

*Stanisław Sulowski*

## Polish Foreign Policy Since 1989

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*Poland, foreign policy, foreign policy conceptions, good neighbourhood, pro-western position, transatlantic components*

### Tradition and breakthrough in Polish post-1989 foreign policy

1989 was a groundbreaking year in Polish history marking a new caesura in the country's domestic and foreign policy. Almost a quarter of a century has passed since essential changes were introduced in the sphere of internal politics, in consequence, entailing the necessary comprehensive revision of Poland's foreign-policy orientation. The reasons behind the reframing of foreign policy did not boil down to the country's adjustment to the critical changes wrought in the political system but also included Poland's response to the forging of a new order in international relations. Poland was not a newcomer in the international arena. However, not many academics are willing to admit that the success of the Polish transformation was possible in a relatively short time because in the international arena the country was not starting from scratch. As a country functioning up to 1989, with its limited sovereignty, Poland was able to win a degree of trust of the international community and make its unique presence felt. The peculiar nature of Poland's domestic policy is interestingly portrayed by Norman Davies: 'The Polish People's Republic displayed an unusual number of idiosyncrasies. It was the largest of the Soviet satellites, with an army larger than that of Great

Britain. Both structurally and psychologically it was the least sovietised<sup>1</sup>. In terms of its international stature, on the other hand, one cannot but agree with the view voiced by Ryszard Frelek that, barring a few shameful episodes, the Polish People's Republic (PRL) gained wide recognition for its accomplishments<sup>2</sup>. Roman Kuźniar thinks similarly when he acknowledges that after 1956 the Polish People's Republic has achieved some degree of status and sovereignty in the international environment<sup>3</sup>.

Nevertheless, all the positive factors in the period leading up to 1989 were insufficient to ensure a smooth progress. The choice of a new foreign policy orientation in the aftermath of 1989 was not an easy brief, if only because of the diversity of views around this issue. Polish émigré centres had alternative foreign policy conceptions, especially those ex-pats who clustered around the Polish *Kultura* literary-political magazine, based in Paris<sup>4</sup>, and the political opposition at home had their own conceptions. Still Polish political elites were able to come up with a relatively rational and accurate orientation in foreign policy. This was a crucial move, since the choice of a definite course in foreign policy was a necessary precondition of a broader political and economic transformation and the push for independence<sup>5</sup>. The changes taking place in post-1989 Poland were closely associated with the shaping of the new political order in international relations.

The Polish transition had the effect of speeding up change in the post-Yalta order in international relations, which in turn was conducive to domestic shifts but at the same time generated new threats and challenges. The emergence of a united Germany – a European power, and Russia – a country beset with many problems and seeking to restore its neo-imperial policy – constituted a serious strategic challenge for Polish foreign policy. More than that, it revived the old geo-political dilemma of Poland's location between Germany and Russia. However, in the new order, there was definitely a favourable development in that

<sup>1</sup> See N. Davies, *Europe. A History*, HarperPerennial, New York 1998.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Frelek, *PRL w świecie*, [in:] M.F. Rakowski (ed.), *Polska pod rządami PZPR*, Warszawa 2000, pp. 268–271. For more on the international role of the PRL compare N. Davis, *Boże igrzysko. Historia Polski*, Kraków 2002, p. 1064.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Kuźniar, *Polityka zagraniczna III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2012, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> See R. Habielski, *Die Pariser Kultura und das „unnachgiebige London*, [in:] Ł. Gałęcki and B. Kerski (Hrsg.), *Die polnische Emigration in Europa 1945–1990*, Osnabruck 2000, pp. 59–71.

<sup>5</sup> See L. Vinton, *Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy, 1989–1993*, [in:] I. Prizel and A. Michta (eds.), *Polish Foreign Policy Reconsidered. Challenges of Independence*, London 1995, p. 31.

Poland's immediate environment changed to become more pluralist. For this reason, a speedy and clear definition of its foreign policy orientation was extremely important. Poland voiced its pro-western position in no unequivocal terms, opting for the key European (European Union) and transatlantic (NATO) components. From a geopolitical and military perspective, no other solution was on the cards<sup>6</sup>. There were no conditions for neutrality or a third way of any sort. In truth, such options were not even considered by experts or speculated about by politicians.

