

Prof. Piotr Kłodkowski
Rector of the Tischner European University, Kraków

***Poland and Jordan - The Pillars of Stability in Central/Eastern Europe
and the Middle East in the Context of the Global EU Policy.
Parallel Developments and Discrepancies***

It was not quite uncommon in both the 19th and 20th century to declare that geography determines significantly the destiny of a state and the political interplay of superpowers (both global and regional ones) is likely to produce the final result of international relations at various political and economic levels. The concepts by Alfred Thayer Mahan, Halford John Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, Alexander Prokofiev Seversky or Saul Cohen to name but a few have contributed to creating various regional or global strategies with a higher or lower potential for practical implementation. This may have had tragic or even barbarian implications, but generally, the philosophy of geopolitical studies has always had a growing number of takers, not all of them full of evil intentions. At the beginning of our millennium the world according to Thomas Friedman was to become really ‘flat’ and globally interconnected so the theories conceived much earlier could be thought of as obsolete and therefore non-applicable to our deeply transformed reality. However, very soon in the 21st century politicians and businesspeople alike realized that the world might be flat in some places but others would remain not flat at all, and even the number of these ‘flat areas’ is likely to shrink owing to the dynamic changes that were not earlier anticipated.¹¹¹ In other words, as Robert Kaplan puts it, we are ready to experience ‘The Revenge of Geography.’¹¹² The philosophy of Realpolitik, deeply immersed in its own reality of geographical, historical, social and cultural facts, might go through the process of re-thinking but it is likely to stay where it was before, probably with some modifications only.¹¹³

¹¹¹ See: Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: a Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005.

¹¹² See: Robert Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, Random House, New York, 2013.

¹¹³ On the issue of Realpolitik in the context of Nepal and South Asia see my text in *Politeja*, 2015 (in print).

REALPOLITIK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL EU POLICIES

It is definitely worth stating that the debates on the recent interpretations of the changing concepts of political geography are more applicable to the selected regions of Eastern and Central Europe, Central Asia (mostly post-Soviet States), and extended Middle East than to the areas of South or East Asia where they may have quite limited relevance. Moreover, it should be stressed that the political and social transformations in the Middle East do not have only the local implications but these are likely to extend to the borders of the European Union, crossing them into various directions. Therefore, the European geostrategic outlook has to be strongly linked with the area of the Middle East and the necessity to build up strategic partnership with a few selected partners has become one of the iron pillars in the EU diplomacy. The Revenge of Geography has become a deeply-felt challenge especially after the so-called Arab Spring but its consequences are not the only determinants of the EU foreign policy or active policies pursued by some Member States in the Middle East.

Geostrategic shifts in the recent years have their own significance but these cannot fully overshadow the political/cultural values and human rights agenda which have always been on the EU radar in the process of strengthening or loosening ties with its partners worldwide. Although that could be considered as counter-productive in the context of the Realpolitik being implemented by other countries this value-laden diplomatic attitude is likely to bring good benefits in a long-term perspective, as it was the case in Central and Eastern Europe by the end of the 1980s. In a short-term perspective, that kind of policy based on democratic values, propagated globally, may be perceived as utterly naïve but the much deeper insight will allow the external observers to discover the fact that the classical Realpolitik devoid of any ethical substance usually generates some short-term gains for a state but in a longer perspective the same state is likely to lose, both at home and in its international relations. This was the case with the former Soviet Union or Nazi Germany as both of them were the hot proponents of pure Realpolitik which totally failed, tragically having caused the death of millions of people. The European Union, with its well-known ups and downs, has still its own firm international agenda which, in spite of a global criticism, contributes to a positive image of its own. It should be remembered, however, that the European Union and its Member States are expected and have to pursue simultaneously the policies

founded on two pillars: the one rooted in the clear system of European values and the other which props the platform of geostrategic realities. The policy based only on the first pillar would be totally idealistic without a chance to succeed in a long-term perspective whilst the policy based on the second pillar would only be nihilistic and consequently unacceptable for the human rights-sensitive citizens in all the Member States.

