without the participation of Germany) promoting the development of infrastructure projects in the region. At last, Poland has begun to look southwards rather than to the east and west. ●

2.3 THE THIRD REPUBLIC AS GROUP THERAPY

It is easier to understand Poles and their public life by examining not only Poland's most recent history in relation to one's own country and nation, but also the world and the principles by which it is governed.

It is also easier then to grasp what 'getting up off one's knees' actually means: on the one hand, it is a popular political marketing slogan in our country that expresses aspirations to pursue subjective politics and on the other, a scornful accusation levelled at those accused of romanticism and disregard for the real forces at play. ●

Poland entered democracy as a country with meagre reserves of political, social and economic capital.

We succeeded in our longstanding desire to break away from the Eastern Bloc, but the cost we paid was extremely high and the myth of Solidarity was quickly shattered. ●

In 1989, we started off as a democratic country without money, with little subjective standing on the international market and battered elites with only one objective: to join the Western world regardless of the cost and conditions. This was the right thing to do, as anyone can see today, but the manner in which we entered the European and Atlantic communities has been very heavily criticized, rather harshly so, as not enough account is taken of what was actually possible at the time. Today's Poland is not the Poland of thirty years ago, which is sometimes forgotten in our debate.

The economic slump at the beginning of the 1990s (which was severe even in comparison with the deep recession that affected the late Gierek era and whole of Jaruzelski's rule) also meant that ordinary Poles had other problems on their minds than the standing of their own state. 'We have defeated communism and now we need to earn a living' was the most common attitude, which makes perfect sense against a background of falling incomes and massive unemployment. In such a situation, capitalist greed took second

place to survival. We looked at Western countries with envy and admiration in the hope that we would become more like them. But also at our neighbours – like the Czechs – who were better off than us at the time with their kuponovka, low unemployment, velvet divorce and ability to attract foreign investors – not to mention the best beer. We failed to appreciate what we had because in our own estimation (which partially reflected the reality), we had very little.

Elections were held, governments changed, investors invested and we joined the Pact and the Community, actually as second-class members, but either no one noticed this or we just accepted our lower status, because we still felt inferior.

Anyway, being the West's poor relation was better than being the Soviet Union's most important ally.

And so, for years, Poland had no other aspirations than joining NATO and the EU and laboriously hauling itself out of poverty and the drab realities of daily existence.

In any case, in 2004, many believed that we had come to the end of history in the sense that we had finally reached the hallowed shore – after an unusually turbulent voyage lasting 200 or 300 years (depending on whether we are



counting from the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 or the so-called Silent Sejm of 1717, after which Poland became de facto dependent on Russia).

Quantity began to imperceptibly change into quality, as constant uninterrupted economic growth led to greater knowledge of the world (Poles are frequent and enthusiastic tourists and economic migrants or business travellers), and we slowly began to perceive our own successes as well as the weaknesses and shortcomings of others. The old Polish saying 'wszędzie dobrze, gdzie nas nie ma' ('the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence') began to lose its relevance.

Europe and the rest of the world were not standing still either. In fact, they were moving in a direction that could hardly, in many respects, be called good. The West's lucky streak, which culminated in the collapse of the Soviet arch-enemy, appeared to be coming to an end. Asia's increasing power, the rebuilding of Russia, the loosening of Atlantic ties, Europe's economies' gradual loss of competitiveness, federalist tendencies in the EU accompanied by an evident lack of European solidarity, migrations and the conflicts these provoked and finally, a revolution in worldviews that was most certainly not to the liking of conservative Poles – all spelled trouble.

Against this background, Poland became a more attractive proposition to Poles. Uninterrupted GDP growth for 30 years (up to the pandemic), as well as modernisation and improvements in many areas of life, the expansion of infrastructure, a low crime rate and finally, the realisation that our stance on many issues (such as migration, Russia, energy policy or armaments) had been right, while the 'older and wiser' had been wrong – all led us to start thinking about ourselves more subjectively. ●

Hence the return to power of Law and Justice, i.e. a party whose programme contained demands for a much more independent and ambitious politics than that of its competitors: the liberal-leftist camp, broadly conceived, with Civic Platform at its head. While the latter also undertook certain constructive measures when it held power between 2007 and 2015 (e.g., implementing a motorway expansion programme and continuing, not without delay, the construction of a gas port) while at the same being able to resist certain moves that would have increased Poland's dependence (e.g., introducing the euro or selling off many state-controlled enterprises), it generally favoured complying with the policy of Brussels (a name that sounded like another Berlin to Polish ears), doing everything it could to avoid irritating Moscow and making little effort to prioritize relations with other Central European states.

