



Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej)

Publication details, including instructions for authors:
<http://www.iesw.lublin.pl/rocznik/index.php>

ISSN 1732-1395

From strategy to improvisation – Poland's Eastern Policy in 2016-2018

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Published online: 10 Dec 2018

To cite this article: Adrian Chojan, 'From strategy to improvisation – Poland's Eastern Policy in 2016-2018', *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2018, pp. 107-123.

Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej) is a quarterly, published in Polish and in English, listed in the European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS), Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL), BazEkon and IC Journal Master List (Index Copernicus International). In the most recent Ministry of Science and Higher Education ranking of journals published on the Polish market the Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe received one of the highest scores, i.e. 14 points.

Adrian Chojan

From strategy to improvisation – Poland’s Eastern Policy in 2016-2018

Abstract: This article discusses Poland’s eastern policy as it unfolded over the period 2016-2018. Against this backdrop it examines how the right-wing coalition 2015 ascent to power impacted the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland. It is argued that the lingering of Poland’s engagement in its eastern neighbourhood is conditioned by developments on the Polish political scene, which – in some cases – is also reflected in a change of narrative toward the eastern neighbours, especially Ukraine.

Keywords: Polish foreign policy, Eastern policy, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Law and Justice party (PiS) governance

Introduction

Eastern policy has a special place in the assumptions of Poland’s foreign policy and has never depended on the political party being in power. The same situation takes place in the periods of Law and Justice party (PiS) governance, i.e. in 2005-2007 and since 2015. It can even be said that for a long time it was its core and one of the main benchmarks in foreign affairs, especially in the years 2005-2007 and during the presidency of Lech Kaczyński. On the one hand, the political environment tried to change the perception of Poland as a part of Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the aim was to build a friendly coalition of states with Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. This dichotomy approach to the region of Central and Eastern Europe was a result of a change in geopolitical position of Poland after May 1, 2004, and the desire of PiS government to take over the role of the leader in the region. After joining the European Union, Poland began to treat eastern policy as a whole or a system of inter-

connected vessels comprehensively affecting not only Poland's international security but also the stabilization of the region. The region of Central and Eastern Europe was both a challenge in foreign policy and a chance for international success for the political environment of Law and Justice. So when after 8 years of opposition, in 2015 PiS again took over the power, it seemed that there would be a strong advancement of Poland's eastern policy, and its main determinant would be a narrative about the need for rapid integration between Ukraine and the European Union as well as a strong confrontational policy towards the Russian Federation and its imperialist policy.

The purpose of this article is to verify if the government of Law and Justice implements the foreign policy strategy which was planned and presented in the 2015 electoral program in relation to eastern policy. The main thesis of this study is the observation that eastern policy is not a priority for Law and Justice government in its foreign policy due to the complicated international situation and historical past. In addition, the issue of foreign policy itself is secondary for the current government. The main issue is domestic policy, and it directly translates into the decline of Poland's international activity, including the territory of Eastern Europe.

1. Assumptions and problems of Poland's eastern policy since 2015

Over 17 years that Law and Justice has existed on the Polish political scene have proved that, as a rule, this party orients on building foreign policy based on cooperation in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. It could be said that this party advocates Eastern European countries in Western Europe. Such an approach to international relations originated in the period 2005-2007 – the first PiS governance. After joining NATO and the European Union, Poland's eastern policy was geared toward establishing bilateral relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, to understand the logic of Polish eastern policy in the political thought of the current government, it is necessary to return to the context of the international situation at the beginning of Poland's membership in the European Union. Foreign policy not accidentally was focused on this area of Europe. The contemporary authorities in Poland did not underestimate the successes