In addition to representing a breakthrough in Polish foreign policy, the year 1989 marks the starting date for the thorough transformation of the whole country. As a process it must be perceived and analysed in the context of past events as well as current internal and external conditioning. Domestic circumstances seem particularly important, among them the democratic political system, the economic, military and demographic potential as well as political culture and the discourse on the future. Even a cursory look at Polish history reveals that Poland did not have too many favourable experiences with the 'outside world', which is borne out especially in its relationship with its immediate neighbours. Following the partitions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the process of the formation of national identity, the long and tortuous road to independence was strewn with setbacks, betrayals, mistrust and, finally – bravery. This load of experiences used to determine the, often inconsistent, conceptions of Polish foreign policy in the past; and, as it seems today, it is still capable of affecting our diplomacy to a considerable degree and not always in the most favourable manner. While all the time it has to be remembered that the transformation of Polish foreign policy has been a complex and comprehensive process embracing strategic aims, directions, principles and mechanisms of policy-formulation and decision-making.

## **Clear strategic goals up to 2003**

It needs stressing that Polish foreign policy decision-makers of the time made the grade by choosing strategic goals in a rational fashion. First of all, they managed to guarantee national security by applying to access NATO and integrate with Europe through EU membership. These strategic choices were made in extremely complex circumstances:

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<sup>6</sup> Several proposals were put forward, such as NATO-Two and UE-Two – but as these were mostly elements of diplomatic game there were problems with their legitimisation.

the dynamics of change in the international system and internal conditions was substantial. The internal reforms were still incomplete while the process of transforming the entire socio-political and economic system was just being initiated. The process of making these strategic decisions can be evaluated either in terms of the rational actor<sup>7</sup> or from the perspective of political realism, both of which are not that common in Polish foreign policy making. The German author, Bianka Pietrow-Ennker furthers the view that Polish foreign policy can be analysed in a discursive way linking it to history, national identity and political culture wherein the notions of 'freedom', 'victim' and 'resistance movement' actually shape the conceptualisation of foreign policy<sup>8</sup>. This time, in the transformation after 1989, the complex intangibles had not determined the strategy, but this is not to say that they have been irrelevant.

For each and every foreign policy, the realisation of clearly defined strategic goals imposes the requirement of optimising all activities. Among other things, this signifies that tactical and operational measures taken in foreign policy should never hamper the realisation of strategic goals. This logic set the agenda for Polish diplomacy of the time, prioritising the highly difficult task of settling our relations with the evolving external environment. What is important to realise, in the formal sense, is that none of Poland's previously existing neighbours exists today – new countries have emerged, often as the outcome of violent and revolutionary events, with new and reformed, mostly, democratic regimes.

From the onset, Polish diplomacy sought to put bilateral relations with its neighbours in order. This was a crucial endeavour as Poland's access into NATO and the EU required the regulation of many internal-political issues in line with Western value-systems and standards and bringing normality to bilateral relations in the immediate neighbourhood. The first to be normalised were relations with the FRG, following the logic of the rational pursuit of strategic goals. Since 1989 Poland with its on-going democratisation has become a key and necessary partner for Germany. Similarly, for Poland, a country which had just launched its democratic reforms, normalising and intensifying relations with Western Germany seemed vital. For the first time since the Second World War, a Polish-German convergence of interests began to take shape. Poland

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<sup>7</sup> G.T. Allison, P.D. Zelikow, *Essence of Decisions. Explaining the Cuba Missile Crisis*, New York 1999, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Project implemented at University of Konstanz, <https://scikon.uni-konstanz.de/personen/bianka.pietrow-ennker>.

changed its position on the question of German unity, from a negative attitude to one favouring reunification<sup>9</sup>. The fact that the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl wasted no time in visiting Poland, is testament to this growing convergence of Polish-German interests. The visit issued in the Joint Mazowiecki-Kohl Statement, which was a 'stocktaking' of the hitherto contentious Polish-German relations and, at once, offered a spring-board for furthering these relations even in areas which until that time had been antagonistic.

