

**U.S.-Polish Relations for the 21st Century**  
**By Ambassador Lee Feinstein**  
***Rzeczpospolita*, December 14, 2010**

President Komorowski's meeting in Washington with President Obama has brought new energy and vitality to U.S.-Polish relations.

In their two-hour meeting in the Oval Office, the two presidents laid the foundation for broadening and deepening our historic bonds to address the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century. Our new, stronger alliance reflects Poland's important role as a leader in NATO, as the sixth largest EU country, with a growing economy, and as a promoter of human rights and democratic values in the eastern neighborhood and around the world. It is built on the pillars of security, prosperity, and democracy.

In their meeting, President Obama said Americans admired the resiliency demonstrated by Poland's people, its institutions, and economy after April 10. He said Americans still feel deeply the tragic loss of President Kaczynski, the First Lady, and the extraordinary Polish leaders who perished in the tragic plane crash. Sitting next to President Komorowski, President Obama recalled the 30th anniversary of Solidarity and how President Obama and all Americans had been inspired by brave Poles who fought with determination to regain their freedom, including a younger Bronislaw Komorowski. President Obama lauded the strides Poland has made in two short decades and cited Poland's importance as a model for other countries striving to build democratic institutions.

As important as the symbolism was, in the substance of their meeting President Obama and President Komorowski conveyed our countries' commitment to one another's security. President Obama reaffirmed the centrality of Article 5 as the core tenet of the NATO Alliance, and reiterated his determination and the American people's determination to always stand by Poland in its defense and its security needs. The two presidents announced their plans to establish a U.S. aviation detachment in Poland. The presidents welcomed NATO's decision to adopt territorial missile defense as a core mission of the Alliance, and President Obama affirmed America's commitment, backed up by the NATO decision in Lisbon, to deploy an operational system in Poland on schedule. The two presidents highlighted their support for NATO's mission in Afghanistan, where U.S. and Polish troops fight side-by-side. They also noted with satisfaction that ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan are entering a new phase of joint effort. These are all tangible expressions of the Presidents' shared commitment to ensure that transatlantic relations are resilient and relevant to today's challenges.

The U.S.-Polish relationship reflects our deeply-held commitment to share the gift of freedom with others. Poles, like Americans, have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to promoting democracy and human rights around the world. President Obama praised Poland's leadership in the Community of Democracies and reiterated strong U.S. support for the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative, designed to spur reform and democracy in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Security and democracy are fundamental. Our ability to deliver both ultimately depends on our prosperity. The presidents discussed Poland's growth despite a global recession and the euro zone crisis. President Komorowski and President Obama announced they had reached agreement to enhance cooperation on clean and efficient energy technologies. They underlined their respective governments' readiness to cooperate in good faith and in a fair, open and transparent manner on a broad range of

energy-related issues, including civilian nuclear power, unconventional gas, energy efficiency, renewable energy and other clean power resources in Poland. The presidents applauded efforts to promote entrepreneurship in both countries, including the newly expanded partnership between the Polish-American Freedom Foundation and leading U.S. companies to bring talented Polish university students and young professionals to the United States for internships in the private sector.

Poland's economic dynamism was on display in Washington at a dinner reception President Komorowski hosted that night across the street from the White House at Blair House. There, dozens of executives from many of America's leading companies came to meet President Komorowski and demonstrate private sector interest in doing business in Poland. U.S. investment in Poland, important at the time of Poland's transition, has been particularly strong since 2008, owing to Poland's continued economic growth amidst a global recession.

People to people contacts between our countries have been essential to maintaining our closeness over the years. President Obama said he understood that Poland's exclusion from the visa waiver program was source of irritation between two great friends and allies. He said Poland's entry into the Visa Waiver Program is a priority, and that he would work to solve this issue by the end of his presidency.

I congratulate President Komorowski on his successful visit to the United States, and for the vision he and President Obama set out for a strong and resilient relationship for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Lee Feinstein is the 25<sup>th</sup> U.S. Ambassador to Poland.