Public disillusionment with Civic Platform's two consecutive terms in office was not the only reason why Jarosław Kaczyński regained power in 2015. The two political slogans 'Getting up off Our Knees' and 'Breaking through the Impossibilism' also became very important. The first slogan denoted a subjective politics that cast off the role of pupil and protégé (mainly of Germany) and was guided to a larger extent by the national interest, and to a lesser extent by the expectations of powerful partners. The second slogan implied the taking up of challenges and projects that had hitherto been regarded as unrealistic or not worth the effort. Ambition had renewed appeal for Poles, and the party that best expressed that ambition received an electoral boost that returned it to power.

After 2015, the inferiority complex towards the major powers (and sometimes, shamefully, a sense of superiority towards lesser states and nations) underwent further therapy. This therapy was mainly domestic, taking the form of proof that it was possible, for

example, to pay parents 500 PLN per child every month without breaking the state's finances while also reforming some areas of the state (with mixed success, but noble intentions) or stand up to Europe's leaders: Beata Szydło began her tenure as prime minister by changing decisions made by her predecessor Ewa Kopacz that would have compelled Poland to admit more immigrants at Germany's behest. And it was not long before pressing foreign policy issues needed to be dealt with: from responding to the aforementioned migration crisis, through the provision of support to Ukraine (required since the

seizure of Crimea), the maintenance of rapidly warming relations with the Baltic States (with particularly spectacular progress being made with Lithuania), coping with manifestations of the lack of solidarity with the policy decisions of the big European powers (and not only in relation to gas policy), dealing with the devastating pandemic and the slow but steady reorientation of the states in our region away from our former Western patrons and towards one another, to formulating a response to the real trial by fire presented to states, nations and societies by Russia's aggression towards Ukraine.

2.4 ARTIFICIAL AND REAL COMMUNITIES

Voices have been appearing in Poland of a kind heard before. But this time they have been amplified by the migration crisis (since 2014), conflicts over gas pipelines, the pandemic and the overture to the Ukrainian war, i.e., the conflict on the Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish borders with Belarus.

And these voices all make the same point: the EU requires reform, Germany should not be allowed to grow into its putative role as leader of the continent, other states need to have more say and there should be more to European cooperation than expecting member states to orbit the double axis of Brussels and Berlin.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has uncovered the truth for everyone and exposed a great many intentions that were previously mainly familiar to experts alone. It has also provided a few surprises, most of which are pleasant for Poles, a prime example being the decisive stance taken by the Czech Republic. ●

From the Polish point of view, the second most important geopolitical question today (after the rather obvious 'Who will win in Ukraine?') is: 'With whom does Poland share common interests?' The turbulent, unpredictable nature of the past decade inclines us to consider this even more carefully. There are a number of responses to this question:

- ✓ **Not with Germany, it would appear,** or at least not to the extent to which we have become accustomed to think. The famous speech that Radosław Sikorski gave in Berlin ten years ago in which he, as Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, castigated the Germans for being too slow to assume responsibility for Europe, has aged exceptionally badly. At the time, Germany was not only displaying its selfishness and arrogance towards other countries (e.g., by trying to impose migra-

tion quotas or pressurizing other states to accept gas pipelines from Russia), but - even worse - showing its incompetence and naivety. Europe's leaders failed, for example, to foresee that the money that Putin made from them would be used to strike back at them despite Lenin's well-known aphorism about capitalists and rope. In any case, it is now quite clear that Germany cannot serve as a model or leader. Incidentally, it is worth adding that our Western neighbours have fallen into confusion. They are involved in a heated discussion whose final conclusions are difficult to predict, but will probably entail some adjustment to their policy or stance that will go nowhere near as far as we in Poland would like.

It goes without saying that this does not suggest any intention to reduce the economic cooperation with Germany from which Poland after all benefits.

on which it can realistically rely: the United States, preferably in good old Cold-War fashion. And the more conditions come to resemble the Cold War, the surer we can be of American support. Recently, this mechanism has been put to the test twice, with mixed results: first, under Donald Trump, NATO's eastern plan was reinforced as an immediate response to the first aggression against Ukraine; later, Joe Biden enacted a swift reset that was perceived in Poland as a rapprochement with Russia (despite being a de facto rapprochement with Germany), so caused understandable fear and anger. However, the events that unfolded after February 2022 made it obsolete. Fortunately for Europe, the USA quickly reversed its position. It is just regrettable that a bloody war was needed for transatlantic leaders to come to their senses.

✔ **In matters of global security, Poland has just one super-partner**

✔ However, in matters of **regional security**, the possibilities appear to be more extensive.



3 percent of GDP

Following an increase in defence spending to 3 percent of GDP, the introduction of debt instruments, purchases made from national and foreign companies, modest American support and the army reforms that have already been launched,

Poland has launched new plans to radically expand its armed forces. Following an increase in defence spending to 3 percent of GDP, the introduction of debt instruments, purchases made from national and foreign companies, modest American support and the army reforms that have already been launched, within a decade we could have the most powerful forces in Europe, which would provide us with the capability to deter Russia, offer our neighbours extra security guarantees and, in the worst-case scenario, destroy enemy forces – not on the outskirts of Warsaw (or Poznań), but on our borders, so that our population would not be exposed to the fate of the inhabitants of Bucha and our infrastructure and economy would not be devastated. The brave and skilful fight being put up by Ukraine, with international support, is buying us time.