DEMOCRACY VERSUS STABILITY

On the other side, it ought to be emphasized that a concept of ‘democracy’ is not and should not be interpreted precisely in the same way globally and it has to be adopted to local conditions and cultural traditions. The transfer of one fully-shaped and ideologically rigid political system, workable in a unique social and cultural milieu, into a land with a totally different historical and religious background may result in political disorder, social chaos and finally the disintegration of the country. The most tragic recent example is Iraq where the promise of a ‘shortcut to democracy’ made before the American intervention, materialized in a gradual disintegration of the former state and the establishment of the extremist political entity known under the misleading name Daesh, or ISIS - the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. However, one cannot forget the fact that the non-interventionist policy in Syria has brought about the same tragic consequences, with the disintegration of the country and the spread of the extremist ideology of the Daesh. There are no clear-cut solutions applicable to various countries with their own historical, cultural and geographic complexities. Therefore, in their geostrategic policies towards the Middle East the EU Member States should carefully design not only their own priorities but should also take into account the priorities of the targeted countries. The concepts of a ‘balanced stability,’ ‘gradual nation-building’ or the ‘rule of law’ do have their own material equivalents in the real political world (and can be valued more than the idea of ‘democracy’). These may and do differ globally but the priorities remain the same for responsible political players: the reduction of violence and the avoidance of bloodshed. These priorities fit well into the **ethical framework of the EU Realpolitik, however the methods to implement them in various parts of the world** might be deemed disputable under certain conditions.

A good example on the perception of ‘democracy’ comes from Tunisia, which in many Western countries has been regarded as ‘the most successful state’

in the process of democratic transition after the Arab Spring. According to the Pew Research Center Tunisian support for democracy declined steeply in 2014 as compared to the early days of the Arab Spring. Just 48% of Tunisians believed that democracy was preferable to other kinds of government, down from 63% in a 2012 poll conducted only months after the uprising removed Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from office.

Similarly, when asked whether a democratic government or a leader with a strong hand could best solve the country's problems, only 38% choose the former, down from 61% two years ago. Meanwhile, the share of the public favoring a strong leader has risen from 37% to 59%. Still, despite waning confidence in democracy's ability to produce results, Tunisians continue to want key features of a democratic system, such as a fair judiciary, competitive elections, the right to protest and equal rights for men and women.¹¹⁴ The public's discontent could result from a poor economic situation but that probably would only be a part of the explanation. Impatient voters might expect to see the immediate benefits of any kind after a revolution which has ousted the previous regime and democracy is usually considered to be the best tool to this end. Unfortunately, building all the democratic structures, institutions and traditions is generally a time-consuming process that requires a big dose of patience and a great deal of compromise among all the players in the country. Any political 'shortcuts' in the democratic process may appear to be tempting but they usually end up in another authoritarian regime taking over. Given its own geostrategic backgrounds, historical developments and cultural values every country ought to have its own version of the political system which can guarantee stability, the rule of law and the minimum prosperity for its citizens. It is hard to define one universal political system that fits everywhere. The realities of the 21st century world force us to compromise on the workable and optimal solutions which, unfortunately, could be regarded as 'disappointing' by a part of the public opinion in Europe or in Arab countries, but the idea of 'geostrategic compromise' in the real, not in the ideal world, must always be a viable option at our disposal.

¹¹⁴ See the reports by Pew Research Center: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/10/15/tunisian-confidence-in-democracy-wanes/>, [(retrieved on 24th May 24, 2015)]

THE POLE OF STABILITY. JORDAN AS A STRATEGIC EU PARTNER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

It comes as no surprise that it is Jordan who plays a very important role in the EU foreign policy in the Middle East. In fact, the country should be and definitely is perceived as a strong pole of stability in a relatively volatile region and that high opinion is attested by an advanced status partnership, officially signed in 2010. According to the EU diplomacy, Jordan ‘continues to exert a stabilizing and moderating role in a difficult regional environment while pursuing efforts to strengthen democracy and rule of law.’ Naturally, it is the EU’s objective to support Jordan in all of these endeavors. The current agenda of EU-Jordan relations is laid out in an Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy and the legal basis for the EU-Jordan relationship is the Association Agreement which entered into force on 1 May 2002.¹¹⁵ Geostrategic realities, especially the situation in Syria and Iraq, highlight the role of stabilizing factors in the Middle East and definitely, Jordan’s position in this context is likely to grow in the near future. It is especially very clear for the US government that has its own vital interests in the whole region. Robert Satloff and David Schenker from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy present their own recommendations for the President Obama and his administration. The authors assume that Jordan’s geostrategic location in a volatile environment might have a significant impact on its perception of security and domestic situation. Their views are probably shared by the US Department of State:

Syria - both in its current state of civil war and in the post-Assad era - will pose a substantial threat to Jordanian security, one that rivals or even surpasses the heightened operational tempo of al-Qaeda in Jordan following the US invasion in Iraq. The spread of radical ideologies from Islamist groups in Syria, an influx of violent jihadists, the threat of cross-border terrorism, and trade in sophisticated weapons will erode Jordan’s internal stability. In order to help Jordan address this range of threats and insulate its internal politics from the developments in Syria, the United States could increase its already strong intelligence sharing and cooperation with Jordan. However, it should work with Jordan quietly. Whatever additional deterrence is created vis-à-vis Syria by advertising US-Jordanian military and intelligence cooperation,

¹¹⁵ See: *The EU’s Relations with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, http://eeas.europa.eu/jordan/index_en.htm, ([retrieved on 23rd May 23, 2015])

including the deployment of US forces to prepare for contingencies, is offset by inflaming local passions that could ignite if circumstances worsen.

