

Transatlantic Relations: Ambassador Lee Feinstein

Evelyn Stacey, April 13, 2011

The Kozminski Academy hosted the US Ambassador to Poland, Lee Feinstein for a discussion on transatlantic relations. He begins by noting that “Poland is America’s closest ally and oldest friend,” and that we share a community of values. These values include: promoting democracy, expanding prosperity, and strengthening mutual security. One example, he gives, of promoting democracy is the work of Secretary Clinton and the Polish Foreign Minister, Radoslaw Sikorski. They started an open dialogue on democracy which has led to a team, from Poland, going to Tunisia in hopes of using Poland’s experience in building democracy as an example or model for Tunisia. As the Ambassador explained, “Poland’s bold and skillful transition has paved the way for much of the changes in Eastern Europe in the 1990’s. It has been an inspiration and a model for countries starting democracies.”

In the goal of both US and Poland to promote prosperity, there is and will continue to be an increase in trade and investments between the US and Poland, according to the Ambassador. In 2010, business investments had reached nearly \$300 million and US firms employed, directly or indirectly, 350,000 native Poles. Poland continues to be the fastest growing country in the EU. Overall, Europe receives more American investment than other emerging countries including Brazil, Russia, China, and India.

Finally, in pursuit of security, Poland and the US have continually worked together. First, in NATO, through the adoption of new strategic concept to reaffirm article 5 of the Washington Treaty, that an attack against one is an attack against all. And then in December, President Obama and President Komorowski made an agreement to establish an Air Detachment, to boost US capacity train with Polish allied and partnered air forces in the future. This is the first agreement for permanent deployment of US troops to Poland. Furthermore, the Missile Defense program is in the primary stages of being built to protect against the growing threat of ballistic missiles. As for Afghanistan, there is a plan to eventually turn security to the Afghan forces which will be achieved through the help of Polish troops. America and NATO are deeply grateful for Poland’s contribution to this mission.

The US seeks to expand internship opportunity aboard for Polish students through the Polish-American Freedom Foundation Internship Program as well as the Fulbright student program. The US Embassy has also been working to change the Visa-waiver program to include Poland. Meanwhile, the number of visas being given has greatly increased and most Poles that apply are able to get a visa to the United States for up to ten years.

Ambassador Feinstein concluded his remarks saying, “We face many challenges around the globe but the United States is blessed to face them together with a true ally and close friend like Poland.”