The intensive cooperation started on NATO's eastern flank, which later benefited Ukraine's war effort, has also allowed us to think very optimistically about our close allies, including the new ones in the north. Countries in the region are increasing their defence budgets and expanding and modernising

their armies, as they see an opportunity in the notion of mutual defence. The flank has never been stronger in its short history, and this is only the beginning. The policies being pursued by Hungary and Turkey are hardly helping, but from the point of view of our part of Europe, that problem would be more than compensated for if Sweden and Finland's bid to join NATO is finally accepted. Assuming that happens, it can be presumed that Budapest and Ankara will conclude that it no longer makes any sense to sit on the fence.

- ✓ According to Poles and, fortunately, an increasing number of other countries, regional cooperation (with countries to the South) has a big future. A special role – from Poland's perspective – is performed in this case by the Three Seas Initiative and the various projects that are associated with it, which include the Three Seas Fund and a common stock index.

Three Seas is both a project that seeks to balance out deficits and an expression of new ambitions.

The countries at our geographical latitude have very poor transportation links with one another, which impedes wider cooperation. Getting from Warsaw to Prague is much harder than getting from Warsaw to Berlin, even though our capitals are closer to each other as the crow flies. Of course, the project not only engages with transport connections, but also infrastructure in a much broader sense incorporating energy and IT, as well as common standards.



Nevertheless, as far as new ambitions are concerned, Three Seas must not limit itself to improving transport links and increasing mutual compatibility to make economic exchange easier and cheaper. The issues that need to be addressed next (or even first in the light of recent events) are energy and military security. ●

If, however, new political projects appeared among the countries of our region, or an idea such as a 'two-speed Europe' came to be implemented, the Three Seas projects could serve as a splendid starting point, bargaining chip, or even security policy, if the situation became worse than we may suppose today.

- ✓ The war in Ukraine has led to a re-valuation of past certainties. It

would also be fair to say that it has removed the final impediments to a far-reaching Polish-Ukrainian rapprochement previously hindered by memories of the Volhynia massacres during the Second World War as well as the strong tendency of some members of the Polish and Ukrainian elites to look to Berlin or Moscow. Clearly, the best option today for both parties is to rely on trustworthy neighbours as well as the Atlantic security architecture.

The war has not only brought Poles and Ukrainians closer together, but renewed and strengthened many bilateral and multilateral ties among the countries of our region. Who remembers today that Polish-Lithuanian relations were really dreadful as recently as a decade ago? Who remembers that, just a year ago, many of our politicians and

publicists were presenting the relations between Poland and the Czech Republic as being among the very worst since Bretislav was raiding Poland?

- ✓ The countries of Central Europe have some of the fastest growing economies. The Czech Republic's employment figures have consistently been the best on the continent. **The Visegrad countries are a larger trading partner for Germany than China.** We also attract massive foreign investment, for which we often only need to compete with each other. We have the industry, location and human potential we need to succeed, while also sharing similar traditions and problems.

The changes caused by the war (and before that, the pandemic) represent – despite the potential costs and risks – a major opportunity for our region. Increased transportation costs, the lessons taken from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the breakdown of trust between some countries, and China's domestic troubles – are all factors contributing to a deglobalisation process that is set to take place, but on a small scale of course.

Poland, the Czech Republic and the other countries in our region can create and develop value chains.

2.5 WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING FOR EUROPE AND OUR COUNTRIES?

There is no point in deluding ourselves: it will bring conflicts. And the associated costs. But also, actually, opportunities.

- ✓ **The future shape of the EU.** In 2017, the European Commission published a white paper containing scenarios for the development of the EU. There were five alternatives – from continuing in its current form, through concentration on the common market, to a focus on individual policies and moving towards full integration. Right-wing Polish politicians are of course happy to talk about a 'Europe of homelands', in which integration is not so much halted as stripped down a little. In practice, however,

media portray it to be. It has agreed to various common policies that express, through their very nature, the idea of integration, such as the recent Fit for 55 or the Reconstruction Fund.

Otherwise, it has done no more than seek the same kind of exemptions or delays that other countries do.

Of course, there are areas where Poland swims against the mainstream, such as the adoption of the euro, migration policy or world views that do not match its own.

Nevertheless, accusing our country of putting the brakes on integration is simply unjustified (or, as some would prefer, a partially deserved compliment).

However, resistance to further integration can be expected to grow.