such as membership in the EU and NATO despite high criticism from the media and experts. Although, they also sought a new dimension of Polish foreign policy. They were aware of the fact that for some Western European countries Poland is a problem in relations with Russia, while for others it is not a very significant player in European politics. So, they were considering the importance of Poland. It was believed that Poland could only be important for countries that are concerned about their subjectivity and independence in international relations. According to the assumption proposed mainly by the environment of the President Lech Kaczyński, raising the security of these countries and the growth of their subjectivity in the long run contributed to the strengthening of the subjectivity of Poland. This region has become an arena of acute, geopolitical rivalry between the global power which is Russia and Poland which aspires to the rank of a regional power. As Juliusz Mieroszewski wrote, the aim of competition in this area is to gain an advantage, not good neighborly relations between Poland and Russia¹. For both countries the “acquisition” of the territories of Ukraine or Belarus was a strategic challenge. Therefore, the decisive external factor influencing the shape of Poland's eastern policy in 2005-2007² was the policy of the Russian Federation that aimed at destabilizing the integration process of Eastern European states. It also had a significant impact on the logic of reasoning of contemporary international relations. It was also a reference to the doctrine of Jerzy Giedroyc, which combined Polish-Russian relations with independence and the right to self-determination of countries such as Ukraine and Belarus and international security of Poland³. However, excessive concentration on the Russian Federation and attempts to “defend”

- 1 J. Mieroszewski, 'Rosyjski „kompleks Polski” i obszar ULB' [Russian “Polish complex” and the ULB area], in: P. Kowal and J. Oldakowski, M. Zuchniak (eds), *Nie jesteśmy ukrainofilami. Polska myśl polityczna wobec Ukraińców i Ukrainy. Antologia tekstów* [We are not Ukrainainophiles. Polish political thought towards Ukrainians and Ukraine. Anthology of texts], Wrocław 2002.
- 2 For more information, see A. Chojan, 'Polityka wschodnia Polski w myśli politycznej partii Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (lata 2005-2007)' [Eastern policy of Poland in the political thought of the Law and Justice party (2005-2007)], *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, no. 5, 2016, pp. 301-314.
- 3 P. Kowal, 'Polityka wschodnia Polski po 1989 roku. Kontekst, uwarunkowania, punkty zwrotne' [Eastern policy of Poland after 1989. Context, conditions, turning points], in: J. Osiński (ed.), *Polityka publiczna w Polsce. Priorytety i wyzwania* [Public policy in Poland. Priorities and challenges], Warszawa: Szkoła Główna Handlowa 2015, p. 96.

Ukraine, Belarus and other post-Soviet states against Russian policy have overshadowed the actual picture of the eastern logic of international relations. This referred not only to 2005-2007 period but also to all previous and succeeding governments. It can be said that PiS government in 2005-2007 and other governments wrongly assumed that the countries of Eastern Europe want to integrate with the Euro-Atlantic structures such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, regardless of the costs they will bear. In other words, the Polish political class, including Law and Justice, roughly until 2015, wanted Ukraine's membership in the EU or Georgia in NATO much more than these countries.

The verification of this strongly optimistic and pro-Atlantic attitudes towards the countries of Eastern Europe came up in 2015. Law and Justice, which won the parliamentary elections, quite briefly referred to this region of the world in its 2014 electoral program. The document diagnosed the state of Polish foreign policy in 2014 and 2015 and overly criticized the achievements of the previous coalition of Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party. The 2014 electoral program showed much less of the "plan" for Eastern Europe than the one before the elections in 2005. This extensive document says that "it must be continually emphasized that the concept of extending NATO to the countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus is still important and should be developed as part of creating scenarios for the future [...] Poland draws its strength from the strength of the Central and Eastern Europe region and thus strengthens the potential of all of Europe. The Government of Law and Justice will conduct a policy focused on building the subjectivity and freedom of the states of our regional political space [...] Our goal will be to enter the whole area of Eastern Europe on the path of membership in the European Union. We will propose new, deepened instruments of cooperation with the countries of this area, bilateral and international, which, in fact, will bring them closer to the transatlantic integration"⁴. This is the only utterance that refers to eastern policy in such a very direct way. In this context, it should be pointed out that the electoral program does not

4 *Zdrowie, praca, rodzina* [Health, work, family], program wyborczy Prawa i Sprawiedliwości [Election program Law and Justice], 2014.

refer directly to Ukraine or Belarus in the part discussing foreign policy. It mentions the Russian Federation and the desire to build Polish-Russian relations based on “mutual equal respect, truth and openness, observance of the rules of international law, withdrawal from the belief about the special status of some countries towards others [...]”⁵. It is the maintenance of the so-called concept of an external enemy that PiS has practiced since 2005 and additionally reinforced by the Smolensk tragedy of April 10, 2010. It is difficult, however, to expect PiS government to build correct relations with the Russian Federation, especially on the basis of existing political or historical differences. However, while the reference to the Russian Federation is not surprising, there is no reference to Ukraine and the ongoing war on its territory. From the beginning PiS portrayed itself as a party that defends neighboring nations against the aggression of the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, this issue was completely omitted or even marginalized by the Polish side. With a high degree of certainty, it can be stated that the source of the decisions to limit support for Ukraine was and is the so-called historical policy presented by the previous and current authorities in Kiev. A characteristic feature of Law and Justice governance is the inclusion of historical issues into the current policy, especially the issues that raise large doubts in Poland. As we know, there are quite a lot of them in relations with Eastern European partners.

