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The dilemmas of the Eastern Policy of the Republic of Poland. From dynamic equilibrium to imbalance

Abstract: In analysing the mode in which Poland settled its relations with Russia, the conclusion comes to mind that Poland remains under the spell of the syndromes which were either disposed of, or dealt with by other European nations. The challenge to solidify Poland's position within the safety zone that is vouched by the West, while establishing pragmatic, rational and conflict free relationships with the East – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic countries, and particularly Latvia, remains. Thus, the ability to comprehend Polish national interests, or *raison d'état*, is required, taking into account realistic and rational arguments and the limits of the existing geopolitical situation where competition plays a substantial part. Poland should also take a long-term view securing its competitive advantages, entering into alliances and making compromises.

Key words: interest; national interest; foreign policy; *raison d'état*; Russia, syndrome

The reversal of vectors

'The Great Change' of 1989 laid the ground for the transformation of Polish foreign policy. The circumstances were conducive. First and foremost, there was the change in the political attitude of the Soviet Union, due to the Soviets coming to terms with the impossibility of sustaining the limited sovereignty of the empire's satellite countries. Concurrently, support for the aspiration to gain independence came flowing in from across the ocean and Western Europe.

The key actors on the Polish political stage were increasingly in agreement with regard to the critical components of Polish foreign policy. They accepted the main directions that were laid out on 12 September, 1989 by the Prime Minister, who expressed Poland's ambitions to "liberate itself" from the restrictions that were imposed by the existing divisions in Europe and in the world, as well as concerns that this would not complicate Poland's situation. He announced that Poland would participate in co-forming a 'new Europe' and would work together with its international partners toward overcoming the divisions that existed in the world. He acknowledged that "international relations that are based on sovereignty and partnership are much more stable than those based on domination and power." He declared that the "key goals" of Poland's foreign policy will be to "preserve its contents and meaning regardless of which political orientation will be at the steering wheel at a given time." He called for a sensible approach in regard to relations with the Soviet Union, arguing that only a "rational comprehension" of these relations would lead to "solutions that would take into consideration the interests of the Soviet Union as a 'world power' on the one hand, and the sovereignty of our country and our right to freely and independently form and govern our internal affairs" (*Oświadczenie*

premiera, 1989). Generally, the government carried out a policy of “liberating Poland” from the restrictions imposed by the existing divisions in Europe and the world, coupled with the reversal of political vectors.

After September 1989, Poland started to participate in the debates of the Council of Europe. The Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl, paid an official visit to Poland on 9–14 November, 1989. However, the visit was interrupted by the events that erupted in the GDR and which later led to the unification of Germany. Nevertheless, a visit paid by such a prominent politician in such a sensitive time and place for Central and Eastern Europe was significant, and constituted a mark of approval and support for the changes that were taking place in Poland, it also augured well for the future.

As the leader of changes in the region that brought about the dismantling of communism, Poland gained the approval of the leading world power – the United States. Lech Wałęsa spoke at a joint session of the US Congress on 15 November, 1989. His appearance was applauded by the members of both houses in acknowledgment of ‘victory over the Evil Empire’. Wałęsa’s speech was characterised by dignity and a sense of mission. In exposing the role of Poland in “reaching for the freedom to which she was fully entitled” he also extended the expectations that “now the participation by the West in this transformation shall also increase. We have heard many wonderful words of encouragement. This is good, but as a worker and a man of real labour I will say that while there is a great supply of good words in the world, the demand for them does not get any smaller” (Wałęsa, 1989).

The intensification of ties with the West was of growing importance within the context of Poland’s future relations with the Soviet Union. During his visit to Moscow on 23–24 November, 1989, Tadeusz Mazowiecki once again spoke of the authentic broad social base of interactions and their longevity as the basis for relations between the Soviet Union and Poland. The forthcoming change was signalled by the announcement of the “cleansing of the field for cooperation by re-evaluating the past: the clearing up of the difficult matters, and firstly the matter of Katyń will help both countries liberate themselves from the layers of negative past experiences and strengthen the friendship between the two nations” (*Nowa sytuacja*, 1989).

Abandoning the East...