Poland is not such a staunch opponent of wider integration as the Western

Firstly, Poles value having their own state. Though they are open to integration, this has its limits. Politicians need to take this into account. Secondly, the benefits are becoming less attractive in relative terms, and our country will soon become a net contributor (some analyses claim it already is). Thirdly, the EU is experiencing multiple setbacks and trying to introduce ever stranger and more harmful policies, which is also lessening its appeal.

It would appear that the most interesting and realistic model for Poland is the 'multi-speed Europe', which not only envisions integration at different tempos, but also the tightening of ties within individual blocs. Admittedly, the creators of this concept were thinking about the integration of old EU members, but this idea can also be profitably applied to others. Including the countries of our region.

✓ **Leadership.** In this case, the issue is simple, but challenging. Unquestioningly accepting the lead-

ership of Germany and France is in the past.

Europe should return to a model of collective leadership, where the voting power of different EU member states is at the very least proportional to their size and importance. ●

Unfortunately, various EU organs headed by the Commission aspire to European leadership to such a great extent that they behave like a separate political entity rather than representing voters, and to make matters worse, that entity is aggressively usurping powers that go beyond the spirit of the Treaty. Often successfully.

Pessimistic scenarios envision the Commission turning into something like the Kremlin Politburo and the gloomiest of these foresee a time when the nations of Europe will begin to perceive the Union as a prison rather than a community of mutual benefit and guarantor of peace and prosperity.



✓ **Civilisation.** The European Community was built on foundations rooted in values common to Europeans, notably Christianity, freedom, the importance of the individual and the market. None of these values is safe today and current trends are hardly favourable to them. It is fair to say that a new progressive-liberal civilisation is developing on the continent that has little in common with the good old Europe whose principles built the Community's power and prosperity. Furthermore, many countries contain large, but growing Muslim minorities professing to a dynamic form of Islam unaccepting of either new or old European values.

Fortunately, these trends need not be linear or inevitable.

Many countries are experiencing a resurgence in conservatism, which will present a barrier to Islamisation and other dangerous trends (such as empty consumerism). As a matter of fact, the EU oligarchy's battle against conservatism is a suicidal act, as is clear from the succession of crises it has caused. ●

● **Energy and a place in the value chain.** The energy transition being managed through Germany's Energiewende and the Fit for 55 proposals cannot be considered in isolation from industrial policy, the value chain and global logistics, or in other words, from the issue of

who will make the real money and who will be little more than a dependent subcontractor. Of course, many factors are influencing the economic order, for example, the political rivalry between the USA and China and the effects of the pandemic.

The war in Ukraine has created massive confusion, for example, in Germany's energy policy. The huge project that was supposed to construct a huge energy hub based on Russian gas can be regarded as an unmitigated disaster. Further evidence of this can be found amid the heated discussion and lack of new ideas we observe in Germany and the EU's salons.

Some countries have made certain preparations, including Poland, which has built the appropriate infrastructure in time. And the cooperative regional project Three Seas falls into the category of precautionary preparations. ●

The future is a mystery, but we can be certain that the political, economic and energy arenas, among many others, will be subject to continuous reshuffling. Anyone able to conduct an independent policy has the chance of being among the winners when a new hand is dealt. And one more thing: winners will find reliable allies possessing similar interests.

MAREK WRÓBEL



CZECH VISIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Attempting to craft a viable vision for the development of the European Union is a demanding task which ought to be approached with the utmost respect for the fact that even the mere existence of the Union is something of a wonder in itself, especially when taking into account the troubled history of the European continent and the diversity of the peoples who call Europe home. For centuries, Europe had been alternating between bloody conflicts and short periods of peacetime, best characterised as war intermezzos, which were inevitably replaced by even bloodier conflicts as soon as the armies regrouped and reloaded. Although the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and early 19th century started an unparalleled economic advancement which changed society as a whole and arguably allowed democratic movements to flourish, it conversely meant that conflicts were fought with much more potent weaponry, capable of inflicting irreparable damage not only to the physical capacity but moreover to the psychological capacity of European nations. In hindsight, the inception of the European Union, which started to take shape as the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and was followed by the European Community (1957), is a miracle in its own right. It is therefore crucial to approach any

vision or revision of the concept of European integration with the knowledge that the process from which the EU arose is historically unprecedented and cannot be taken for granted.

Hence, in order to look into the many possible futures and find one that offers the most viable development of the European Union, it is necessary to start by looking into the past. Such an approach has the best chance of not being considered as trivial wishful thinking. ●

This approach can be accurately summed up with a quote by one of the most brilliant minds in English literature, Terry Pratchett, an author who took the world of fantasy and fiction to a whole new level, but who frequently used his works in a satirical way to warn society about futures that are best avoided.

“It is important that we know where we come from, because if you do not know where you come from, then you don’t know where you are, and if you don’t know where you are, you don’t know where you’re going. And if you don’t know where you’re going, you’re probably going wrong.”