Even for a not very active observer of Polish foreign policy, it is evident that something has happened to our eastern policy. This is because, for the current power in Poland, the main focus is on internal policy, including the reform of the justice system and the continuation of pro-social activities in the form of “solving problems of ordinary people”. The outbreaks of inactivity in eastern policy were already visible in the electoral program of 2014, and later in the years of government 2015-2018. Over the past years Poland has never been so weakly present in Eastern Europe. However, we should not assume that the authorities in Warsaw give up on the eastern policy pursued in such a way in bilateral relations or on the European forum. The decrease in the intensity of undertaken activities is very visible. It is, therefore, not entirely consistent with the vision of development of Central and

5 Ibid.

Eastern European region proposed by the United Right Wing Club as well as from the perspective of membership in the European Union. As Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz writes, “the Polish authorities do not seem to care about the consequences of their passivity at the European level. Meanwhile, Poland’s withdrawal from the active shaping of eastern policy causes a weakening of the lobby of the EU foreign policy acting in favor of this direction. It conduces to shifting the Community’s attention to other neighbors: the Balkans and the countries of North Africa”⁶. Let us note that the absence of the largest country in this part of Europe in the discussion on the resolution of the Ukrainian crisis adversely affects the overall engagement of the EU in the East. It can be presumed that the effect of Poland’s and the EU’s abandonment of the eastern part of the Old Continent will be its appropriation by the Russian Federation, which would be highly unfavorable for the security of Poland. From the very beginning the core of all Law and Justice assumptions of external relations was to strengthen the eastern neighborhood and transfer its problems to the European level, as evidenced by participation in the European Neighborhood Policy or the initiation of the Eastern Partnership program. We should realize that Poland was (is?) one of the few countries that took care of the balance in EU foreign policy. Meanwhile, since 2015, it is difficult to enumerate what Poland’s eastern policy is focused on. The lack of a clear voice of Poland as a country with similar historical experiences to, for example, Ukraine, clearly strengthens the self-confidence of the Russian Federation in the region, and the political group of the United Right Wing Club fights with it – at least declaratively. Authorities in Poland are trying to counteract the policy of the Russian Federation in the fora of other international initiatives, such as the Visegrad Group or the so-called the Three Seas Initiative⁷. Meanwhile, the internal division of the Visegrad Group’s strategic goals is so big that it is difficult for them to find other mutual elements apart from the mi-

6 K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, ‘Polityka wschodnia w chaosie’ [Eastern policy in chaos], Warszawa: Fundacja im. S. Batorego, 2014, p. 1.

7 For more information, see M. Dahl, ‘Inicjatywa Trójmorza z perspektywy niemieckiej’ [Three-way initiative from the German perspective], *Studia Europejskie*, no. 2, 2018, pp. 59-72; A. Orzelska-Stączek, ‘Inicjatywa Środkowoeuropejska a Trójmorze – odmienne koncepcje współpracy w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej’ [Central European and Tricity Initiative – different concepts of cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe], *Studia Europejskie*, no. 1, 2018, pp. 149-170.

gration crisis⁸, while the Three Seas Initiative, for now, remains only a theoretical concept that does not translate into international reality.

However, it is necessary to show the approach of the current Polish government to its eastern policy. It is difficult to write about a wide-ranging strategy, but there are some general conclusions drawn over the last three years. They are as follows:

1. verification of the relations with Ukraine in terms of historical policy and the resulting implications for political relations,
2. maintaining a critical narrative towards the Russian Federation and undertaking actions for Russian energy projects (including Nord Stream),
3. maintaining, but not significantly deepening, the narrative about Poland's support for the European aspirations of the Eastern European countries and making its further shape dependent on the policy of these countries towards Poland (the example of Ukraine),
4. giving more importance to economic relations with the countries of Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Belarus) at the expense of "drifting" political relations.