The United States has important interests at stake in Jordan and should take steps to lower the likelihood of major threats to Jordan's stability emerging in the near future. The most urgent factor contributing to instability in Jordan is financial; the IMF recently reported that Jordan's midterm fiscal situation appears positive, but to get to the 'midterm,' especially if the regional security situation worsens, Jordan needs help. At the same time, Jordan cannot be insulated from the deepening crisis in Syria but it can be protected from its most negative repercussions.¹¹⁶

The US and EU perceptions of the Middle East may vary in some points but both players are interested in strongly supporting Jordan in its efforts to stabilize the neighbourhood. At present, it is hardly possible to predict the future development of the whole area of the Middle East but the task of identifying the most reliable regional stakeholders appears to be relatively easy. The moderating Amman's policy is a natural choice for the global players so the European Union is quite comfortable with its partnership with Jordan. Although the Middle East strategies and the visions of Washington and Brussels have their own significance it is the self-perception of its own policy-making that matters most for every country and Jordan is no exception. In the official Jordanian documents on the political strategy both at home and abroad the objectives for the policymakers are stated very clearly and these are well understood by the EU diplomats and their counterparts in the Member States. The philosophy of the government must be deeply rooted in the geostrategic ground reality:

As a small state with limited resources, the primary concern of Jordanian policymakers must be to safeguard the country's immediate national interests. However, the Hashemite leadership has concurrently pursued a number of grand strategic objectives designed to revitalize the Arab world and the Middle East. Jordan's geostrategic outlook can therefore best be described as operating on two distinct yet sometimes interacting levels. The first involves activities, behavior and decisions that are related to the immediate welfare and survival of the country. The second track is a long-term activist orientation designed to spur a renewal of Arab energies and promote the overall well-being of the Middle East.

¹¹⁶ Robert Satloff, David Schenker, *Political Instability in Jordan*, <http://www.cfr.org/jordan/political-instability-jordan/p30698>, (retrieved on May 22, 2015).

The idea of unity is a powerful and emotive political imperative within the Arab world, as Arabs share a common language, culture and much of the same historical background. In respect to the promotion of Arab unity, Jordan represents what can be termed the 'federal' school of thought, long espoused by the Hashemites. The main viewpoint of this school is that the Arab countries, especially in Asia, should organize politically along federal lines. Jordan and other members of the 'federal' school have pursued a moderate approach aimed at creating and strengthening true bonds of cooperation between Arab states.

The Hashemite commitment to Arab unity has been demonstrated repeatedly. Sharif Hussein led the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire after having been promised a unified state for the Arabs. After the conclusion of World War I, however, separatist forces and local Arab chieftains colluded with Britain and France to impose the confederal state system against the will of the majority of the Arab populace. The confederal scheme was later institutionalized in 1945 by the adoption of the Charter of the League of Arab States, and it remains in effect today.¹¹⁷

From the European perspective, the Jordanian geostrategic outlook combining two fundamental objectives is much better appreciated at present than 30 or 40 years ago. To safeguard its own national interests the country should be constantly involved in an active policy towards the Arab unity and that is reflected in the above-stated concept of the 'federal approach.' Strengthening the bonds of effective cooperation between the Arab states guarantees the minimum stability which is the condition for the future prosperity of the whole Arab world. The colliding interests of several Arab states and the objectives of the non-state actors are the main obstacles in the process of building the unity but these are - as I believe - the natural determinants of the recent phenomenon of the 'Revenge of Geography and History.' Within the European Union this collision of separate interests of its Member States with the desire to gradually build the European unity is being experienced quite painfully, especially in the situation of geostrategic challenges and threats coming from the South (the influx of immigrants escaping the persecution and poverty at home) and from the East (after the Russian invasion on Crimea and the violent foreign policy of Moscow). The EU concept of unity of values in diversity of cultures

¹¹⁷ See the official website of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/f_affairs2.html#The Arab Political Order: Confederal vs. Federal, (retrieved on May 22, 2015).

is being seriously tested. Almost every Member State has to pursue its own policies on two distinct yet interacting levels, in a quite similar manner as Jordan does, so generally the idea of the 'federal policy' is closely linked with the policy of addressing the domestic challenges. Both policies are more and more inseparable as geostrategic challenges by definition cross all the national borders so they cannot be tackled by the national governments only. The European strategists should therefore understand and correctly interpret the realities of the Middle East and the Jordanian perspective of pursuing its complex policy.

