

EUROPEAN UNION – RETROSPECTION AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

European Union has entered into a turning point of its history. The number of member-states has increased nearly 5-fold. Therefore, the need of new institutional and legal solution is urgent.

Political context of the undergoing integration processes is different than at the beginnings: the “cold war” is the past. The threat of large military conflict is in Europe smallish. New threats and challenging are emerging, instead of: terrorism, organized crimes and natural environment protection. There are new “actors” at the global economic and political scene – with increasing importance of China, India and other “emerging markets”.

A historical perspective leads to better understanding of these processes and to find better solutions. And brings to light foundations of the European unity: common civilization values and the aim of peaceful development.

Keywords: European Union, integration, history, politics

Sixty years of Schuman Declaration

The European Union – retrospection and prospects

Sixty years after the announcement of Schuman Declaration, the European Union has found itself at a turning point since it has been enlarged by a group of as many as twelve member states which stands for an 80% growth. The new Europe is facing the challenges of the third millennium in which the whole world is different than it used to be sixty years ago.

The set of institutional and legal solutions of the European Communities established for 6 states has turned out to be insufficient. Thus, the Treaty of Maastricht provided for the need of its revision. The first not very successful trial to introduce such changes was the Amsterdam Treaty agreed upon in 1997 and next partial trial was the Treaty of Nice from December 2002. In summer 2003 a proposal of a “Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe” was presented by the European Convent. This treaty was rejected following its defeat in national referendums in France and the Netherlands. However, a straight majority of the solutions suggested in the above mentioned Treaty was included in the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force on 1st December 2009.

Entering the path of cooperation by the European nations, which was shown in May 1950 by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, was a result of the experiences of previous generations and whole historical eras. As Jerzy Łukaszewski explicitly stated⁸⁶: ‘The future cannot be separated from the past. History is a continuous process. It is like a river the upper reaches of which still affect the lower ones. The one who does not know the sources and the initial impulses of European integration cannot understand the tendencies, traditions and the written, as well as the unwritten, rules which nowadays set the direction of its development’.

⁸⁶ Łukaszewski J. 2002. *Cel: Europa. Dziewięć esejów o budowniczych jedności europejskiej*, Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa, p.11

This work is an attempt to address, from such a perspective, the essential issues of the future of the united Europe, such as the foundation of common values, sovereignty and peaceful development.

Europe as a community

It is a very common tendency not to distinguish the history of the European Community as an institution initiated at the beginning of the 1950s from the European community which is not capitalized. Owing to that community the notion of Europe is not narrowed down to a geographical terms but is pervaded with rich cultural, political and social meanings which constitute the heritage of the European civilization. Three main cultural streams participated in the above mentioned establishment of Europe as a community. The oldest one is the civilization of ancient Greece. It is not an accident that the word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek language. It was there where different branches of philosophy, science, literature and art were initiated.

The second centre of European culture was ancient Rome. Owing to it the majority of European, and other, nations have the same alphabet. The means of conveying universal values has also become the system of law or the very Latin language⁸⁷.

The third source is the Christianity, which as a matter of fact was taken from outside but it is Europe which radiates it over the world. A range of European nations were shaped in the circle of Christian culture. An important example is Poland where accepting Christianity stands for the beginning of the written history of the state and the nation.

The integration in the scope of economy also dates back to distant centuries. Roman money was accepted far beyond borders of the empire. Cities in Poland were located on the Magdeburg Law. Many European cities were associated in the Hanseatic League. The economic integration gained speed in the 19th century, the era of steam and electricity as well as stormy development of a new system, capitalism. The classics of the economic thought, such as J. S. Mill or A. Smith laid the theoretical foundations for modern economy, whereas D. Ricardo explained the benefits of international exchange of material goods in his theory of comparative costs.

Among the thinkers of past centuries, the pioneers of the idea of the unity of Europe, there were also Poles. In his work *O wiecznym przymierzu między narodami (On eternal covenant among the nations)* Wojciech B. Jarzębowski presented a project of the European constitution which at the time of the 19th century was quite innovative.