To what degree was the concept of dynamic equilibrium, developed in 1989, later enriched and continued? What of the experiences or achievements of that period were preserved or became a permanent feature of political life, what part of that was discarded, abandoned or labelled as ‘unwanted’ ballast? Looking at it from the ‘trend’ point of view, the answer appears to be quite clear. It reached the point of calling the idea of ‘equilibrium’ into question. The quest to form a context for relations with the East weakened. The political groups that claimed to be the first generation descendants of “Solidarity” rose to the top and exerted the greatest influence over domestic and foreign policies. The paucity of their actual political achievements during the 1990s resulted in overcompensation, particularly in magnifying the ‘communist syndrome’ which tied them to Russia. The key attributes of the dominant political formation were to use the self-interpreted past as a ma-

trix for defining the present and the future. There was no attempt among these groups to even conceal their attempt to preserve the bipolar system within the framework of which antagonism between communism – which was interpreted intellectually, in a rather unrefined manner (Janowski, 1996, p. 213–214) – and the powers of progress, democracy and reforms became the key tool for sorting out the political vision. Paradoxically, the camp that deserved the most regard for the fight against the communist regime adopted, from that very model of political establishment, elements that were in direct contradiction to the ethos of the August 1980 protests.

Poland was liberating itself from the dependency of the Soviet Empire in a relatively low conflict manner, as demonstrated by the peaceful withdrawal of Russian troops and the almost friendly relations between the presidents of Poland and Russia – Wałęsa and Yeltsin. Mutual relations were composed of a level of sympathy exerted by Russians towards Poles, knowledge of the East, its material and cultural needs and Polish-Russian beneficial economic and trade relations. Indeed, Poland did have a chance to play a role as a bridge between the West and the East.

Nevertheless, the subsequent “Solidarity” governments contrarily strove to turn Poland into a bulwark for the West that would safeguard the civilised West against the ‘uncivilised’ East. Thus, the East was addressed more as the subject of a political and civilisational crusade and the recipient of western-made cultural goods and values, while reserving the right to expose the superiority of one’s own moral principles, and so on. The politicians of “Solidarity” demonstrated their mental inability to dispose of the ballast of the past. As if unable to acknowledge, or come to terms with the downfall of the Soviet Union, they proceeded to comprehend and treat Russia as the ‘Soviets’. They refused to acknowledge the changes that were taking place in Russia, or the problems that Russia had to face. They were also not willing to perceive the interests of Poland and Russia as symmetrical. Instead, they continued interpreting the aims and aspirations of Russia through the projection of their own experiences and feelings, especially those of phobias and frustrations.

So, the Eastern direction became overrun by chaos, impulsiveness, lack of rationality and the absence of positive and rationally based actions. The events that occurred went well beyond anything that could be classified as ‘incidents’ in time turning into a peculiar sequence. The unconcealed antipathy toward Russia was reflected in a foreign policy that was far from the norms and standards typically observed by the international diplomatic community. A good example of this was the expulsion of Russian diplomats who were accused of espionage. This event was commented on in a peculiar manner by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said: “[t]he time has come to put an end to actions born out of thrillers authored by John Le Carré” (*Koniec*, 2000). Analysis of the information regarding the actions by the expelled Russian diplomats raises many doubts as to the measures that were taken, as well as to the level of professionalism of the persons in charge of state policies (*Raport*, 2000).

Within the same context, it is hard not to mention the hooligan acts that were carried out against Russian diplomatic posts. The organisers of these actions frequently had support and sympathy bestowed on them by people who were descended from the underground “Solidarity” movement and who were now serving in prominent government posts. The events went uninterrupted by the police or the secret service. The culprits went

unpunished (*Flaga pod but*, 2000). The vandal brawls that took place in the front of the Russian Embassy in Warsaw on 11 November, 2013 should also be noted (*Rosja żąda przeprosin*, 2013).

It was very fitting within the context of the 'government narration' to take advantage of the Katyń tragedy. The Katyń massacre was a sharp, double edged political sword to be used in two directions: internally (within Poland) and externally against the East (*Golgota Wschodu*, 2000). This approach was seconded by the Catholic Church, which further elevated the level of drama within the framework of the Polish-Russian relations. The Church did not conceal its anti-Russian sentiments, and it was the Church's posture combined with the failure of the proselytism of John Paul II that became an additional premise of the 'Eastern policy' that was carried out by the descendants of "Solidarity" thus demonstrating the attachment to the Pope's tiara.

The triumph of the anti-Russian syndrome...

