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## Discussing Changes in Contemporary International Relations

The 9th Polish Conference on International Relations: *2017 – a Year of a Change*.  
Toruń, (2 June, 2017), Faculty of Political Science and International Studies,  
Nicolaus Copernicus University

**Abstract:** The paper reports the 9th Polish Conference on International Relations: *2017 – a Year of a Change* organized by the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń on June 2, 2017. It presents not only the scope and process of this year's conference, but also briefly describes the idea of annual meetings of young Polish scholars interested in widely understood international relations. The conference report presents accompanying events of the conference, which gave its ninth edition a unique atmosphere. It also points out the way this year's conference contributed to the unification of the community of students and Ph.D. students in Poland who are researching a variety of subjects related to international relations.

**Keywords:** *conference report; international relations; international studies; OZIS*

Discussions about changes in contemporary international relations, although they are usually associated with the political discourse presented by media, are also performed and vital on the academic level. Issues such as: global security, geopolitics, relationships between certain regional and global powers, as well as challenges that the world is facing nowadays, are subjects of disputes not only for professors and professional researchers, but also young scholars (students and Ph.D. students). The experience of the latter may not be as rich as one of their older colleagues, but their opinions and initiatives can be considered an important factor contributing towards personal and academic development of young researchers. Moreover, the abovementioned group has a noticeable influence on the popularization of

knowledge about the world affairs, often inspiring others to think critically about issues related to international relations and become an observer aware of the surrounding world.

The most important event designed as a discussion forum for the Polish students and Ph.D. students interested in a variety of topics related to global affairs is a Polish Conference on International Relations, hosted annually at different university since 2008. The “OZIS” project (its shortcut refers to the name the conference had until 2014 – *Ogólnopolski Zjazd Internacjologów Studentów*) concentrates around political, economic, cultural, historical, and legal aspects of international relations. It is not only the biggest national conference of its type, but also one of the oldest platforms that enables young scholars to share their research and interests with their colleagues from the whole country. Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń had an honor to host the ninth edition of the conference, held on June 2, 2017.

Every edition of OZIS has its own theme chosen by the organizers according to their preference. Sometimes conferences are dedicated to particular events in international affairs, whose importance cannot be overestimated, and which take place right before or after the respective edition. The year 2017 is full of such events, some of which are: inauguration of the new president of the United States, presidential elections in France, parliamentary elections in Germany, the biggest military exercises in Europe since the Cold War, continuing destabilization of Syria and the Middle East broader, or ongoing repercussions of the migration crisis. A number of important events has been noticed by the organizers of the 9th Polish Conference on International Relations, this is why they have decided to focus on a “changing” factor while planning this years’ edition. By calling the ninth OZIS “2017 – a Year of a Change”, the hosting institution aimed at encouraging panelists to present their analysis, reports, research, and essays on a variety of topics related to widely understood “change” in contemporary international relations.

Being prepared by students and for students, the 9th Polish Conference on International Relations was organized by the International Affairs Student Association, a part of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at NCU, with the support of the Faculty. This years’ edition was prepared under the Honorary Patronage of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Marshall Mr. Piotr Całbecki, Mayor of Toruń Mr. Michał Zaleski, Chairman of the City Council Prof. Marcin Czyżniewski, Vice-Rector for Student Affairs and Staff Management Prof. Andrzej Sokala, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies Prof. Zbigniew Karpus, Centre for Eastern Studies, and Asia Pacific Society. Scientific Patronage over the ninth OZIS was received by the institutions being a part of Nicolaus Copernicus University: Jean Monnet European Studies Centre, Chinese Language and Culture Centre, and Arabic Language and Culture Centre. It should be pointed out that such a wide group of organizing and cooperating institutions significantly differentiates the ninth Polish Conference on International Relations from the previous editions. By reaching not only academic units, but also local government and independent research organizations, hosts of the ninth OZIS initiated a new model of annual meetings of the young Polish scholars interested in

contemporary international relations. Regardless of continuing or not of this model by the organizers of incoming editions, the 2017 meeting deserves to be called outstanding.