Unfortunately, instead of a progress in integration the World War I broke out in Europe. In the interwar period an important role in the intellectual debate played Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, whose book 'Pan Europe' was the source of inspiration for the Pan European Union. Among the projects of unification put forward by politicians, the conception of the United States of Europe draws particular attention. That conception was presented on the forum of the League of Nations in June 1929 by Aristide Briand, the multiple minister of foreign affairs and prime minister of France⁸⁸.

The outbreak of the next world war provoked people to reflection on the reason why it was not possible to avoid it in spite of the fact that the World War I broke out only twenty years before and the trials which were undertaken to prevent the next potential conflict.

The proposal to initiate such a cooperation, which would safeguard peace, formulated by Jean Monnet and approved by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, was announced on 9th May 1950. A year later under the Treaty of Paris the European Coal and Steel

⁸⁷ Kubiak Z. 2003. *Piękno i gorycz Europy. dzieje Greków i Rzymian*, Świat Książki, Warszawa.

⁸⁸ Marszałek A. 1996. *Z historii europejskiej idei integracji międzynarodowej*, UŁ, Łódź.

Community was formed, the institution which initiated the history of the present European Union.

In the first years of establishing the legal and institutional bases for the European Communities an important role played: Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi. Those politicians were Catholics, who were famous for their religious beliefs. It is worth noting that in that period in 1995 the Council of Europe approved the sky blue flag with a circle of twelve stars on it, which is one of the symbols of Holy Mother. On that occasion the Council of Europe funded a stained glass in the cathedral in Strasburg.

Looking from the perspective of the previous centuries of forming Europe as a cultural community as well as several decades of the development of the European Communities it is possible to note a kind of move away from the underlying principles, which were the clear inspiration in the first years of forming the European structures.

There are lots of examples illustrating this view. One of them is given by the project of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in the version proposed by the European Convent in July 2003. In the preamble to this document there was a reference to the heritage of the ancient Greece and Rome, whereas the existence of Christianity was carefully concealed. What is more, in the last sentence of the preamble there were words: 'being grateful to the members of the European Convention for drafting this Constitution on behalf of the citizens and states of Europe', which was ironically promoted by the rejection of the Treaty in France and in Holland.

Thus, it is so necessary and essential to reflect on the foundations of the European unity. In this context it is worth reminding that John Paul II repeatedly warned that democracy which is formed without any internal cement, that is any system of values, can be easily transformed into totalitarianism: 'it is a threat of a democracy allying with ethical relativism which deprives the life of a civil community of a long-lasting moral point of reference, at the same time radically taking from them the ability to identify the truth since if there is no ultimate truth being a guide for a political activity and giving direction to it, such ideas and beliefs can be easily used for the sake of the purposes set by the authorities. History teaches that democracy without values is easily transformed into an open or disguised totalitarianism'⁸⁹.

The question of sovereignty

The word 'sovereignty' is derived from the adjective sovereign (French *souverain* means the supreme, ruling) and refers to the politics, standing for 'independence from any power in relations with other states'. Such a sovereignty was applied in some of former absolute monarchies as well as the totalitarian states of the epoch of Hitler or Stalin, which existed in recent times. Nowadays to some extent sovereign are the United States of America.

At present it is not possible to measure the sovereignty in binary number system treating it in a static and comprehensive way, assuming that there is sovereignty or there is no sovereignty. In this way are concealed both economic as well as political and cultural mutual bonds which were accumulated among the states at the time of globalization.

Moreover, sovereignty is not an independent carrier of the supreme values. That is why, a voluntary limitation of sovereignty is frequently effected in order to achieve other benefits all the more so because sovereignty is reduced in one respect and broadened in the other. States join various international institutions and integration groups in this way achieving many economic and social benefits at the expense of renouncing a part of its

⁸⁹ Encyclical: *Veritatis splendor*, n.101, quotation after: *Europa jutra*, selected and drawn up by A. Sójka. 2000. Publishing House: M, Kraków, p. 252 – 253

sovereignty. Then they gain the opportunity to co-decide not only about themselves but also about the whole community to which they belong.