Terry Pratchett

3.1 WHERE WERE WE JUST A MINUTE AGO?

On 25th March 2017, the heads of governments of the European Union met in Rome to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties which had given life to an ambitious project of the European Community in times of uncertainty and economic volatility in the world. Although the celebration was certainly appropriate, the European

continent had successfully endured for over 70 years without a major conflict, in large part due to the project of the European Union which had helped to make Europe arguably the most prosperous, free, and just region in the world, there was an unpleasant aftertaste lingering in the corridors of the Campidoglio where the celebration took place.

The decade leading up to the celebration had not been an easy one. The financial crisis of 2008 was mostly talked about in the past tense, if it was talked about at all, yet the traces of its consequences could still be sensed in many parts of Europe. The 2015 migration crisis of refugees from the Middle East, who overwhelmingly dispersed into countries like Germany, France and Sweden, stopped making the headlines right around the time of the British referendum to remain in or to leave the European Union. However, the social and economic imbalance in some of these countries created a steady stream of doubt about the success of the refugee integration process.

On top of that, the results of the referendum in the United Kingdom stunned and perplexed not only the British themselves, but also the rest of the EU. ●

In 2017, the ground beneath the EU, which had felt so solid at the beginning of the 21st century, felt rather weak and brittle. Nevertheless, despite the onerous decade, the determination to continue the economic and increasingly also the political integration of the European theatre was steadfast. The European Union still paddled forward towards more integration as if nothing had happened, according to the bicycle theory introduced by a former President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, in his 2001 presentation on the future of the EU.

3.2 WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties took place five strenuous years ago. The world of today might look fairly similar to the one of 2019 when viewed from a distance, but the reality appears much grimmer than that. In 2015, inflation rates in the European Union hit their lowest point since the end of the financial crisis of 2008 and completely stabilised at a healthy 2% inflation rate in 2016. The effect of the 2008 financial crisis eased off, the migration crisis was dealt with and even terrorist attacks lost their frequency. But, as is often the case, when there is a peaceful moment of tranquillity, reality has a way of turning bad again. The rise of inflation rates in the past few years has been so unprecedented that Europe might be heading towards the greatest recession in modern European history.

Some economists and politicians predict a stagflation of unparalleled levels, a rise in unemployment and a global en-

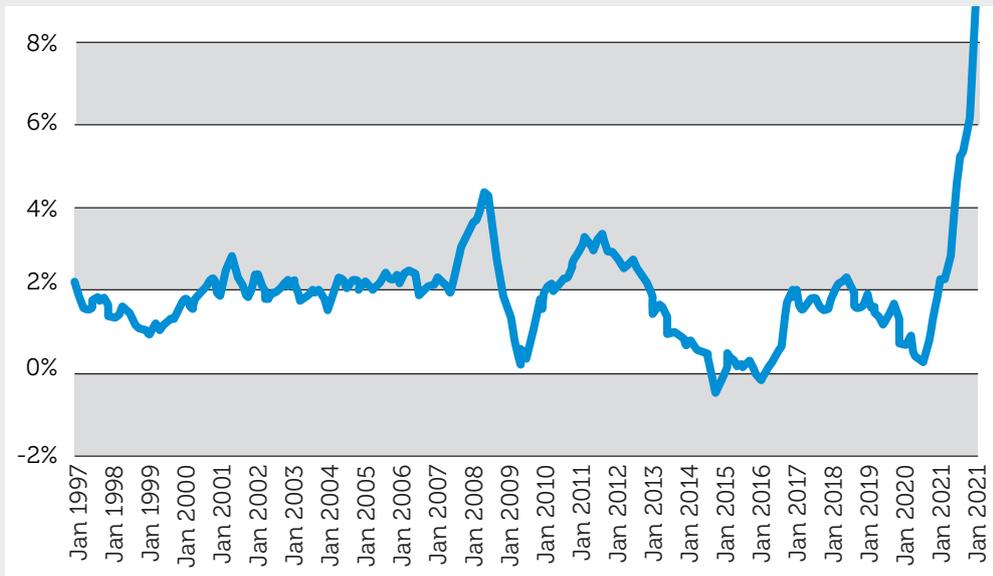
ergy crisis. There are two simple reasons for these pessimistic predictions. ●

The first reason is the re-introduction of a long-forgotten enemy of the human race – a **global pandemic**. The coronavirus pandemic, which started in late 2019 and spread to Europe at the turn of the year, took a significant toll on the world and arguably most of all on the European nations. All facets of life were affected. The total number of deaths across the whole EU surpassed one million in May 2022¹, economies suffered an unimaginable blow and the world's supply chains were almost halted for weeks.