The tearing down of the Berlin Wall, which occurred during Kohl's visit to Poland, diametrically changed the situation in Polish-German and European relations. The developing community of interests was sent off course by some of the Chancellor's steps taken in connection with the changes taking place in the German Democratic Republic following the collapse of the Wall and the factual unification of both German states. In the ten-point unification programme delivered during his Bundestag address on 28 November 1989, there was no mention of the foundation of Polish-German relations that is the inviolability and permanence of the Oder-Nyssa border between Poland and Germany.

In a certain sense, one can say that the pulling down of the Berlin Wall for some time changed German conduct towards Poland. From that time on, Poland, alerted, carefully watched the process of the two German states coming closer together and listened to the various statements made on the possibility of changing the Oder-Neisse border. The Mazowiecki government was keen to put a stop to this sort of speculation and proposed to sign a border treaty with both German states. This gave rise to a host of diplomatic manoeuvrings with Poland, both German states and the four powers as the principal actors. In the wake of a speedy diplomatic offensive, Poland gained the support of the four powers so that during the numerous troika meetings (Poland-FRG-GDR) a satisfying outcome was found in the form of two important treaties. The first to be signed by a sovereign Poland and a united Germany, on 14 November 1990, confirmed the existing border between the two countries. The treaty referred to all the hitherto international treaties covering this matter. The conclusion of the treaty confirming the border issued directly from the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany of 12 September 1990*, commonly called the 'Two-Plus-Four Treaty' and ultimately ended the Polish-German conflict on the regulation in international law of the Oder-Neisse border. The second treaty dealt with the regulation of

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<sup>9</sup> Statement made by B. Geremek for *Bild Zeitung* of 13 October 1989.

bilateral relations in the spirit of cooperation, good neighbourliness and reconciliation<sup>10</sup>. The latter treaty is unprecedented in the long history of bilateral relations, and the Polish-German cooperation it is based on is an important contribution to European geopolitical stability and security. The European dimension of this treaty, for instance, is highlighted by the FRG's commitment to support the Polish bid for EU membership.

In the discourse on the development of Polish-German relations of the early 1990s it was considered *de rigueur* to manifest over-optimism. There was almost nobody who wanted to share Karl Dedicius's feelings, when he described Polish-German relations as 'unequal, dangerous, weak, almost neurotic as history had impossibly burdened them'. Very soon, routine and the lack of a long-term conception for these relations came to the fore in the dialogue of the 1990s, giving way to critical voices and damning labels such as the 'kitsch of reconciliation'. Old problems re-emerged; it was no longer thought possible to count on solving them swiftly in the spirit of the euphoria typical of the early 1990s. Towards the late 1990s a 'new suspiciousness' and emotionality appeared in relations between Poland and Germany. The so called *Altlassen*, in other words, issues related to the past, including the problem of reparations and expulsions took centre stage, as politicians on both sides of the border began to treat these issues instrumentally in their election campaigns. The debate on the Centre against Expulsions is a most compelling case against using such dangerous measures in relations with other countries. It is an activity that politicians on both sides of the Oder-Neisse divide eagerly engaged in and not, as had been argued by some that the discourse on expellees is used only by Polish foreign policy<sup>11</sup>. It is, both, here in Poland and in Germany that a national way of seeing things, which arranges and interprets the past from the vantage point of a certain strategy, dominates the discourse on foreign relations.

Poland in the process of democratisation was keen to regulate ties with its Eastern neighbour, the USSR. In this case, however, the picture changed abruptly, putting Poland in an difficult situation of trying to settle relations with newly emerging states from the implosion of the USSR: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia. There was no end to difficulties. The strife for independence in the wake of the disintegration

<sup>10</sup> The treaty in question is the Treaty signed between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic on Good Neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation on 17 June 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. P. Ciołkiewicz, *Pamięć zbiorowa w dyskursie publicznym. Analiza polskiej debaty na temat wypędzeń Niemców po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 286–287.

of the USSR took place with the attendant euphoria and solidarity on the part of the nations achieving statehood. But already the traditions and ghosts of the past were re-emerging in a nationalist framework. The past could have easily stood in the way of the process of treaty regulation of relations with the four states. However, the early 1990s, still a time of pragmatism, saw the successful normalisation of relations between all five countries concerned.