The question of sovereignty was among the key issues on the debate over the causes of the cataclysm of World War II as well as the ways to prevent a similar tragedy in the future, which can be even more dreadful bearing in mind that it is possible now to make use of nuclear weapon.

One of such proposals was presented by Winston Churchill in his speech in Zurich in September 1946 - it was the reconciliation between Germany and France. Moreover, he was also in favor of establishing such an European integration group in which: 'the military strength of an individual state will become less important since small countries will be of the same importance as the big ones in this way being proud of participating in common cause'⁹⁰.

The author of the project of the postwar order in Europe which initiated the establishment of the present European Union is the French politician, Jean Monnet. He deemed utopian the idea to build a European federation in a short period of time. In his opinion, the edifice of community constructions should be erected gradually, making use of favorable opportunities in appropriate timing.

According to both Jean Monnet and Winston Churchill, the initial condition for the new European construction is the reconciliation between Germany and France. It should be effected by means of a joint undertaking of governments and nations. To that project were supposed to be invited other democratic European countries. In such an accord the status of Germany and France were supposed to be the same. Such a proposal, formulated according to the principles of partnership and put forward as soon as five years after the world, made it easier for Germany to come back to the family of world nations.

Monnet was convinced that the unity of Europe cannot be built by way of realization of a single project. He claimed that integration should be started from a selected economic sector and then broadened onto following areas. Integration was supposed to safeguard peace so its aim was of political nature. The tool of its realization was economy. Jean Monnet proposed that integration should embrace the two key sectors of industry, which at the time decided upon the military potential of the military industry. These were coal and steel industries. Another argument in favor of such a solution was also the fact that the hotbed of conflicts between Germany and France used to be the Ruhr Basin. Establishing the proposed community made it possible to solve the disputes in a peaceful way by means of mediation of supranational institutions.

Monnet's proposal was accepted by the French Foreign Minister. It was announced on 9th May 1950 and is referred to as the Schuman Declaration. Negotiations were started and one year later was signed the Treaty of Paris, under which the European Coal and Steel Community was set up. It started its activity in 1952.

It is also noteworthy that it was the principle of limiting sovereignty in favor of the community institutions representing the states which laid at the root of the project of European integration, which with the course of time led to the establishment of the structures referred to as the European Union in the Treaty of Maastricht. Gradually, competence of the Community institutions is growing. It is accomplished as a compromise between the supporters of deeper integration and its opponents.

The fear connected with rejecting part of sovereignty can be observed in all societies of countries candidating to the European Union⁹¹ - since the first enlargement by Great

⁹⁰ Quotation after: Churchill W. *Speech in Zurich, September 1946*, in: *Building European Union. A Documentary History and Analysis*. Ed. T. Salmon, W. Niwll 1997. Manchester Univ. Press, p. 26 (own translation),

⁹¹ The process of the enlargement of the European Union has not been completed yet. At present the country closest to the membership is Croatia.

Britain, Denmark and Ireland in 1973 to the last enlargement by the group of twelve states from the years 2004 and 2007. In Norway the membership in the Communities has been rejected twice, following the completed negotiations, by slight majority in national referendum. The issue of its presence in the European Union is still dividing the Norwegian society.

The debate over the future of the European Union is thus connected with one of the most fundamental disputes – between the supporters of the federation model and its opponents.

Is Europe meant to become a federation?

The word federation is derived from Latin (*federatio* means alliance) and stands for a structure in which the entities forming it transfer part of their rights to the federal bodies representing them.