During the pandemic, the assistance provided by the European Union proved to be limited, especially when it came to specific rules and laws which necessitate State authority in order for citizens to follow them. Therefore, the burden was left on the member countries. ●

GRAPH 1

Harmonized index of consumer prices (HICP) inflation rate of the European Union from January 1997 to May 2022



Source: www.statista.com

Even one of the most astonishing successes of European integration, the Schengen area of free movement of people, services and goods, was limited due to the restriction of movement of citizens which was controlled by reinstating border controls. Two exhausting years of unpredictable developments later, life is returning to normal, with the enormous support of vaccination and the incredible efforts of the health service workers who daily put their lives on the line to save others. However, unfortunately, the economic damage is still to be assessed.

The second and more recent reason why the European Union is suffering a historic crisis is the **Russian full-out invasion of Ukraine**, which started at the end of February 2022. The unprovoked attack

can be seen as the last stage of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which started in 2014 with pro-European protests on Euromaidan Square in Kyiv, leading to the Russian annexation of parts of the Donbas region and Crimea. The Russian invasion shocked the entire world and has been ongoing for three months now. The devastating conventional war has had a catastrophic effect on many parts of Ukraine, but the rest of

the world has been affected as well. Europe and especially the European Union are most affected, as the supply of natural resources from Ukraine and Russia are endangered, the refugee crisis far surpasses the one which hit Europe in 2015, and the uncertain development of the war shatters any hopes that markets are going to stabilise after the two-year pandemic surge.

2 percent

In 2015, inflation rates in the European Union hit their lowest point since the end of the financial crisis of 2008 and completely stabilised at a healthy 2% inflation rate in 2016.

The most affected countries in the European Union are countries close to the Ukrainian border – Slovakia, Czechia and chiefly Poland.

The humanitarian and military aid offered to Ukraine by the European Union, Great Britain and the United States is again unprecedented, but the conflict is not going to end soon, as has been estimated by most military experts. It will have devastating effects on European economies for months if not years to come. ●

The developments of the last three years have been very challenging. The biggest challenge is presented to the countries of the European Union, since they are the most reliant on the Russian supply of oil and natural gas and are also partially reliant on the supply of goods and services coming from Ukraine. It is unpredictable what the tipping point in the conflict will be, but until then, markets are going to be suffering from vol-

atility which will affect prices of commodities like oil, natural gas, coal, grain, and other goods providing the basic necessities for the European Union and the entire European continent. Moreover, the refugee crisis disproportionately affects post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe, due to the fact that they are close to the conflict and at the same time are home to many Ukrainian diasporas already. The role of the European Union is substantial, especially in mitigating the effect this conflict will have on the future of the Union, even though, as with the pandemic, the biggest burden is on individual countries.

How this three-year stretch of pandemic and war will affect public opinion on State security, international relations and global security is yet to be seen. However, countries must form their own visions on how the post-pandemic, post-war times will be approached. ●



3.3 THE CZECH POSITION(S)

The future of the European Union is one of the most prevalent topics in Czech society today. This is mostly due to the ongoing and quite vigorous political debate which generates the necessary interest within the general population. Naturally then, the topic is quite divisive and attracts plenty of media attention which perpetually fuels the debate. Over time, this seemingly never-ending cycle of debate has helped to generate three main strands of thought about the future of the EU. These three positions envelop the Czech political spectrum from the far left to the far right, apart from a tiny minority of parties of no real importance. Therefore, this topic can serve as a basic and quite accurate litmus test of the overall political ideology of Czech citizens.

The first position, which is held by approximately **one-quarter of the population**, is that of a firmly positive attitude towards Czech membership in the EU. The members of this group are commonly referred to as **pro-Europeanists or Euro-federalists**. They are generally favourable of further integration of economic and political institutions, would fervently support the acceptance of the Euro as the national currency, and are not opposed to the idea of a united European military force. They are represented by parties such as the TOP 09 (members of the EPP) and the Pirates (members of the Greens – European Free Alliance). The second position, which is held by **over one-third of the population**, is of a positive attitude towards Czech membership in the EU, but with reservations about the way the EU is evolving. They are mostly referred to as **Euro-realists or Euro-reformists**. They would welcome a substantial reform of the Union and its institutions and are sceptical of projects like the Euro, a united European military force, and are generally opposed to any further political integration. Neverthe-

less, they see the benefits as outweighing the drawbacks and are therefore opposed to any talks about a potential Czexit (the exit of Czechia from the European Union). They are represented by parties such as the Civic Democrats (ODS – members of ECR), the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL – members of EPP) and ANO 2011 (members of Renew Europe). The last position, which is held by a **little less than one-third of the population**, is of a negative attitude towards Czech membership in the EU. The members of this group are referred to as **anti-Europeanists**. They would support a general referendum, where the question of the membership would be at stake, similarly to what took place in the United Kingdom in 2016, and they would expect a similar outcome. They are sceptical of the role of the Union as a force for good as it pertains to the Czech nation and are outright opposed to projects like the Euro and a united European military force. They are represented by the party of Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM).