In essence, the Eastern segment of the foreign policy was given a rather ideologically emotional dimension which made it impossible to define it in rational terms. The best testimony to the above is the response to a proposal to improve Polish-Russian relations put forth by the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, during a meeting with members of the American Chamber of Commerce on 1 March, 2000. During that meeting the Polish President defined the relations with Russia as "not good at the moment." He reminded of Russia's disapproval with regard to Poland joining NATO. Yet at the same time he underscored the indigenous sources of reservations, pointing out that "undoubtedly some significant errors were made by the Polish side [...] and the new government, despite the declaration that new Polish-Russian relations would be free of the 'ballast of the past', did nothing of consequence towards that end."

In analysing the entrance onto the political stage by the 'newcomers', particularly with reference to Yeltsin – the Polish President concluded that Polish-Russian talks would become more difficult because the new Russian President was a strong man with regard to Europe, but at the same time deeply rooted in the 'Russian Empire' way of thinking (Rakowski, 2000). On 29 March, 2000, during a phone conversation to congratulate Mr. Putin on his election as President of Russia, the Polish President invited President Putin to visit Poland and expressed his conviction that both countries would undertake efforts to build the best of bilateral relations based on "joint values, historical heritage and experiences, and mutual sympathy." In turn, Putin stated that a neighbourhood of such close proximity requires that a suitable rank of mutual relations be established while eliminating unwanted incidents and barriers (Kwaśniewski, 2000).

The opinions expressed by the Polish President met with a hostile reaction by the government. The assertions by the Polish President were perceived wrongfully as interfering with the constitutional powers of the government and the President was accused of undermining the Polish *raison d'état*. During an extraordinary conference that was held on 6 March, 2000, the Minister of Foreign Affairs put forth the following questions: "If you, Mister President, view the Polish foreign policy toward Russia so negatively, then let me ask do you still agree with the position that Russia does not hold a position of a privileged

partner? [...] Are we still in agreement, that Ukraine is the strategic partner for Poland and [...] that we shall not alter that policy?" (*Rozmawiać*, 2000). This exaggerated reaction not only attached a false meaning to the intentions of the Polish President, but more importantly – confirmed the key directions of the Eastern segment of Polish foreign policy.

Could that process have been stopped or reversed by the left-wing of the Polish political stage? If it had had global and European political experience and training it could have seized the moment to redefine Polish foreign policy and to phrase it in a more pragmatic framework. Mentally, the Left was ready to embrace a more open policy toward the East, while acknowledging the importance of relations with the West (*Oświadczenie Leszka Millera*, 2000). However, during the time the Left was in power the foreign policy did not change. From 1993–1997, the shape of Polish foreign policy was heavily influenced by Lech Wałęsa. Despite their own lack of commitment and ideological consistency, the Left was also a bearer of psychologically political reservations held against them by the "Solidarity" formation. "[The] SLD's [Democratic Left Alliance] ability to act is restricted, because after having suffered the period of communism in Poland, which can be only compared with having suffered 'scarlet fever', it must go through a period of quarantine" (Milewicz, 2000) – this was the justification for the political distribution which was exploited at the time, in spite of the democratic rules and mechanisms. In general, the Left was paralysed by the fear that any of their actions would be categorised by their political opponents as closely related to 'Eastern totalitarianism' (Nowak-Jeziorański, 2000).

The prominent leaders of the ruling government from 1997–2001 excelled in hurling abuse, insinuations and slanderous accusations, which after all, only testify to intellectual weakness. They exhibited an 'anticommunism' that was almost Jacobin-Bolshevik in nature, suggesting that the Left is still subject to the pressures and ideals of their obsolete doctrine. They perceived the potential victory of the Left in the presidential and parliamentary elections as disastrous and catastrophic. "The dominance of the political stage by the SLD could undermine and question the current goals of Polish foreign policy" (Rybicki, 2000). While in power from 2001–2005, the Left failed to reverse the tendencies that dominated foreign policy. Admittedly, they were able to sustain or enhance key elements. The cooperation with the West had deepened and moved forward, as demonstrated by the progress in the integration with European military and economic and political structures; in 2004, Poland became a member of the EU.