2. Ukraine – an abandoned ally?

Twenty-seven years ago Poland was the first country to recognize the independence of Ukraine. At the end of 1991, it seemed that Polish-Ukrainian friendship would develop in the coming years, and both countries would meet together in NATO and the European Union in the near future. At that time both countries started to go through transformation processes. After that, Poland has become both NATO and the European Union member, while Ukraine has been torn by war, internal disintegration and social division for several years. Throughout all this time, Poland tried to be a lawyer of Ukraine in the European Union. Potential success like Ukrainian membership in the EU

8 For more information, see A. Chojan, 'Polityka zagraniczna i bezpieczeństwa UE z perspektywy państw Grupy Wyszehradzkiej' [EU foreign and security policy from the perspective of the Visegrad Group countries], in: M. J. Tomaszuk (ed.), *Polityczno-społeczne i ekonomiczne zmiany w Europie w świetle globalnej strategii na rzecz polityki zagranicznej i bezpieczeństwa Unii Europejskiej* [Politico-social and economic changes in Europe in the light of a global strategy for the foreign and security policy of the European Union], Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WNPiD UAM, 2017, pp. 65-66.

would also be a success of Poland, following the example of Polish-German relations. Poland supported Ukraine during the so-called Orange Revolution and during the events of Euromaidan. However, since 2015, Polish-Ukrainian relations have been gradually cooling, and it quickened in 2017-2018. At the beginning of 2017, Paweł Kowal, an acknowledged eastern policy expert, in one interview said that relations between Poland and Ukraine have not been so bad since 1991 and he predicted that they could worsen in the near future⁹. As for August 2018, it should be assessed that the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in the government of Law and Justice accurately predicted the further development of events.

The main reason for the significant deterioration of Polish-Ukrainian relations is the historical policy, especially the one run by the Ukrainian side. While the historical differences (mainly related to the so-called Volhynia crime) were quieted down before 2015, in the last two years there have been far-reaching changes in this area. The Polish side directly demanded that Ukraine acknowledge the situations in Volhynia in 1944 as a crime and stop the glorification of supporters of Stefan Bandera. The first symptoms of changes in historical policy towards Ukraine took place in 2016 when the Sejm of the Republic of Poland adopted a resolution recognizing the situations in Volhynia as genocide. The temperature of the dispute was increased by both the Ukrainian and the Polish side. The President of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, in one of the interviews made the further support of Ukraine by Poland on the EU forum dependent on the change in Ukraine's attitude towards historical politics: "there are certain limits that cannot be exceeded. We have shown great patience for many years. And we still have some patience, but I repeat: this year Ukraine will make very important decisions due to the fact that there are different anniversaries and we will have to take a look at it"¹⁰. In turn, former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski, was about to say that

9 P. Kowal, 'Relacje Warszawa-Kijów są najgorsze od 1991 roku [Warsaw-Kiev relations are the worst since 1991], *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 January 2017, www.rp.pl/Dyplomacja/170129814-Pawel-Kowal-relacje-WarszawaKijow-sa-najgorsze-od-1991-roku.html [2018-08-13].

10 P. Wroński, 'Odwrót PiS z Ukrainy? Kaczyński: „Nie zgodzimy się, by z ludobójców i morderców zrobić bohaterów” [The return of the PiS from Ukraine? Kaczyński: "We will not agree to make heroes out of the genocide and murderer"]', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 January 2017.

“Ukraine will not enter Europe with Bandera”, and the media reported a serious dispute between Jarosław Kaczyński and the Ukrainian president Petr Poroshenko in the background of commemorating the Ukrainian Insurgent Army¹¹. The oil to the fire was added by amendments adopted by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, which paid a lot of attention to Ukrainian crimes against Polish citizens. The law was adopted mainly with the support of the electorate of the ruling party, which promised in the election campaign to “cherish the good name of the Poles”. Meanwhile, Polish-Ukrainian relations lack substantive discussion, devoid of political connotations and a mutual backward step. It is impossible to get the impression that Poland’s policy towards Ukraine has no logical and well thought-out basis, while it is characterized by improvisation and reacting to current events. If it were different, the Polish side would look for an alternative, knowing that the tightening of the course towards Ukraine and ending the “policy of silence” in historical matters would lead to the loss of an ally in the region. Meanwhile, since 2015 there have been no major prospects for obtaining the alternative.