In Moscow, Presidents Lech Wałęsa and Boris Yeltsin signed a *Treaty on Friendly and Good-Neighbourly Cooperation* between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation. It paved the way for Poland's broad cooperation with its largest neighbour and made an important contribution to stabilising Europe's peaceful order after the disintegration of the Eastern bloc. However, in the new international reality and altered political systems in both countries the treaty failed to provide a sufficient basis for good relations. First, the past – old scores never settled, second, Poland's Eastern policy waiting to be charted, then Russia's super-power stance on many difficult and delicate issues, coupled with prejudices on both sides, all worked to make mutual relations contentious.

In regard to the other eastern neighbours, Poland gave its support to Ukraine's and Belarus's pursuit of independence and Poland was the first country to recognise Ukraine's independence proclaimed on 1 December 1991. The Polish Ukrainian treaty, the *Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation* was concluded on 18 May, 1992 in Warsaw. Soon afterwards, many new agreements were signed setting up a solid infrastructure for developing close and intense cooperation. However, real good neighbourly Polish-Ukrainian relations are not that easy to attain for several reasons. To start with, mutual resentments, injustices and the historical unsettled scores still affect ties between the two countries. Reconciliation requires much effort on both sides, on the part of political leadership, society, but mainly, representatives of the young generation.

On 23 June 1992 Poland signed a similar treaty with Belarus, following in the footsteps of many agreements on cooperation. Mutual relations suffered a setback following the rise to power of Alexander Lukashenko. Poland tried to pursue a two pronged approach towards Belarus: on the one hand a dialogue on the political level, but this only made matters worse and currently mutual relations resemble an open conflict; on the other hand, Poland gave its backing to the country's democratic opposition and protested against the violation of human rights in Belarus. From Poland's perspective, a democratic and sovereign Belarus represents an opportunity for its Eastern foreign policy.

In the South, Poland's relations with the Czech and the Slovak Federal Republic were also provided with a new basis: in 1990–1991 many bilateral agreements were signed regulating trade, non-visa traffic and cultural cooperation. These numerous regulations were crowned with the signing in Kraków on 6 October 1991 of an *Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on Good Neighbourhood, Solidarity and Friendly Cooperation*. The treaty annulled the Treaty between the Polish People's Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic of 1 March, 1967 on *Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance*. Following the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Poland and Slovakia concluded an agreement on the legal succession of Slovakia in respect of the treaties concluded between the Republic of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The last country Poland signed a *Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good-Neighbourly Cooperation* was the one it signed with Lithuania on 24 April, 1994. The long delay was caused by the controversies surrounding the assessment of relations of the interwar years and legal regulations on minorities in both countries. This was a clear case of past events and national minority issues coming in the way of good relations.

Poland's bilateral relations with its neighbours were based on the formula of 'good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation', understandably, a somewhat ambiguous expression. It was Germany's idea to imbue its new treaty regulations with Central and Eastern European states with this ideological tone as it was keen to provide a treaty-based guarantee to the interests of the German minority in those countries<sup>12</sup>. This ideological underpinning of regulating bilateral relations had the backing of the European Union. It was used for the first time in the *Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Partnership and Cooperation* concluded between the FRG and the USSR on 9 November 1990.