The pro-Europeanists and the anti-Europeanists stand on opposite sides of the barricades in Czech politics and there is very little understanding between them. The Euro-realists, the most populous of these three approaches, but not by a large margin, act as a bridge between the two opposing groups. They agree with the pro-Europeanists on questions such as the general membership of Czechia in the EU and the need for harmonised grids, infrastructure and even most of the laws, but, on the other hand, agree with the anti-Europeans that projects such as a European military force are dangerous. They are frequently criticised by both groups for being too ambivalent and indecisive, which can sometimes be justified, sometimes not. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majori-

ty of them would vote “Stay” if a referendum were to be announced, but would be opposed to adopting the Euro as the national currency.

These three positions, the pro-Europeanists, the Euro-realists and the anti-Europeanists, are nevertheless not divisible along the lines of left-right politics, as there are parties on both sides of the spectrum who are members of one of the three positions towards the EU. For example, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM, member of The Left in the European Parliament or, as known by its abbreviation, GUE/NGL) is a far-left political party, which is also very sceptical of the European Union. Their latest candidate

for Prime Minister, Vojtěch Filip, suggested in October 2021 that he would vote “Leave” if there was a referendum on membership of Czechia in the EU². Then there is the Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD, a member of the Identity and Democracy European fraction), which is a political party adhering to populist radical nationalism with a mixture of far-right and far-left policies. Their goal is to initiate a referendum on the membership of Czechia in the EU, in the hope that the “Leave” ballot wins. Although these two political parties would be typically considered as total opposites, when it comes to the European Union, they share pretty much the same position.

3.4 WHAT VERSION OF THE EU DO CZECHS WANT?

When it comes to the question of what version of development of the EU would be ideal for the majority of the Czech population, the different approaches must be taken to account. A consensus would be very difficult to reach, especially on topics such as the national currency, military engagements, energy security and the justice system. Nevertheless, there might be a possibility to reach consensus on three basic principles on which the majority of Czechs would find agreement.

- ✓ The European Union ought not to infringe on national sovereignty, nor should it influence the trias politica – the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.
- ✓ The European Union ought not to create a robust European military force, without the agreement of all member countries, i.e., it ought not to leave the decision to a general

vote in the European Parliament or to the decision of the European Commission. If one of the member countries disagrees with the creation of a European military force, then the project is not viable.

- ✓ The European Union ought not to mandate or insist on the adoption of the Euro as the national currency, but should leave this decision exclusively to the citizens of each country.
- ✓ The European Union ought to control migration at the point of entry through the European Border and Coast Guard Agency – Frontex, and ought not to apply quotas to redistribute migrants, but should rather use financial and material aid to those affected countries.
- ✓ The European Union ought to add atomic energy to the Green Ener-



gy List and support the development of new technologies in this field – Advanced Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)

All these points should be the focus of the upcoming Czech presidency of the Council of the European Union (July – December 2022).

However, Czechia should focus most importantly on the need for the addition and the support of atomic energy as a green energy source, because it is cru-

cial for the Czech energy mix to be less reliant on natural gas, which is almost entirely imported from Russia, and coal, which, despite being the cheapest option to generate energy, is also the least environmentally sustainable. ●

Atomic energy offers Czechia the chance to move further away from coal power plants and to substitute them with nuclear power. The temporary switch to natural gas seems like a less viable option now, when the Russian government has the ability to halt any transfer of gas to Czechia and other countries.

3.5 PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The European Union is at a crossroads when it comes to its future development. There are several externalities that must be taken into account when considering the way the Union ought to develop. The decision should be taken on a par with the solutions to the most pressing problems that the EU is facing. The chosen solutions

to these problems will affect the future of the Union and could very well lead to a further dissolution. There are three main problems currently burdening the EU:

- ✓ The rise in nationalism, fuelled largely by the continued economic and political integration

- ✓ Energy crisis amplified by the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- ✓ Recurring migration crisis from the Middle East and Ukraine

The problem of the rise of nationalism is not new to Europe, but is new to the European Union. A mere century ago, the European continent was just waking up from one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of the entire continent. The First World War was sparked mostly by nationalistic sentiments in most European nations. Similar sentiments can be seen throughout Europe today. The rise in nationalism can be seen in France, as represented by Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Rally (FN), in Germany, as represented by Tino Chrupalla, leader of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), in Czechia as represented by Tomio Okamura, the leader of Freedom and Direct Democracy party (SPD), and by the newly re-elected prime minister of Hungary, Victor Orban, who is the leader of Fidesz party. All these parties and many others across the European Union have

one thing in common. They oppose the existence of the European Union as a legitimate and democratic institution. The root of their critique cannot be dismissed simply because they are nationalists nor because they tend to support autocratic leaders all over the world. The problem is not the parties, but the support they are all enjoying in their respective countries. If the EU continues on the path of indifference to these tendencies, the strength of these parties will rise and will potentially overwhelm some countries.