It seems that the majority of the dilemmas that Poland was facing in 1989, are still current today. Starting in 2005, when the Right came to power, the Western direction within the context of foreign policy had gained the upper hand, while efforts to form a rational policy toward the East had dwindled. The distance toward Russia deepened over time, taking on a form of hostility while accompanied by a growing subservience toward the USA. The rulers subscribed to the illusion that they were participating in a 'great world political drama'. No consideration was given to the character of the competition between Russia and the USA. Poland, despite its subordination to US interests was not able to secure, aside from positive gestures and promises, any concrete benefits, what is more, even those that were eventually gained usually did not match the promises or expectations. This is easy to comprehend, because the needs and wants of US partners are taken into consideration only if they fit, or at least do not contradict US interests and policies. However, the Polish authorities give the impression of being unaware of this fact.

The next issue that resides outside of the realms of the political imagination of Polish politicians is the matter of the relations that tie Russia and various member countries of the EU. These various mutual and particular interests come together in spider's web-like pattern. Priority lies with the ability to carry through promises, and not with values, as these take second place within the EU. Groups of Polish politicians who aspire to be recognised as political elite do not differ in their perception of the political triangle of the USA-EU-Russia from their counterparts in other member states within the region. Instead, striving to serve as a bridge between the EU and Russia they use the EU as a tool to play out their own psychological problems within their relations with Russia. Today, Poland and the Baltic states are the US's 'Trojan Horse' in Europe, and they provide more benefit to the US administration than to the EU – this commentary on the tri-party relations between the US-EU and Russia, (*Polska to*, 2010), is consistent with the conclusions of academic analysis of the subject.

Poland has been successful in regard to its orientation towards the West, particularly in the economic sphere. However, the effects of the policy toward the East raise many doubts. Admittedly, more than once, Poland has been able to convince her European partners to act somewhat consistently with Poland's intentions. This indicates that the social, economic, political and even axiological potential of Poland is valued. However, when looking at it from the perspective of social, economic and national interests, Poland's achievements within Eastern sectors present an array of real failures. Without going into detail regarding the nature and sense of the actions undertaken by Russia, whose past as the 'Great Empire' is still well remembered, it should be noted that her actions and behaviour drifted away from European standards on many occasions. But Russia's influence on the course of international political events cannot be underestimated. Yet subsequent political regimes rooted in "Solidarity" have shown a lack of comprehension with regard to Russia's rights and interests while accentuating their own. Their political posturing and behaviour resulted in the evolution of a very peculiar Polish-Russian relationship that was significantly different from those typical of other European nations which formed their relations with Russia aiming at a settled future and mutual benefits. One of the clearest examples of a failure brought about by the 'mission over the economy' principle was the matter of the Nord Stream Company. Referring to the 'anti Russian syndrome', as its result Poland was left out of the decision process regarding this strategic undertaking.

... and its influence on regional strategy

The anti-Russian syndrome has acquired a strategic dimension. The countries that neighbour Russia are perceived by the Polish government as elements of an offensive sanitary cordon. Polish-Ukrainian relations are encumbered with tragic consequences connected to Polish expansion to the East, as well as with the increasing national aspirations of the Ukrainians. The Polish attitude toward Ukraine appears to be irrational. 'The Orange Revolution' along with the 'Maidan of Freedom' (2006) was enthusiastically endorsed by Polish politicians and political parties. The dominant attitude was a deeply felt 'mission' to carry out the charge of bringing freedom and democracy to Ukraine. This,

however, was accompanied by a lack of awareness as to the real state of Ukrainian internal affairs, particularly in terms of the readiness of the Ukrainian nation to bring in and adhere to the values and mechanisms of the West, as well as the inability to translate the ideals of the 'mission' into interests that mirror the Polish national interest.

Finally, a conclusion can be drawn as to the lack of professionalism and ability of crisis management. There is a prevailing delusion that the 'Ukrainian card' opens the opportunity to flirt with Russia as equals. In essence, Ukraine has become an instrument of a local nature, to strike at Russia. This is what the whole thinking behind liberating Ukraine from under an 'imperial dictatorship' and introducing the "buffer" into the "Western Orbit" can be boiled down to. The Orange Revolution was disappointing in terms of the recognition of Polish interests and desires. Yet, despite the failures, or maybe because of them, the anti-Russia phobia deepened, reaching the level of a political paranoia that skews the "accepted and constructive reactions to threats [...] brings in pathological elements [...] not only activates, but also deforms defense mechanisms and correct political responses" (Robins, Post, 1999, p. 31).