The idea of 'good neighbourhood' was immensely useful in regulating the foundations of bilateral relations as without necessarily going into the details of historical complexities a certain state of things could be anticipated. To this expression 'friendly cooperation' was added, and in some cases the idea of 'reconciliation' as well<sup>13</sup>. The notion of 'good neighbourhood' is more widespread in the literature on the subject and

<sup>12</sup> K. Gal, *Bilateral Agreements in Central and Eastern Europe: A New Inter-State Framework for Minority Protection?*, ECMI Working Paper 1999, no. 4, pp. 1–5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. Przyborowska-Klimczak, W.Sz. Staszewski (eds.), *Traktaty o przyjaźni i współpracy zawarte przez Polskę. Wybór dokumentów*, Lublin 2005.

bears positive connotations. A reference can even be made to the 'good neighbourhood policy' espoused by the US towards the states of Latin America in the pre-war period. The notion of good neighbourhood is always linked to a favourable and harmonious arrangement of ties, taking account of the different conditionings and peculiar settings in which neighbours find themselves. In bilateral relations this could involve an attempt at defining the political goals and rules, as well as the principles set in international law governing the development of these relations. In as much as the notion of good neighbourhood could have been an appropriate element for re-structuring bilateral relations with Poland's new neighbours, the term 'friendly cooperation' is a semantic misnomer of sorts. The regulation of bilateral relations by means of a treaty was, no doubt, a necessary act but, it must be emphasised, regulating ties between states by means of law can never be a substitute for politics – let alone push the past away from our thoughts.

### **Polish foreign policy 2003–2007: attempting change**

In a simplified analysis we can adopt the view that Polish foreign policy in the years 1989–2003 issued from a rational calculation of the inner capacity to act and international conditions and was based on a broad consensus between the main actors of the political system and public opinion<sup>14</sup>. Poland's unexpected support for the US in the Iraq conflict in 2003 signalled a certain shift in its foreign policy: Polish foreign policy went beyond the Euro-Atlantic zone and in doing so invited the astonishment and even irritation of France and Germany. It was considered an act of disloyalty towards its European allies just before Poland's formal accession to the EU. On key international issues, especially in regard to peace and security, Poland had the relevant treaty commitments with the FRG and France<sup>15</sup>, which afforded opportunities for consultations, but Poland simply chose not to take this route. The decision to support the USA in the Iraq war was a sign for our European partners that in certain situations Polish foreign policy can be faced with the dilemma:

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<sup>14</sup> A. Smolar, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Ciągłość i zmiana w polskiej polityce zagranicznej*, Warszawa 2006, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Szerzej na ten temat: S. Sulowski, *A Critical View of the 1991 Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation*, [in:] W.M. Góralski (ed.), *Breakthrough and Challenges. 20 Years of the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Relations*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 275–277.

Should we choose the USA or the EU? The problem is, does Poland have the political, military and economic potential to even consider such a possibility? Providing an answer to this question is no easy task under any commonly known research approaches in the study of foreign relations<sup>16</sup>. Some academics are indubitably right in their judgement that such an approach results from thinking in geopolitical terms so typical for Eastern European states<sup>17</sup>. But geopolitics alone is insufficient in explaining this change of conduct. Following Poland's engagement in the Iraq war, Poland staged parliamentary and presidential elections in the wake of which a new course in the country's foreign policy was charted. Once the nationalist right wing party, Law and Justice (PiS), formed a new government it launched its fierce criticism of the foreign policy pursued up to 2005, escalating appeals to stop 'politics on one's knees', in its opinion pursued by all the hitherto governments of the Third Polish Republic. This was the undoing of a national consensus in the area of foreign relations. Specifically, the new foreign policy agenda was expanded to include 'historical diplomacy'. In the words of the then foreign minister, it was a set of ventures aimed at discerning any negative phenomena or tendencies appearing in other countries which could be detrimental to Poland's image or interests, and accordingly counteracting those<sup>18</sup>. Among other things, it implied the re-activation of problems, which for pragmatic reasons, have been partially ignored in bilateral relations.

It must be said, however, that our relations with Russia and Germany had deteriorated even before the inauguration of the PiS-led government, whereby, the previous pragmatism and political correctness of sorts – which required an ahistorical approach towards the neighbours, especially Germany and Russia, gave way to historical and geo-political motivation<sup>19</sup>. One of the causes of this return to historical aspects in relations with Germany was the previous un-critical optimism in bilateral relations, shrugged off by some with the words: 'the kitsch of reconciliation'<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Por. J. Wysłowski-Walters, *Between Europe and America: Polish Choices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, available from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/39688276/Between-Europe-and-America>.