In the 20th century some unaccomplished ideas of federation were put forward under pressure of some stormy events. Among them was the concept of the Marshal Joseph Piłsudski to establish a federation which would among other things include Poland and Ukraine. In the period preceding the outbreak of World War II and in its initial years the negotiations were held to federalize Poland and Czechoslovakia. At the end of the year 1939, in the face of looming threat from Germany the proposal of a French-British Union was being considered.

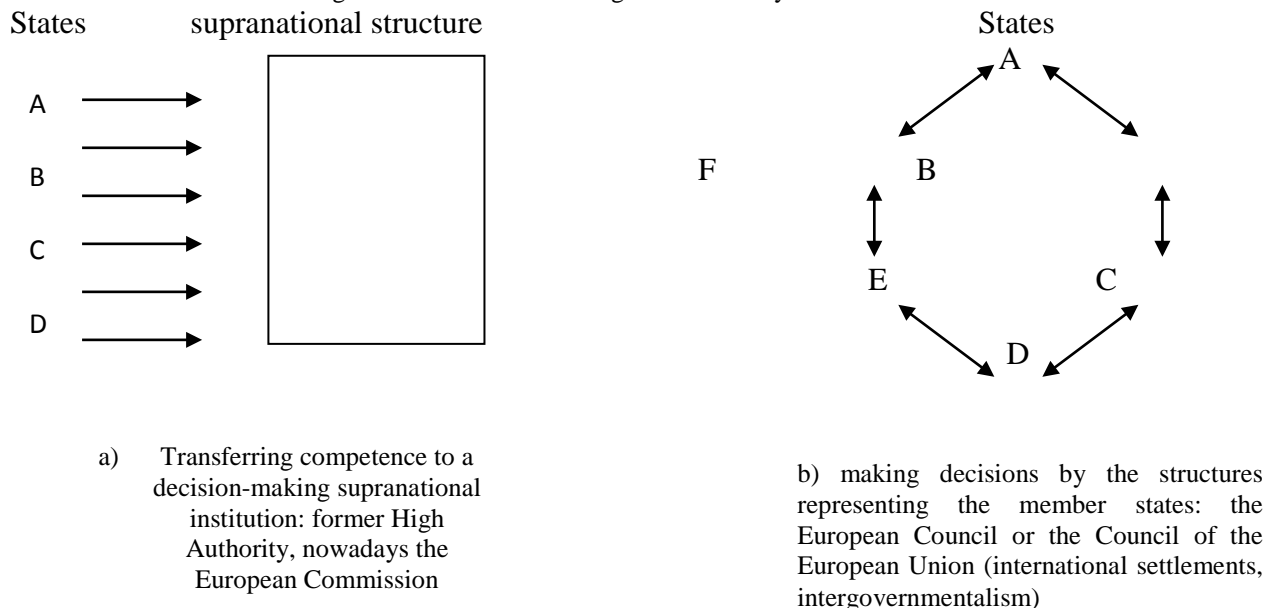
At that time the Research Institute for Federal Union was established. British authors published several books on the perspective of European federation which contributed to strengthening of the federal stream in different countries, including Italy.

During the war the supporters of federalism perceived it as a permanent solution to the issue of threat from Germany and protection against the possible outbreak of the next war. The matters of this kind were included among other things in the manifesto from Ventone by Italian federalists Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi in 1941 or *Manifeste de la Resistance Européenne* adopted in Geneva in July 1944 by the participants of the resistance movement from 9 countries. That year in the USA the Legal Committee of the 5th Pan European Congress drafted the Project of a Constitution for the United States of Europe.

The founders of the conception of the European Coal and Steel Community, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, were pragmatists. They deemed utopist the possibility to set up a European federation several years after the war, although, at the same time, they were in favor of establishing it in longer run. It is worth noting that the founded according to their conception European Coal and Steel Community established the institution of the High Authority, which exercised supranational competence. The member states renounced part of their sovereignty in favor of the above mentioned institution. Thus, in the first Community there was a clear leaven of a federal structure.