The aspiration by Polish politicians to exert an influence over Russia – which means to obstruct Russia – was exemplified by the Eastern Partnership initiative of 2009. The official purpose was to bring about closer cooperation by particular member states of the EU based on EU standards, values and norms, whereas in reality it was directed against Russia. The members of the alliance – former republics of the Soviet Union – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, were enticed to break off historical and economic ties with Russia. Poland actively supported the thoughtless anti-Russian undertakings by the Georgian President (2008), also attempting to entangle other members of the EU and NATO into it. The countries of the Eastern Partnership were to be links in a chain of a 'buffer cordon' separating Europe from Russia. Poland propagated this idea most intensely, making efforts to render this approach from a policy into practice without giving any regard to the potential consequences and response that could take on the form of economic harassment (prices of commodities, an embargo on food products, etc.), assuming international solidarity and support from her allies.

The Polish-Russian context, but primarily the mission to spread freedom and democracy – included Belarus, to counterweigh the Russian influence. To make up for the absence of success, the conciliatory approach was abandoned and substituted by the language of aggressive superiority. Poland had been taken hostage by its own mission, which it was not able to carry out. So, came the escalation of conflict, political quarrels began and antagonistic actions supported by demagoguery and black PR, including meddling in the matters of a sovereign Belarusian nation. The Polish authorities support the young people that are contesting official public order, provide support for the hostile TV station *Bielsat*, grant extraordinary privileges to the activists of the Polish People's Alliance in Belarus and use blackmail. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs jointly hosted a meeting with the representatives of the Belarusian opposition. The Prime Minister announced that "[t]here shall be no aid for Belarus without a dialogue with the opposition" appealing to the countries of the EU against establishing closer relations with the Belarus regime (Mińsk, 2011). The Polish minority is used as an instrument, by implanting conflicts, disintegration and destabilisation. It is being exploited in a conflict against the country within whose border it exists. This weakens Poland's ability

to homogeneously elaborate its own interests, and makes it impossible to forge a rational and pragmatic relationship with this neighbouring country.

Admittedly, preceding the Ukrainian revolt in the autumn of 2013, Polish-Russian relations appeared to be improving, due to the pragmatic approach of the ruling party and, paradoxically, as a result of the Smoleńsk catastrophe (2010). However, gestures were not followed by actions. To the contrary, the regression continued. As a result of attempts to influence the course of the Ukrainian drama, Poland took the lead in radicalising attitudes, postures and actions towards Russia by politicians of the EU. "At present, it is impossible not to realise that a Pole is becoming a rising political star" – this is how the Czech weekly *Respekt* commented on the activities of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine and in the EU (*Czeski Respekt*, 2014).

Poland has written yet another page that confirms its inability to define and carry out a rational foreign policy, floating instead on clouds of euphoria and emotion, living through its anti-Russian mission without reflecting upon the potential consequences. It took the lead in motivating Ukrainians to turn away from Russia. The easily understood desire to improve one's existence and climb out of poverty is interpreted as a universal desire for freedom and democracy, and a readiness to embrace Western standards. The mirage of 'wealth for one and for all' and of Ukraine soon gaining closer relations with the EU has been floated in front of the Ukrainians for years. The expectation of benefits took over the imagination of the people of Ukraine, enticing them to engage in demonstrations, social unrest, drastic and aggressive protests, breaking the law and public order.

Command over these events was assumed by the extremely radical and combative political powers that were centred around the so-called Right Sector. Military-like squads were established, subject to military lines of command, and equipped not only with weapons that resembled museum exhibits, but also arms seized in clashes with militia or the special forces (BERKUT), or taken from police or army magazines. Squad members received training modelled after the training of assault groups. The atmosphere along the 'Maidan of Freedom' was largely created by the All-Union of Freedom "Svoboda", one of the principal and in some towns the leading political force in Western Ukraine. It contributes greatly to the radicalisation of political sentiments and expressions. Originally, it bore the name the Social-National Party and its emblems resembled those of Hitler's NSDAP. It relates itself to the nationalism of the Second World War (*Działacze Swobody*, 2014). Its effectiveness rests on the importance of organisational structure, mobility and the ability to echo and propagate the desires and expectations of a large portion of the Ukrainian people. Admittedly, it has only 37 members in the 450 member parliament that was elected on 28 October, 2012, while the Party of the Regions (the party of the ousted president, Victor Yanukovich) holds 185 mandates, Julia Tymoshenko's Batkivschina (the Homeland) holds 101 mandates, 40 mandates belong to Vitali Klitschko's UDAR, 32 are held by the communists, 43 by independent parliamentarians and the rest are spread among smaller parties (*Ukraina*, 2012).