<sup>17</sup> See O. Krejci, *Geopolitics of Central European Region. The View from Prague and Bratislava*, Bratislava 2005, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> See S. Meller, *Polityka ciążłości i zmiany*, [in:] *Ciążłość i zmiana...*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. N. Marek and P-F. Weber, *Prädispositionen polnischer Außenpolitik*, DIAS-Analyse 2010, no. 44, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Sulowski, *Germany as a partner of Poland in the European Union – between a community of interests and a community of disputes*, [in:] S. Bieleń (ed.), *Poland's foreign policy in the 21 Century*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 262–263.

In the discourse on foreign policy, in the wake of Poland's official EU accession, a debate on the new 'Poland in the EU' strategy was undertaken. Towards the end of his second term President Kwasniewski initiated a strategic debate 'A strong Poland in a strong Europe'. However, the lack of consensus between the main political actors deprived Poland's European policy of its strategic aspect and, by the same token, became more opaque to our EU partners. Polish European policy was now being approached instrumentally, despite several constructive steps taken. For one, Poland started seeking EU support for its Eastern policy which paved the way to the Eastern Partnership.

With regard to security policy the pro-American option became the dominant one. The chief architects of Polish foreign policy of the time perceived the outside world through the prism of history and geopolitics. The dominant idea was that foreign policy is not just the efficient administering of foreign relations, but rather a task and a mission to represent the nation's interests and a venture for building national identity<sup>21</sup>. This sort of thinking was part and parcel of the discourse on the necessity of constructing the Fourth Republic in Poland. Through concrete foreign policy decisions, the interpretation of a specific national identity narrative was outlined, and by the same token a certain version of history defined. The change in foreign policy over the 2003–2005 period, leading up to the parliamentary/presidential elections, should be explained in discursive categories, because the internal capacity for action, material and non-material, and international determinants have not changed to the extent to warrant such a change.

### **The normalisation of foreign policy since 2007 with no clear strategy in sight**

Polish post-2007 foreign policy has often been described as a policy of 'returning to normality' or the 'policy of optimisation'<sup>22</sup>. Indubitably, the new liberal-conservative government of the Civic Platform (PO) and Polish Peasant Party (PSL) dissociated itself from the style of foreign policy as pursued by its predecessors. The government found itself in an awkward situation as, given the views of the PiS President, a consensus in

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<sup>21</sup> See D. Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign policy and the Politics of Identity*, Minneapolis 1992, pp. 69–75.

<sup>22</sup> R. Kuźniar, *Polityka zagraniczna...*, p. 333.

this area was out of the question. In Polish cohabitation following 2005, the president and the government, two competing centres mandated to shape foreign policy, differed starkly in their ideas on the content and style of pursuing foreign policy. This resulted in a number of serious conflicts between the two centres and mutual animosity. On the government's initiative the Constitutional Tribunal was asked to analyse the spats between the government and president.

The new (2007) government made its European policy a priority. However, contrary to its promises, it failed to break with the policy of the previous government. Despite its earlier criticism of the conduct of the PiS government on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, it agreed to sign the Lisbon Treaty including the British Protocol. Polish diplomacy was to have been guided by the adage: 'Poland's strength driven by a loyal European Union'. This way of putting things, in the context of the economic downturn swiftly overtaking Europe, was not conducive to the spirit of solidarity, instead it set the scene for a return to national egoisms on the part of EU members. This made conditions worse for Polish European policy.

A spot-on idea was the project of the Eastern partnership initiated by both Poland and Sweden. The Polish presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2011 clearly demonstrated that under the new conditions of an economic and a financial crisis enveloping the Euro-zone it is not easy to pursue a European policy.

In the beginning of the democratisation process, more realism and pragmatism was demonstrated in Poland's policy towards the USA. The agreement on the American anti-missile base in Poland, signed on 20 August 2008, was approached on the merits of the case. With the looming US presidential elections, for tactical reasons the agreement was not ratified. As expected, Barack Obama's administration modified the agreement to a considerable degree, so accordingly, a protocol modifying this unratified agreement was signed on 3 July, 2010.

