

**Wystąpienie Wicepremiera-Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych
Radosława Sikorskiego na spotkaniu organizowanym przez *Foreign Policy Association*
(Nowy Jork, 25 września 2025 r.)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all thank you for the invitation, your warm reception, and the recognition of my work expressed by the FPA medal you were generous to award me. It is an honor to stand and speak here, where so many great statemen have stood and spoken before.

I am sometimes asked what really worries me about our world, what truly keeps me awake at night.

Here is the answer: the post-war international order – shaped by the memory of World War II and the trauma of the Holocaust; the order built on the foundation of political compromise, respect for other countries' sovereignty, free markets, civil liberties, and the protection of minorities – may soon collapse.

“Never again” – this promise and ambition has shaped international institutions and global security policy for decades. Now, its influence is beginning to wane.

In Ukraine, Russia's aggression has broken the taboo on the use of force to change borders.

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In Gaza, the state of Israel is losing the moral high-ground, which for so long has underpinned its international standing.

In many Western countries increasing polarization has led to a growing acceptance of the use of violence, not only against other countries, but also against “the enemies within”.

Lively public debate is the essence of democracy. There is a difference, however, between even a fierce dispute and a struggle for complete elimination of the other side. We are returning to the practice of dehumanizing political opponents – as if we had forgotten that words always come first, and that the language of discrimination ultimately leads to extermination.

Compromise is no longer seen as a value but as a sign of weakness.

The passage of time, decades of economic growth, and a false sense of security have weakened old norms and taboos. Many institutions, states, and arbiters that stood guard over the old order have lost their former prestige – sometimes deservedly so.

Will we be able to defend our values with the help of new institutions and new role-models? Winston Churchill, known for his unmatched quips,

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used to say he was an optimist because “it does not seem to be much use to be anything else.”

Optimism is ultimately nothing more than a belief that things can change for the better. In this sense, I am an optimist too—otherwise, I would have withdrawn from public life long ago. And yet we – the broadly understood West – are facing the greatest challenge in decades. At its root lies a sense of civilizational exhaustion, which our adversaries are well aware of, confident that their time has come.

But has it?

Over 1,300 days have passed since Russia launched its three-day “special military operation” – that is an illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. About 1.5 million Ukrainian and Russian soldiers have been wounded or died – more than a thousand per day. The Moscow regime bears full responsibility for this heavy toll.

Sadly, we should expect more death and destruction in the months to come. In April, Russia announced plans to increase its troop presence in Ukraine by at least 150,000 by the end of this year. Military spending will soon gobble up 40 percent of the national budget.

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Moscow's war machine is clearly speeding up, not slowing down. In the early hours of September 10th, over 20 Russian drones breached Polish airspace. Just 10 days later Russian planes violated Estonia's territory.

All these actions make three points clear.

First of all, the Kremlin is not and has not been interested in peace.

Secondly, every territorial breach, every arson, every cyber-attack sponsored by Russia is not a mistake, but a deliberate act designed to test the resilience of Europe and its allies.

And thirdly, these escalatory steps are not a sign of strength but of a growing weakness. Despite Kremlin's determination and cruelty, the war has been a catastrophic failure. Russia has lost or crippled over a million of her citizens, severed lucrative trade relations with Europe, pushed two new countries to join NATO, squandered hundreds of billions of dollars, and made herself more dependent on China.

One may ask – if it is so bad, why would the Kremlin want to escalate the conflict instead of looking for a “peace with honor”?

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The answer is simple – Russia’s interests are now different from those of Vladimir Putin.

It is a well-established tactic for autocratic regimes facing domestic crises to divert public attention by manufacturing external threats and stoking nationalist fervor.

Putin’s recklessness presents a grave danger to international peace and security. Unfortunately, Russia is not alone. It is being assisted by some of its neighbors, both east and west of Moscow. A new CORE – Coalition Of Resentment – is forming, capable of disrupting what little international order we managed to build over the last couple of decades. Without its support, this war would have ended long ago with the aggressor’s bitter defeat.

The world is on the verge of a geopolitical transformation. The United States and China are creating a bipolar system of rivalry, while Russia is striving to become the third pillar of the global triad at the expense of Europe. India, Brazil, and the Gulf states are also growing in strength, but the EU remains one of the three largest economies in the world. The challenge is to better translate the size into influence.

A united Europe can achieve this goal. A divided one will become paralyzed. This is Vladimir Putin’s dream scenario: a Union torn apart

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by nationalism and unable to defend itself.

The EU faces a stark choice: either it becomes a community capable of action, or is reduced to a battlefield between superpowers. One path to success is deeper cooperation—in the areas of security, migration, technology, and foreign policy.

This is the way to build the strength to deter aggressors, maintain social cohesion, defend the values on which our civilization is based and – last but not least – earn the respect of our allies, primarily the United States.

This is the way to keep the transatlantic community together and thus to keep the world safer. A divided West opens the door to a chaotic future, where democratic values and human rights give way to brute force. Disunity will cost us dearly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our global order, based on respect for international law is certainly imperfect. It is flawed as all human creations are. But despite its imperfections, it remains the best tool we have to prevent global chaos. Yes, it should be constantly updated and amended, but by means of debate and negotiation, not by means of war and extermination.

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Either we make an effort to defend it, or our grandparents' grand promise – “Never again” – will soon be broken, barely eight decades after it was so solemnly made.

This is what truly keeps me awake at night.

Thank you.