The two subsequent Communities established 6 years later, the European Economic Community and EURATOM were of different character. In this case the most important decisions were not made by supranational institutions but as a result of intergovernmental settlements (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Models of functioning of Community institutions



Such an essential change was a result of several factors. The formula of the European Economic Community was much broader than the one adopted in two other Communities which were limited to the sectors explicitly defined in their names. In practice, the European Economic Community covered all the rest of the economy. Thus, in that case maintaining the federal character of the decision-making structures would make it necessary to limit the sovereignty of the member states in plenty of new areas. There was no political consent for that all the more so because in the second half of the 1950s the threat from the block of the East European states considerably diminished. As a result it ceased to be one of the prime movers in the scope of defense policy as it used to be in the period of establishing the European Coal and Steel Community.

Another formula of the EEC and EURATOM as well as changeable political conditions contributed to the fact that for the next decades the main stream of integration was not set by politics or the issue of defense but more and more frequently by the economy.

The dispute between the supporters of the federal option and its opponents was repeatedly arising in the course of the Community history and is still alive. In June 1979 the first general election to the European Parliament took place, whereas already in June 1980 Agostino Spinelli, who was famous for his federalist beliefs, sent a letter to the deputies criticizing the way of functioning of the community structures and the mode of arranging the decision-making settlements. He suggests the consolidation of the law which is scattered among individual Treaties as well as other changes by accepting the Treaty on European Union. There was a slight response to that letter. Only 9 deputies came to the meeting in the restaurant in Strasburg. In this way the so-called ‘crocodile club’ initiated its activity (the name is derived from the name of the restaurant in which the meeting took place). Due to the fact that another group embracing the opponents of the federation called ‘kangaroo club’ was formed, the European Parliament became a forum for discussion between the federalists and supporters of the intergovernmental option⁹².

The proposal aiming to limit the scope of issues settled on the basis of the unanimity principle as well as to strengthen the importance of the European Parliament and other institutions was the plan of Genscher-Colombo, presented at the beginning of 1981. In the

⁹² Cf. Swann D. 1996. *European Economic Integration; The Common Market, European Union and Beyond*. E. Edgar, Cheltenham, p. 43-44.

course of discussions, in June 1983, the European Council adopted the Solemn Declaration on the European Union which did not include many facts.

The next step belonged the Parliament, which in February 1984 adopted the preliminary Treaty establishing the European Union. That proposal was not legally binding. It was just a voice in the debate over the future of the unified Europe. One year later, in spite of the protest from Great Britain, Denmark and Greece, it was decided to summon an intergovernmental conference in order to prepare a new treaty.

As a result of the negotiations, being a compromise between the supporters of different options, the Single European Act was adopted. It did not satisfy the supporters of closer integration, it did not meet the expectations of those deputies, which were expressed in the draft project of the Treaty on European Union. Thus, on the ceremony of signing the Treaty in February 1986 in Luxemburg the European Parliament and Commission were represented only by its vice-presidents in this way showing reserve towards it.

At that time the European Commission was chaired by Jack Delors, one of its most dynamic presidents, who exercised his office for two consecutive terms of office (10 years is the hitherto record). The settlements of the Single European Act were only gradual points towards further integration. In the sphere of economic solutions the above mentioned Treaty provided for the implementation of single European market till the end of 1992. A natural supplement of that stage was the program of a single currency. The premature project of the currency union provided the so-called Werner plan from November 1970.

The idea of a single currency was once again mentioned in the reports of Delors in 1989. This time it was well-received and the program of the economic and currency union was included in the Treaty of Maastricht of the year 1992.

This Treaty is another compromise. In the working version of the Treaty, being the initial material for further works, there was a provision on the European federation. In the face of a decisive objection from Great Britain, it was removed from the Treaty⁹³.

The next Treaties: the Treaty of Amsterdam and Nice do not include any important new solutions. We will not find any reference to the federation as one of the aims of integration in the Treaty of Lisbon, either. For this reason, in the dispute over the future of Europe questions are asked whether it is supposed to transform into a European federation. The dispute between the supporters of federalism and the intergovernmental option is probably going to last long. As before it is going to shape the patterns according to which further integration is going to follow.