However, in reality it is 'the street' and the crowds of the mavericks on the 'Maidan of Freedom' that dictate the survival of the fittest and how office is exercised. Nationalism (and also anti-Semitism) with Bandera traditions prevails, often taking on the form of fighting squads. *Foreign Policy* – an American magazine, states: "Putin's invasion of the Crimea must be evaluated in the strongest of language." Still, a solid policy should be es-

tablished on an honest analysis of all political actors. Such an analysis would require that the arguments presented by Crimea that “the new leaders of Kiev are mostly fascists” are true and should be acknowledged (*Foreign*, 2014). The euphorically experienced climate of the combat clashes, and the group exaltation of the victory over the recently elected and generally accepted powers, weakens rationalism and makes it impossible for those politicians who declare themselves on the side of civilised methods of political disagreement and political competition to influence the political process (*Co się wydarzyło w Kijowie*, 2014).

Well written into the stream of confrontational, populist rhetoric that is belligerent in a form, but most of all anti-Russian in content is Julia Tymoschenko (the presidential pretender) – the leading figure of the Orange Revolution. In a telephone conversation (18 March, 2014) she referred to the Russians as “damn *kacapy* who should be executed by firing squad along with their leader” and she said that the 8 million Russians who live on the territory of Ukraine should be destroyed with the use of the nuclear weapons. The German government distanced itself from this kind of political expression. A spokesman for the government defined the phrases that were employed by the former prime minister as “fantasies of violence,” stating further that “[d]espite the wholehearted opposition to the activities undertaken by Russia in the Crimea, and regardless of all – even fundamental – differences of opinions, there are barriers of ideas and manifestations that shall never be thwarted” (*Fantazje o przemocy*, 2014).

A more complex assessment of the developments in Ukraine was formed by Günter Verheugen, the former European Commissioner for Enlargement, incidentally much praised by the Polish media and politicians at that point in time. He pointed out that the source of escalation of the Ukrainian conflict is rooted in Kiev, “where we have the first government in the 21st Century some members of which are fascists.” He categorised the provision of financial assistance to Ukraine as a mistake. In his opinion “it is still not too late to resolve the conflict and we shall prevent an escalation that would lead to the new cold war.” Europe should provide Russia an all-European safety structure, in which Russia would participate together with NATO. He concluded with the assertion that “[e]ven more significant is the foundation of a special economic cooperation zone from Lisbon to Vladivostok” (*Verheugen*, 2014).

Is there a chance of success for the Polish crusade?

The decision makers of Polish foreign policy do take stock of the diversity of political options, political orientations, the dynamics and the long-term consequences of the Ukrainian events. However, they do not conduct a profit and loss analysis in terms of Polish interests. They have expressed, and continue to do so, indiscriminate and unconditional support for the Maidan revolt in its effects so far, mostly for its anti-Russian aims. On 3 December, 2013, the Polish parliament passed a special resolution on the situation in Ukraine, announcing its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who “are demonstrating today with great determination that they desire their nation to become a fully-fledged member of the European Union.” The Polish parliament called on the parliaments of other EU member nations to undertake initiatives aiming at strengthening civil society

(*Uchwała Sejmu RP w sprawie sytuacji na Ukrainie*, 2013). On 24 January, 2014, the Polish parliament condemned the use of force to “repress freedom and the rights of the citizens, particularly the right to peaceful demonstrations and freedom of speech” (*Uchwała Sejmu RP w sprawie wydarzeń na Ukrainie*, 2014).

On 5 March, 2014, Ukraine was the lone point on the agenda of the session of the Polish parliament. It was with clear satisfaction that Donald Tusk announced that Poland had accepted the leading role. He said that these efforts must result in Ukraine signing the EU Association Agreement. From that perspective, too, the Prime Minister presented the position and role to be played by Poland: “[t]oday, we are not the object of the game [...] but the subject of it.” He proceeded to make a virtue of the strategy that was implemented by Poland. He encouraged EU allies to follow the Polish example and adopt similar goals and motivation. To emphasise the drama of the moment he recalled the “Munich procrastination.” “Anyone who thinks that peace and stability can be ensured by giving in to threats and demands is in error [...] Poland has never experienced such a critical situation close to our borders.” In his speech, he suggested a specific sequence of events that led from the awakening of Ukrainian hopes, to the confrontations that were “dangerous for Poland,” to which the only response must be unity of the entire West.