The Conference, held in the representative building of Faculty of Languages (Collegium Maius) located within the medieval Old Town was officially opened by Professor Zbigniew Karpus, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. After welcoming more than 50 students and Ph.D. students representing major Polish universities, Prof. Karpus briefly presented the history of the hosting Faculty. As the Dean stated, even though it is one of the youngest faculties of its kind in Poland (officially launched in 2009), Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at NCU, with its origins in the late 90s of the previous century, is reported to be one of the main national academic units researching variety of aspects of political science and international studies (above other disciplines) in both historical and contemporary contexts.

After his speech, Prof. Karpus gave some remarks about the contest; organizers of this year's OZIS prepared to choose the best papers written by the conference participants. Remarkable papers will be later published as chapters in monographic collective work, to be prepared by the Organizing Committee as a visible legacy of the Conference. Mr. Dawid Dymkowski from the Military University of Technology in Warsaw was awarded the first prize. The Organizing Committee found his paper entitled "The essence of the destruction of the international sources in the international management" "interesting" and "innovatory". The second and third place in the contest were respectively granted to Ms. Magdalena Kania from Jagiellonian University ("Development Aid as a Win-Win Game: the UE Members States' Models of Development Assistance Policy in a Comparative Perspective") and Mr. Antoni Pieńkos from Warsaw University ("European Defence Action Plan – European recipe for decreasing defence capabilities of the EU countries?"). On behalf of all the reviewers of the submitted papers the Dean expressed gratitude towards the contest attendees for preparing papers that correspond to the theme of this years' edition, and wished everybody successful and beneficial progress.

The first inaugural lecture ("Russia as a geopolitical vacuum") was delivered by Professor Roman Bäcker, Rector's Plenipotentiary for Integration and Innovation, Head of Department of Political Theory at Nicolaus Copernicus University. It was followed by the second inaugural lecture ("Brexit – what next?"), which was presented by Professor Paweł Hanczewski from Jean Monnet European Studies Centre at SOU. After the speeches, conference participants could enjoy the first opportunity to ask questions and discuss with guest speakers not only issues related to Russian and British politics, but also topics connected with the most urgent challenges for contemporary international relations.

The conference program was divided into nine sections: global security, international economics, 2017 – a year of a change, European studies, Middle Eastern studies, post-Soviet zone, political theory, philosophical thought, and history of international relations. Some of the short lectures that deserves distinguishing, both in terms of representing innovative approach and corresponding to the conference theme, were: "Development of relations

between the North Atlantic Alliance and the Russian Federation” by Mr. Borys Gawroński, “The debate on the topicality of the European Security Strategy” by Ms. Bożena Kalisz, “The essence of destruction of information target in the international management on the example of hybrid conflict in Ukraine” by Mr. Damian Grzegorz Dzierżyński, “Principles and methods of controlling security in international space” by Mr. Paweł Kawalerski (all from the Military University of Technology in Warsaw), “Year 2017 as the period of intensified Islamophobia? The impact of migration crisis for the European-Islamic relations” by Ms. Hanna Wiczanowska from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, “Economic diplomacy between Poland and China in a context of the “New Silk Road” initiative” by Ms. Ewa Strankowska from the University of Wrocław, and “Human trafficking in a contest of migration crisis” by Ms. Oktawia Ewa Braniewicz from the University of Łódź.

The main reason why Polish Conferences on International Relations are being organized is to enable students and Ph.D. students to present their research and discuss their thoughts about variety of aspects of contemporary international relations. Noteworthy, OZIS serves as the biggest platform of communication and integration for the group of Polish young scholars interested in global affairs. Another objective added specifically to this year’s agenda was to address issues related to widely understood “change” of an international order. The ninth Polish Conference on International Relations has successfully completed all of the abovementioned aspects. Organizers of the ninth OZIS not only proved their organizational skills and fulfilled all of the duties that the Conference Statute obligates them to consider, but also added some new elements to the conference formula (i.e. best paper contest) and reshaped the way OZIS interacts with local environment. Due to Organizing Committees’ efforts, selected conference papers will be published in a volume, which makes the legacy of the event more visible and beneficial for both particular attendees and the whole scientific community. All of the aspects mentioned above support the opinion shared by a great majority of the conference participants, according to which the ninth Polish Conference on International Relations organized in Toruń on June 2, 2017 can be considered a success.

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