Integration versus the European security

As it has been already mentioned, safeguarding peace in the postwar Europe was the underlying condition for Monnet's project of unification. In less than half a year from the time when this program was presented by Schuman, France put forward another proposal called Pleven's plan. It provided for setting up single European defense structures.

The negotiations started in February 1951 led to signing the treaty setting up the European Defense Community by the foreign ministers of the six European states. In 17 detailed settlements, protocols and declarations accompanying the treaty were among other things defined the principles of cooperation between the future European army and NATO, relations between the new institution and Great Britain as well as were specified the principles of financing it and its institutional structure.

⁹³ After signature of the Treaty John Major said the following thing: ' Great Britain has made effective use of the negotiations from Maastricht in order to strengthen the power of governments of the member states. Now it is clear that the Community is going to remain a union of sovereign national states. It is as the people expect it to be, namely that the decisions are taken by their parliaments' according to: 'The Economist', 25th September 1993.

Several months later, in September 1952, in the Luxemburg resolution the will was expressed to establish the European Political Community. A new team, chaired by Henry Spaak, was appointed to prepare the project of the new system. It was preliminarily accepted by the six member states in March 1953. It provided for replacing the already existing European Steel and Coal Community and future European Defense Community by the European Community.

The institutions of the European Community were supposed to have a supranational character: bicameral parliament, consisting of the Popular Chamber and the Senate. The Popular Chamber, appointed in general elections, was supposed to consist of 268 deputies. The division of seats would depend on the number of population of the given state, whereas excluding the opportunity to obtain majority by two bigger states. France was supposed to have 70 seats in the Chamber (its overseas territories were taken into consideration), Germany and Italy – respectively 63 seats, Belgium and Holland – respectively 30 seats, Luxemburg – 12 seats. The Senators, in the number of 87, were supposed to be appointed by the country parliaments.

The European Political Community, in the period of two years from the time the Popular Chamber was constituted, was supposed to take over the competence of the European Coal and Steel Community as well as the European Defense Community.

Equipping the Community with the institutions of federal character, at the same time in the draft version of the Treaty were included the provisions which aimed at limiting its power over numerous issues. The unanimous consent of the Council of National Ministers was required to undertake any international actions by the Executive Council. Unanimity was also supposed to apply when ratifying international agreements and treaties.

The commencement of the negotiations took place during the period of considerable political changes occurring both in the world as well as in some of the six member states. The daring project of the European Community was enthusiastically accepted in some federalist circles. It was also endorsed by the second Hague Congress, held from 8th to 10th October 1953. The circle of its participants was limited to the representatives of the six member states, whereas the authorities and parliaments of individual countries treated that project with reserve. However, the most meaningful change was taking place in France, which in the years from 1952 to 1954 following the change of government gradually went over from the position of the initiator of the Community projects to the position of the most obstructive and difficult negotiation partner.

The first round of the negotiations was held in Rome from 22nd September till 9th October 1953. Then the idea of direct elections to the future parliament was accepted. The most daring attitude was shown by Germany, the Dutch endorsed the idea of a custom union, whereas the French were the most doubtful and reserved.

The second round of the negotiations, held in Paris from 12th December 1953 till 8th March 1954, was dominated by the institutional issues. There was divergence regarding the role of the Upper Chamber in the Parliament and the principles of the single market (these experiences were later applied in the negotiations over the establishment of the European Economic Community). The agreement on merging the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Defense Community was not reached, either.

That phase of negotiations was supposed to be evaluated by the Council of Ministers of the European Steel and Coal Community on 30th March 1954. It was postponed, however, in the face of mounting difficulties in the negotiations.

Several months later, on 30th August 1954 a deadly blow was dealt to the idea of the European Political Community by the French parliament, which under the pretence of procedural reservations decided not to put the ratification of the treaty to the vote. In this way the far-reaching idea of political and defense cooperation was ruined for several decades.