In this context, we should therefore if the years 2017–2018 did not show superficiality of the Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership and the weaknesses of its foundations. So far, it seemed that this bond was the European path for Ukraine. Meanwhile, in the time of current situation in Ukraine, the issue of choosing a vision of foreign policy of this country remains completely open¹². It is a permanent, ambiguous element of Ukraine’s foreign policy, which no Polish government was able to cope with. Perhaps, then, it is worth to end the policy of promises to the Ukrainian society and to say explicitly that in the next 30 years Ukraine’s membership in the European Union is practically excluded? It seems that the Ukrainian side is well aware of this, trying only to understand Polish motives of the policy of promises that has lasted for 14 years. All the more, ever-shifting visions of Poland’s

11 J. Mikulski, ‘Czy Jarosław Kaczyński pokłócił się z Petrem Poroszenką o UPA?’ [Did Jarosław Kaczyński quarrel with Petro Poroshenko about UPA?], *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 August 2017.

12 For more information, see J. M. Fiszer, ‘Kryzys na Ukrainie i jego konsekwencje międzynarodowe dla regionu, Europy i świata’ [Crisis in Ukraine and its international consequences for the region, Europe and the world], *Biuletyn Analiz i Opinii Zakładu Europeistyki ISP PAN*, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1–20.

internal and foreign policy lead not so much to chaos in bilateral relations, which generates an ordinary lack of trust, additionally fueled by a sensitive historical factor. The foundations of the Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership seem to be even more questionable when we realize that there are no bilateral entities/institutions that can solve existing and constantly emerging disputes and crises on an ongoing basis¹³. It was also not possible to establish such an institution on the basis of the crisis related to historical policy that emerged two years ago. Representatives of power in Poland have repeatedly stressed the need for greater reflection on the condition of Polish-Ukrainian relations. It was indirectly visible in the information given by, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Jacek Czaputowicz on the goals of Polish foreign policy in 2018, in which no individual proposal to support/improve the situation in Ukraine and relations with Ukraine was made. All the issues raised in the context of Kiev were of a multilateral nature. Polish-Ukrainian relations were not given too much political significance. The Polish government has hit hard on historical-nationalist tones and is not going to take a step back. However, this is not only directed towards Ukraine but also other foreign partners, which is very visible in Kiev. Paweł Kowal is right as he writes that the current authorities in Poland do not appreciate the importance of Ukraine in international politics, as countries oriented to permanent alliances will rank Poland among those partners whose policy objectives towards neighbors change potentially after each election¹⁴. This can have much more far-reaching consequences than just temporary problems with the neighbor.

3. Temperance towards Russia

From the very beginning the political conception of Law and Justice has presented the Russian Federation as the main military, political or economic threat to the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. According to some experts, the chaos in Poland's foreign policy towards Ukraine generates a vision of a turn in Polish foreign policy

13 P. Kowal, 'Relacje...'

14 Idem, 'Plecami do Ukrainy' [Backs to Ukraine], *Polityka*, 20 February 2018.

towards Russia¹⁵. It is difficult to expect Law and Justice to have such a vision of foreign policy. However, it is noticeable that over the last two years Poland’s eastern policy have favored Russian interests in the region. For example, the coldness in Polish-Ukrainian relations connected to historical policy has undermined the image and significance of Poland not only in the region but also on the forum of the European Union. It was Poland that practically since 2004 (with varying intensity) has been at the center of the EU’s eastern policy and as the largest Central European country it had influence. European politics do not like “blank spaces”, so the gap that left after Poland had to be quickly filled, which made the significance of the Federal Republic of Germany in this area even more important. In a situation where there are no effective players in the European Union’s eastern policy, the policy itself becomes either weaker or compliant with the German vision. This, in turn, fits the assumptions of Russian foreign policy, which does not treat the EU as a single and cohesive subject, but as a set of countries and chooses several partners to cooperate with. It is much easier to talk to the authorities in Berlin about much more reliable relations than to 27 EU countries, when at least few of them (Poland, the Baltic States) take a confrontational attitude towards Russian politics. In the most pessimistic scenario, it may turn out that German-Russian tandem will be dominant in EU eastern policy. In other words, due to the lack of a coherent and logical strategy in eastern policy, incomprehensible decisions regarding the INR Act, or lack of proper activity, the Polish side – probably completely unconsciously – strengthened both Russia and Germany. In other words, Poland acted in the opposite way than it was assumed in the foreign policy program.