The solution to the rise in nationalism should not be the ostracise of supporters of these parties, but should be the return to the motto the united European Union adopted in the year 2000: *In varietate concordia* (Unity in Diversity). ●

The strength of the EU lies not in continued political and social integration, but in the ability to harness progress from the diversity of the member countries that share the same goal, but are trying to achieve it in different ways.



The energy crisis, although severely amplified by the Russian invasion, is not caused by Russia at all. It is a wound that the EU and many member countries themselves have inflicted upon themselves. The energy crisis started when many European nations began to succumb to the pressure created by the “Green Lobby”, which pushes for the complete restructurisation of energy creation, to be based solely on renewable energy. ●

The problem with this push is not its intentions, because the cleaner the energy, the healthier the environment, but the problem is the realisation of the presented goals. For example, Germany decided to move completely away from coal and nuclear energy and to switch to renewable energy with the help of natural gas as a transitional source of cheap and reliable energy. This means that Germany would indefinitely be relying on the import of natural gas from the Russian Federation, which proves to be a problematic solution in the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The same goes for Czechia, which imports close to 100 percent of natural gas from Russia, although it has had a chance to diversify in the last couple of years. ●

The solution is to support nuclear energy and move it to the green energy category. France, the leader of nuclear energy in Europe, shows the way to energy independence, as it is the biggest European exporter³.

The third problem which the EU has been dealing with since 2015 is uncontrolled migration. The first migration crisis, which brought over a million refugees mostly from Syria and surrounding countries to Europe, was a painful experience since the approach by the

European Union was dismissed by several countries, especially Poland, Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia (the members of the Visegrád Group). The quotas were intended to alleviate the financial burdens on countries such as Germany, France, and Sweden, which took in the vast majority of the refugees. The argument commonly used was that quotas are a deed of solidarity with the affected countries. Nevertheless, the refusal by Central and Eastern European countries to take in refugees was very powerful, and eventually the quotas were not applied.

In contrast, the same countries that refused to take in refugees through quotas in 2015, especially Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Romania, are now the countries with the most refugees from Ukraine due to the Russian invasion, which drove over 6 million Ukrainians out of their homes. ●

Poland has the highest number of refugees at an estimated 3.6 million (estimated numbers: Germany 710 000, Hungary 700 000, Romania 600 000, Slovakia 460 000, Czechia 360 000). The recent migration crisis is unprecedented and has far surpassed the migration crisis of 2015. There are of course tangible differences, where the two most important ones are the ethnic similarity of Ukrainians to Central Europeans and the fact that most of the refugees are adamant

**3.6
millions**

Poland has the highest number of refugees at an estimated 3.6 million (estimated numbers: Germany 710 000, Hungary 700 000, Romania 600 000, Slovakia 460 000, Czechia 360 000).

about wanting to return to Ukraine once the conflict is resolved. Nevertheless, the approaches to both crises were different and breed different outcomes as a result. The European Union must take this experience into consideration when crafting the next policy on migration.

Whenever the European Union is hit by another migration crisis, which should be something worth preparing for, the strategy must be prepared carefully so that all the factors experienced during the two past migration crises are taken into consideration.

3.6 WHAT WILL BE NEXT?

The European Union is a project of unparalleled historical significance. The sole creation of the Union of 27 countries with 24 official languages, countless cultures and religions, is a feat worth marvelling at. However, like any international organisation, it must not succumb to its own success. The original grand idea of Europe integrated into one unified but heterogeneous union has been achieved, but it does not mean that the ideal version has been achieved. Some countries, like the United Kingdom which left the Union in 2020, have different ideas about the development of the EU in terms of its rules of engagement and in terms of its overall structure. The perils which the EU has undergone in recent years prove how

important it is that there is still a diversity in approaches by each member country. Finding a unified solution to such a diverse array of problems is firstly impossible and also undesirable, since there might be a benefit in allowing countries to try out different solutions. Therefore, the European Union should revisit the motto which it adopted at the beginning of this millennium: Unity in Diversity. Only then can the problems of nationalism, energy and migration crises be resolved. They must be resolved by the European Union of sovereign states who share a common goal, but who respect each other's national identities.

ŠIMON ZAJÍČEK

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² EURACTIV. (2021, September 16). Komunistická Strana čech a moravy (KSČM). [euractiv.cz](https://euractiv.cz/section/politika/opinion/komunisticka-strana-cech-a-moravy-kscm/). Retrieved June 7, 2022, from <https://euractiv.cz/section/politika/opinion/komunisticka-strana-cech-a-moravy-kscm/>

³ Kopecký, J. (2021, October 1). Jsem pro vystoupení z Evropské unie, dává nám méně než my jí, říká Filip. iDNES.cz. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.idnes.cz/volby/vojtech-filip-kscm-spd-vystoupeni-z-eu-volby-vlada.A210930_130810_volby_kop

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