However, the idea of the single market did not suffer any damage. It emerged several years later during the negotiations over the Treaty of Rome, establishing the European Economic Community.

The issue of European defense, abandoned 50 years ago, emerged repeatedly on different stages of its development. Already in the year 1958 de Gaulle initiated preliminary talks on the political cooperation. A year later it was put forward the proposal of regular meetings (every three months) of the foreign ministers of the six member states prepared by a small secretariat. In July 1961, during the 'summit' of the leaders of the member states in Bonn was summoned a commission chaired by Christian Fouchet, French ambassador in Denmark. It was supposed to specify the ways of closer political cooperation. The proposals put forward by the commission, referred to as Fouchet's plan, aimed to set up a 'union of states'. During the negotiations the name 'the European Union' appeared for several times (in the document of January 1962 referred to as the 'union of states and Europeans').

Finally, facing considerable difference of opinions, Fouchet's plan failed. The later act of signing the treaty between France and Germany in January 1963 confirmed some politicians in their belief that these countries wanted to dominate.

Following several years the issue of cooperation in foreign policy emerged again in Davignon's report from the year 1970. Regular meetings of ministers of foreign affairs or leaders of the member states were proposed. The initiated dialog was called the European Political Cooperation. However, the scope of that cooperation was limited.

The cooperation in the scope of foreign policy was confirmed in the Single European Act (in article 30). The condition to assume a common stand, in the mode of intergovernmental settlements, was unanimity. The will of closer cooperation in the issues of defense was also declared. The institutional framework of the common foreign and defense policy was initially shaped in the Treaty on European Union, the second pillar of the European Union, and next in the Treaty of Lisbon by appointing 'the minister of foreign affairs' of the European Union.

Great Britain and the European integration

In the speech of Zurich, which has already been quoted, Winston Churchill also said: 'Time is short (...) If we want to build the United States of Europe, under whatever name, we need to start now (...) The first step is to set up the Council of Europe (...) It is a very urgent work. It should be chaired jointly by France and Germany'⁹⁴.

The words about the Council of Europe came true in less than three years later. Interestingly, Churchill claimed that the work to build the community European constructions should be jointly led by France and Germany. It was not without reason that he did not name his country then since Great Britain was in favor of integration of the postwar Europe but did not want to participate in it. It limited itself to being a catalyst or a midwife in the process of the birth of the united Europe. However, it could not find its place in this project. Thus, this country did not answer Schuman's appeal of 9th May 1950. Great Britain was the big absent in the European Coal and Steel Community in spite of the clear pressure from the USA.

The above mentioned absence resulted from several factors. Firstly, from the belief that the European peace was going to be sufficiently safeguarded if the former adversaries, Germany and France, would participate in such a structure. Thus, Britain's participation in it was not necessary. Secondly, the traditional isolationism became apparent, that is the insular feeling of being different from the 'continent'. Thirdly, the transatlantic cooperation and its bonds with the Commonwealth countries⁹⁵ were more important for Great Britain than the

⁹⁴ W. Churchill Speech in Zurich, op. cit. p. 27-28

⁹⁵ Clement Atlee in his speech in the House of Commons stated: I am worried at any suggestion that we could approach Europe more than the Commonwealth. The countries of the Commonwealth are our closest friends

European bonds. Fourthly, Great Britain was in favor of a loose formula of integration which would be limited to establishing a common trade zone. It opposed to the idea of customs union and all the more the political integration, which played such a significant role in the conceptions of the 'Fathers of Europe'. Fifthly, the model of the British agriculture was different from the French one as well as the opinion on what should constitute the future of common agricultural policy.

The British also demonstrated similar reserve towards the conception of the European Defense Community. After its fall in 1954 the British delegation participated in the negotiations, chaired by Henry Spaak, over the establishment of the European Economic Community. However, it withdrew from them when the six member states agreed that the aim of the future Community is to obtain the custom union, whereas the British wanted only a free-trade zone.