However, after consideration of Poland’s foreign policy towards Russia in 2017-2018 it seems the policy is far from the confrontational (sometimes even aggressive) style of 2005-2007. It can be described as a “policy of refraining”, and reactivity to the actions of the other party should be considered the main feature. Even the issue of getting back the remains of the Tupolew TU-154M aircraft was raised in a calmer way than it was stated in PiS politicians’ declarations in 2010-2015. It seemed that after taking power in Poland, PiS would make it a point

15 K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

of honor to regain the remains of the aircraft and would set a trial for Russia before the International Court of Justice. Meanwhile, over time, it was realized that the matter is much more complicated than it initially seemed and it was decided to suspend work on the application to the ICJ. According to the media, the decision to stop the work on the application was dictated by internal considerations. Well, PiS leaders were afraid of the public reaction to the fact that the Polish government sued Russia for the return of the aircraft wreck¹⁶, especially because there was a large polarization of society on this point.

What should lead to a deeper reflection on Russia's international position and its significance for Poland is the new concept of Russian foreign policy adopted in November 2016. The Russians announced that they would take greater steps to improve international security (in opposition to the Euro-Atlantic system), relations with the United States (following the presidential nomination of Donald Trump), take decisive steps in the case of NATO enlargement to Russia's neighboring countries, and also from the point of view of Poland – intensification of bilateral relations with selected EU member states, such as Germany, France or Italy. The most prominent example of the last element of the Russian concept is the Nord Stream 2 project. Despite the ubiquitous criticism, Poland had and has a relatively small impact on whether it will be implemented or not. At best, it could influence a decision to delay the gas pipeline construction¹⁷. The same situation was with the first line of the gas pipeline. What is more important: Poland's resistance to the construction is beneficial for the Russian Federation, as it is a source of division between the Member States of the European Union¹⁸. Therefore, it is not difficult to criticize another government in Poland for not having built a coalition that would have blocked this German-Russian investment. According to the author, neither the government of the United Right Wing Club nor the pro-

16 Rzeczpospolita, 'Zwrot wraku tupolewa. Kaczyński wciska hamulec', *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 June 2018.

17 The Office of Competition and Consumer Protection is particularly active in this area. An example is the reservations, which prevented the formation of the Nord Stream 2 AG consortium and delayed the project financing mechanism and generated additional costs for Russian Gazprom and the antitrust proceedings initiated in 2018 towards companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 project. For more information, see A. Łoskot-Strachota and R. Bajczuk, S. Kardaś, 'Nord Stream 2 dzieli Zachód' [Nord Stream 2 divides the West], *Komentarze OSW*, no. 273, 2018, p. 9.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

German coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish People's Party would do it. There are, in international politics, situations in which middle states – such as Poland – cannot do much, and every decision will be bad¹⁹. The example is Nord Stream. However, these countries should look for the possibility of balancing losses or limiting the negative effects on their own security. Therefore, in the context of this German-Russian initiative, the efforts to expand the LNG terminal in Świnoujście²⁰ should be assessed positively, serving to increase the level of independence and diversification of energy resources. However, the key task for the diplomacy of such countries as Poland is the presence in negotiations, even if our voice will not have big impact on the final decision. Thus, in the context of Poland's eastern policy, the authorities in Warsaw should initiate, maintain and stimulate international dialogue, be it in the specific case of Nord Stream 2, or generally security issues in a broad sense. No one can deny this right to Poland, and due to historical experience and geopolitical location, there might be a thesis that Poland is obliged to do so. Polish diplomacy partly fulfills this task, for example at the UN Security Council, of which it is a non-permanent member. The main challenges posed by Poland are the North Korean nuclear program, the dispute over the status of Jerusalem and the consequences of Russian aggression in Ukraine. However, the main goal is to promote Poland's external security, which in practice means focusing on ensuring peace in the