POLAND AS AN EASTERN PILLAR OF THE EU POLICY

Poland became a fully sovereign state in 1989 after the first free (or semi-free) elections when the process of political, social and economic transformation started. It must be stressed that the transformation from a Soviet centrally-planned economy to a free-market economy was very painful and it was made more so by the devastating condition of the Polish economy in 1989. The new government inherited vast debts, a burdensome welfare system that could not cope with the demands placed on it and inflation of 586 per cent. The Soviet-era flagship industries such as steel and shipbuilding were not only unable to pull the economy out of the crisis; they were wasting the remaining funds. The bold yet socially controversial moves initiated by a new non-Communist government to put the economy on the right track have been fully analyzed and commented over the years so it is sufficient to say that 10 years later the private sector accounted for over three-quarters of the GDP and in 2002 inflation was brought down to 3 per cent. The international environment in 1989 was not promising at all for the new government and the old psychological scars and injuries, deeply rooted in history (or at least in some interpretations of history) could not be easily healed. Adam Zamoyski, an Anglo-Polish historian, refers to the hot days of the transformation in the context of Poland's diplomatic activities in his book 'A History of Poland:'

No formula for adopting any form of violence could be approved of. That sort of new foreign policy, or better said: philosophy of modern foreign policy, conceived by intellectuals-turned-into-politicians, was translated into reality soon after the first non-communist government took over in 1989. So, within weeks of its formation, the then Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski opened up relations with the Soviet republics of Lithuania, Belarus and

Ukraine, as if they were sovereign states. With all of them Poland had had more or less strained relations due to very complex historical issues, expressed demands of territorial revision or the status of minorities - Polish minorities living in those countries or respective minorities living in Poland. That was a very bold move, taken two years before the break-up of the Soviet Union. In a very hot political atmosphere Minister Skubiszewski declared that Poland would never seek to revise her frontier with Lithuania and did not consider Polish residents in that country to be anything other than Lithuanian citizens. The same formula was applied towards other mentioned countries and it was in stark contrast to the political concepts displayed elsewhere.

At that time Poland's relations with the Soviet Union were bound to be strained as there were large bodies of Soviet troops stationed in Poland - which finally left in 1993 - and Moscow was still hoping to keep the country within its sphere of interest. The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a turning point as Poland was the first country to recognize Ukraine's declaration of independence, and the second to recognize Lithuania. A bit earlier in February 1990 the then president Lech Wałęsa met presidents Vaclav Havel of former Czechoslovakia and Jozsef Antall of Hungary in VysehradVisegrad, in Prague, where they reached a tripartite agreement to provide a framework for united action and regional security. (Right now it is, of course, a group of four: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia - PK).

Polish diplomacy faced a no less delicate subject as it opened relations with Germany. In 1945 Poland had acquired, by Stalin's order and the Western Allies' agreement a big area of former German territory in the West, having lost even bigger portion of her own territory on the East to the then Soviet Union (...) Poland demanded formal ratification of its western border, reminding all concerned that, when signing agreements with Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, it had declared its unconditional recognition of existing borders and its refusal to encourage any claims by minorities either within these countries or ousted from them. This argument was accepted and with the support of the United States the existing borders were finally confirmed.¹¹⁸

In fact, our relations with Germany have become very cordial since that time and the German government has offered Poland great support in the efforts to join the European Union. At present, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel

¹¹⁸ Adam Zamoycki, *Poland. A History*, Harper Press, London 2009, p. 399-401

is ready to cooperate fully with the Polish government on the crisis in Ukraine, despite strong protests of several groups of German entrepreneurs interested in maintaining business-as-usual relations with Moscow.

Poland submitted an application for the EU membership in 1994 and was formally admitted on 1 May 2004. A no less significant date for many Poles was 12 March 1999 when the country joined NATO along with Hungary and the Czech Republic, as this act finally cancelled the Yalta Agreement which had made Poland a semi-dependent country under the control of the Soviets. Majority of Poles interpreted the fact of becoming a NATO member in terms of obtaining a secure position which could guarantee the country's sovereignty. At the same time, Poles started to consider our geographical location not as a threat but as a chance to build stable and rational, however not always very friendly, relations with our neighbours. It should be reminded here that the number of our neighbours increased: in 1989 we had only three: the USSR, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. At present none of these exist. We share our border with seven countries: Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Russia. In fact, the geostrategic location has always been a challenge for Poland. The problem, of course, is that it is very difficult to deal with neighbours. Friends can come and go, but neighbours stay. Neighbours, especially the hostile and difficult ones require engagement so foreign policy should be the framework to decide the terms of that engagement. An interesting analysis on Poland's geostrategic challenges in this context has been presented by an external observer, George Friedman from the American Institute at Stratford:

Polish national strategy pivots around a single, existential issue: how to preserve its national identity and independence. Located on the oft-invaded North European Plain, Poland's existence is heavily susceptible to the moves of major Eurasian powers. (...) For some countries, geopolitics is a marginal issue. Win or lose, life goes on. But for Poland, geopolitics is an existential issue; losing begets national catastrophe. Therefore, Poland's national strategy inevitably is designed with an underlying sense of fear and desperation. Nothing in Polish history would indicate that disaster is impossible.

Obviously, close ties with NATO and the European Union are Poland's first strategic solution, but the viability of NATO as a military force is less than

clear and the future of the European Union is clouded. This is at the heart of Poland's strategic problem. (...) Poland has three strategies available to it. The first is to do everything it can to keep NATO and the European Union viable and Germany contained within them. Poland doesn't have the power to ensure this. The second is to create a relationship with Germany or Russia that guarantees its interests. Obviously, the ability to maintain those relationships is limited. The third strategy is to find an outside power prepared to guarantee its interests.

That power is currently the United States. But the United States, after the experiences in the Islamic world, is moving toward a more distant, balance-of-power approach to the world. This does not mean the United States is indifferent to what happens in northern Europe. The growth of Russian power and potential Russian expansionism that would upset the European balance of power obviously would not be in Washington's interest. But as the United States matures as a global power, it will allow the regional balance of power to stabilize naturally rather than intervene if the threat appears manageable.¹¹⁹

It is not difficult to predict that under these circumstances Poland has to act on two (or three) separate yet interacting levels. The bilateral ties with its Eastern neighbours (which are not the Member States) are built with an active participation of the European Union. This strategy enables Poland to exert an effective impact on Russian policy towards Ukraine that depends heavily on external support, both in political and economic areas. EU is hardly ever depicted by the most influential Russian media as a united political entity with its own global agenda and a cohesive philosophy of action. This media-popularized message is strengthened by the '*pragmatic-Realpolitik approach*' of the Russian diplomacy that is more inclined to build up and develop the bilateral relations with a selected group of the Member States than to deal in the overall manner with the EU institutions. Therefore, it is a deep concern of Poland to promote the philosophy of playing in a team, i.e. in the EU team in order to become more efficient in its dealings with the Russian government. The same philosophy may be applied elsewhere as the EU 2020 strategy emphasizes the interdependence of the various EU policies and the policies pursued by the Member States. The stability and prosperity of the Eastern and Central parts of Europe depends on the integrated and cohesive EU activities being in harmony with the policies of the most influential Member

¹¹⁹ George Friedman, *Poland's Strategy* (in:) *Geopolitical Weekly*, August 28, 2012, <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/polands-strategy> (retrieved on May 25, 2015).

States, especially Germany and France. Poland is a strong proponent of these interdependent policies and its solid position on the Eastern European flank will strengthen the overall position of the European Union in this part of the world. At the same time, Poland believes in what is guaranteed by our membership in NATO. From the purely geostrategic perspective any form of Russian expansionism would upset the balance of power in Europe and that consequently would not be in Washington's interest. This simple observation should be considered a pragmatic approach towards Realpolitik which coexists side-by-side with the ethical substance of the EU policies. These policies cannot be efficient without applying the principle of power in the most extreme circumstances. Every Polish government should be fully aware of all these interdependencies.

CONCLUSION

It may appear to be a bold overstatement but both Poland and Jordan have quite similar roles to play in their respective political environments. Their sovereignty and national security depend not only on their respective home policies but also, to a great degree, on the geopolitical realities. Russian expansionist policies and the Ukrainian crisis pose a serious threat to Poland and - in a parallel manner - the extremist activities of Daesh in the Middle East plus the devastating war in Syria are the most serious threats looming over Jordan. Both countries have to pursue their policies on several separate yet interacting levels and both have been considered for quite a long time the pillars of regional stability. Poland and Jordan depend greatly, whether they like it or not, on external powers that may influence their domestic or international activities. The time has come for both, Jordan and Poland, to develop much deeper interest in the crucial areas of the Middle East and Central-Eastern Europe respectively, as many of the regional events, however distinct they may appear, are becoming more and more interlinked.

Amman, May 31, 2015