When the establishment of the three Communities came true, Great Britain took an independent integration initiative. It set up the EFTA, the European Free Trade Association, along with Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland and Sweden. The association was later joined by Finland, Island and Liechtenstein. The British proposal to conclude an agreement between the EFTA and the EEC, which was supposed to broaden the free-trade zone onto the both groups, was rejected by France. Another British proposal to connect the membership in EFTA and EEC was also rejected by Gen. de Gaulle, who was ruling in France at the time.

Characteristic is that already in the year 1960, that is in less than a year since the activity of EFTA was started, Great Britain decided to join the European Communities. Also Denmark, Ireland and Norway followed the example. The difficult negotiations had a surprising outcome on 14th January 1963. General de Gaulle during the press conference expressed his opposition against joining the Community by Great Britain. The negotiators found out about the French standpoint from the journalists!

In 1967, at the time of rule of Harold Wilson, Great Britain repeated its application for participation. Like the first one it was rejected by France. In order to change this state of affairs it was necessary to wait till de Gaulle left the French political scene. His successor as the President, Georges Pompidou, already in his first conference, which took place on 10 July 1969, announced that he is not against Britain's membership in the Community.

The next negotiations for membership started in June 1970. In January 1973 Great Britain along with Denmark and Ireland became members of the European Community. The refusal to participate in the Communities at the time of its establishment meant that Great Britain voluntarily resigned its leadership when it was the only winner of World War II among the member states. Great Britain's way to membership to some extent explains its attitude towards the European integration – frequent reserve towards the federalist proposals which limited the sovereignty of member states. It also allows us to understand better the difference of opinions on the European issues between France and Great Britain.

Conclusion

The experiences of the past, according to the old maxim *historia magistra vitae est* – allow us to understand better the presence as well as indicate how the future should be shaped. Studies of the European integration teach that the issues which bothered Europe several decades ago are still surprisingly up-to-date nowadays.

First, it should be asked why the six states decided to cooperate. Setting up the European Coal and Steel Community had the fundamental political aim: to safeguard peace

(...) we are not only an European Power but also a member of the big Commonwealth and Empire'. House of Commons Debates, 5-th Ser. col. 450, col. 1314-19 Also Anthony Eden expressed his opinion in a similar tone.

and prevent a new war. In order to accomplish that, the initiators of the integration made use of the economy by starting it from two crucial sectors at the time. That aim was accomplished between the states which quite recently and in the distant past used to be at war. The process of reconciliation proceeded as well as the cooperation was becoming closer and closer. The best example is given by the role which was played in the unifying Europe by France and Germany.

In contrast to the economic integration, the political integration proceeds slowly by way of numerous failures. The latest proposal in this respect is the provision on the institution of 'the minister of foreign affairs' included in the Treaty of Lisbon. However, common foreign policy, including the defense policy, is still more a matter of a distant vision than a precise plan.

Like in the past, the issue of sovereignty is still up-to-date today. The federalist conceptions, which were alive both in the interwar period and during the war, turned out to be an illusion. Instead of a supranational integration, won the conception of 'step-by-step' integration. The first of the Communities was more federalist than two subsequent ones since its decision-making body was a supranational institution, whereas in the two subsequent ones the most fundamental decisions were taken by way of intergovernmental settlements.

Last but not least, the fundamental issue for the future of Europe is on what kind of values it is going to be built. The politicians of that time, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi, were aware of how unrepeatable the ongoing events were. They wanted to build the future of Europe on respect for its cultural heritage. Do the politicians who are reluctant to mention the Christian past of Europe propose in exchange any other firm point of reference to ethical values?

The experiences of the first fifty years of the European integration also teach how long, lasting even whole decades, was the way to compromise or from an idea to its fulfillment. In this process for over 5 years participates the group of states from East-Central Europe, including Poland.