Another significant area of Polish diplomacy of that time was restoring contacts in bilateral relations with our neighbours, contacts which in the last couple of years were overburdened with controversies. Our relations with Germany saw the restoration of a good climate without, however, the necessary solution of outstanding problems. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the 1991 treaty was celebrated with much pomp and ceremony, but it failed to be used as an occasion for a genuine breakthrough, or a final closure of certain outstanding bilateral issues. Furthermore, Polish diplomats could hardly seem credible to their German colleagues, when

they either compared the actions of the German government to the Ribbentrop/Molotov pact, or at the other extreme, voiced their support for German leadership in Europe.

Some progress has been made in Poland's relations with Russia, although historical issues and prejudice leave little room for a new opening in relations with the Eastern neighbour. The appointment and operation of the Group for Difficult Issues was a symptom of normalisation<sup>23</sup>. In spite of this, since 2010 relations have been tainted by the Smolensk plane crash which killed the President and his entourage. The policy statements made by opposition politicians indicate that the Smolensk tragedy is going to be the dominant hurdle in developing Polish-Russian relations.

The conceptions which shaped Polish relations with Ukraine and Belarus have broken down. Relations with Lithuania are not at their best. Although settling and normalising relations with our neighbours should be a priority, Polish politics demonstrates a certain helplessness and a lack of strategic planning. In the years 1989–2003, clear strategic goals rationalised the acts and decisions taken in Polish foreign policy, but this no longer is the case. Clearly, Polish foreign policy was in need of an urgent return to normality, but above all it required a strategic plan.

The authors of Polish foreign policy after 1989 faced serious challenges. As the newly-achieved independence and freedom were being relished, bringing the promise of establishing a sovereign foreign policy, the prospects for 'curbing' this freedom or renouncing the recently found sovereignty in favour of the European Union were looming large. Since 1989 Polish foreign policy has made a breakthrough freeing itself from the discipline of the Eastern block and choosing the interdependence associated with Euro-Atlantic structures – which although impose their standards but do not restrict a state's domestic and foreign activity. So, thanks to Poland's membership in the EU and NATO it was possible to bring together sovereignty with a strategic westward orientation. Yet, it must be added that the current discourse lacks common agreement in this regard.

Poland's internal ability to act and the international context preclude its ability to guarantee external security or create favourable conditions in which to develop on its own. To counteract this situation a stable, effective and responsible foreign policy must be pursued, in fact it

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. A.D. Rotfeld, A.W. Torkunow (eds.), *Białe plamy – czarne plamy. Sprawy trudne w polsko-rosyjskich stosunkach 1919–2008*, Warszawa 2010.

becomes imperative to do so. The appropriate implementation of foreign policy requires a number of conditions: political stability, an internal political consensus on strategic goals and direction, the safeguarding of appropriate funds for policy-realisation and tapping into the intellectual potential of Polish universities. Only by increasing the internal capacity to act (materially and ideologically) can Polish foreign policy become effective. The discourse on foreign affairs should serve this very purpose: it should provide a rational definition of the outside world and thus, determine the methods of action consistent with this. Polish diplomacy needs such a strategy for our EU membership that would harmonise the interests of the Community with those of Poland, and one that would strengthen our position in other areas of foreign policy, and in particular in the Eastern dimension. A good relationship with the USA is necessary; it could boost Poland's position in the EU and beyond. All this is possible under the assumption that the principal decision makers in Polish foreign policy avoid the competition between European and Atlantic loyalty and refrain from turning foreign policy into a platform for fighting over power.

#### ABSTRACT

The author discusses the interplay between what was traditional and new in Polish post-1989 foreign policy. He focuses on the goals pursued by principal foreign policy actors and the attempts of some of them at introducing change. He concludes on a rather pessimistic note as his research brings him no closer to finding evidence of a clear-cut common strategy underpinning Polish foreign policy as practiced by all post-1989 governments.

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