- 19 The Gazprom monopoly in Europe is an example of the Nord Stream 2 related case. This problem was also recognized by the officials of the European Commission. The EC proposed that it would enter into negotiations with Russia to develop such conditions for the use of the gas pipeline so that they would be in accordance with EU Competition Law. On the one hand, being consistent with such a solution it could threaten the adoption of such unfavorable regulations for the countries of Central Europe that they could become dependent on Gazprom for many years. On the other hand, blocking the possibility of negotiations by the EC would be taken as an anti-Russian attitude without any substantive justification. This, in consequence, could lead to a situation in which both Germany and Russia would recognize that the problem was solved and there is nothing to prevent the start of construction. For more information, see A. Kubik, 'Polska w pułapce Nord Stream 2. Przed nami wybór jak między dżumą a cholera' [Poland in the trap of Nord Stream 2. Before us, we choose between the plague and cholera], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18 September 2017.
- 20 A. Kubik, 'Gazoport w Świnoujściu będzie powiększony. Jest decyzja o rozbudowie' [The LNG terminal in Świnoujście will be enlarged. There is a decision to expand], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20 April 2017.

immediate neighborhood²¹. In addition to the declarative dimension of the proposals, it is still necessary to wait for their actual materialization and concrete proposals to improve regional security. One of them could be an attempt to establish a dialogue with Russia regarding international peace. On the one hand, such a solution would show that Poland wants to be reckoned with in the peace game, is a serious partner who looks at security issues in a global way, and on the other, would break the Moscow authorities' arguments about anti-Russianness of the United Right Wing Club in Poland. In the short term, however, it is difficult to expect the initiation of such or similar dialogue formats, also on a multilateral level. Particularly because of the fact that communication between Poland and Russia practically doesn't exist as it boils down to official matters only. Paradoxically, Poland, when initiating a hypothetical attempt to enter into dialogue with Russia (even in an extended form with EU states) could gain a lot in international relations. The problem seems to be the electorate of the ruling party with the negative attitude towards Russia. It would be difficult for him to explain why he helps out a neighbor that poses the greatest threat to Poland, even using arguments such as the need to overcome particularisms and replace them with strategic thinking.

Conclusions

The criticism of Poland's eastern policy coming from various sides after 2015 should be cooled and confronted with the condition in which it was left by the coalition of Civic Platform and Democratic Left Alliance. Let us note that the clearly adopted pro-Western course of foreign policy in 2007-2015 greatly weakened Poland's position in the East, and the instrument to strengthen our presence there, namely the Eastern Partnership, has significantly depreciated. It was also during the previous government that Poland was removed from talks on the solution of the Ukrainian-Russian crisis, which strongly weakened the credibility of the authorities in Warsaw in the opinion of other countries in the region. Indeed, PiS has not received any significant instruments from

21 R. Tarnogórski and S. Zaręba, 'Polska w Radzie Bezpieczeństwa ONZ' [Poland in the UN Security Council], *Biuletyn PISM*, no. 1, 2018.

its predecessors in order to develop eastern policy of the Republic of Poland. Of course, this is not an argument explaining and justifying passivity in eastern politics since 2015, but the statement that, first of all, the entire Polish political class has no strategy on how to conduct its policy towards the East, and secondly, the ongoing “Polish-Polish war” led to a lack of continuity in foreign policy, which is a big trait of the image of such a state. While in 2007–2015 foreign policy of Poland focused mainly on the Poland-Germany-France triangle, after the takeover of power in Poland by Law and Justice, the Visegrad Group started to be its core. However, the eastern policy kept the minimum basis for a consensus in the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland. Meanwhile, since 2015, even it has been a source of division between individual political parties and their electoral base. For the foreign policy of the state – contrary to domestic policy – stabilization and predictability, as well as consensus about its strategic directions and goals, are very important. An effective foreign policy is built up over the years by initiating, supporting and coordinating international bilateral as well as multilateral alliances. The predictable foreign policy of the state is one that inspires confidence in other actors of international relations. Poland’s eastern policy in recent years was neither predictable nor trustworthy. And it is not only the fault of Polish governments but also foreign partners. However, its main problem since 2015 was its vulnerability to internal politics (including the fight for electorates and its views, adoption of controversial legal acts, pursuing policies contrary to previous governments for the sake of difference²²). Unfortunately, it can be said, with a high degree of probability, that this state will deepen over time, and this will have an adverse effect on Poland’s international position and the effectiveness of pursuing its objectives in foreign policy, also in the short-term perspective.

22 This applies to all governments in Poland after 2005.

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