According to Tusk, the entire future of the Polish nation, its very existence and sovereignty is being put into question, and all of that because of the actions undertaken by Russia. It is Russia who bears sole responsibility for the crisis, having shown at more than one juncture that she had not dispensed with her imperial ambitions. In the face of such dangers and threats to be faced by Poland, it is paramount to strengthen the battle spirit: “[t]he Polish soldier [...] his morale, his bravery, his training and his patriotism are flawless, he is still better than the most modern equipment” – announced the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, and he was then applauded by the members of parliament (with a long-lasting, standing ovation) as they accepted a resolution on solidarity with Ukraine (*Sprawozdanie stenograficzne*, 2014).

The Ukrainian events exposed the strength of the anti-Russian syndrome. It became an element of the election campaign which was launched by the National Convention of Civic Platform (PO) on 22 March, 2014 for seats in the European Parliament. The key points on the agenda were Ukraine and the menace of Russian aggression. Symbolising the support for Ukraine, was the participation by Vitali Klitschko. Donald Tusk dealt with the Ukrainian crisis as a dare laid before “the whole of Europe.” “The results of the elections to the EU Parliament will establish whether the European Union will live on [...] These elections just may be about the question of whether Polish children will be going to school this 1st of September” – he stated, referring to the drama of September 1939 (*Opozycja kpi z Tuska*, 2014). The Prime Minister maintained that Poland is a “valued partner” that engages in a “rational and responsible policy” (*Tusk na RW PO*, 2014). The statement regarding a competent and responsible policy stands in direct contradiction to the aggression, and the establishing of a pro-Ukrainian, and in reality, anti-Russian crusade, which is way above Poland’s ability to continue; there is a lack of qualities of the biblical David to defeat the Goliath. The way the Ukrainian conflict is being used to supply Poland with an adequate proportion of political drama brings back memories of the pre-World War II slogan propagated by the Sanation party, “United, strong, and ready.” Predominantly, it is the speech given on 5 May, 1939, by the Polish Foreign Minister,

Józef Beck, who stated in reaction to Hitler's ultimatum: "Here in Poland we do not know the phrase of peace at any cost. There is only one thing in the lives of people, nations and states that is priceless and that is honour" (*Przemówienie*, 5.05.1939).

The increasingly warlike rhetoric of recent months has at the same time become a tool for political combat. Foreign policy has been used for the purpose of the political competitions driven by the political parties descended from "Solidarity". The goal is to evoke feelings of fear and tension in their supporters. Civic Platform, having been in power for two terms without much to show for in terms of economic and social contributions, as well as not being able to present new ideas for the EU or a clear role for Poland within EU structures, is using Ukraine, and predominantly Russia, as a reason to keep them in power. In looking at the way Civic Platform is using political marketing tools, an analogy can be drawn to the situation in Great Britain, where falling levels of support for the Conservative Party were changed only after the war in the Falklands started. The result of the war secured Margaret Thatcher another term in office.

Fear for the destiny of Ukraine was expressed by the President of Poland, for whom it was the key to relations with Russia. He shared views that the situation presented a genuine threat for Poland, and about the means of counteracting the danger, stating "I dream of a stronger NATO presence in Poland, because this is a matter of Poland's safety." However, he stipulated that "nobody is after an all-out conflict with Russia" and declared that good economic relations with Russia would be sustained and the conflict would not impact the sphere of cultural relations (*Komorowski*, 2014). Such a declaration, which held out the expectations that Russia will come to terms with Poland's hostile gestures, only testifies to the hypocrisy and misperception of the state of affairs by the Polish authorities. "Why should the ordinary citizen of Poland and Russia pay for the ill-conceived policy toward Ukraine and the decisions made by Putin?" – this question was posed by the Polish Prime Minister during his visit on 6 April to the region that borders with the Kaliningrad oblast (*Kampania*, 2014). By the same token the question ought to be asked, "why should the average Polish citizen suffer the consequences of the imprudent 'Sarmatist' undertaking of their rulers?"

How should the undertakings of the authorities be interpreted? What is, and what is not of substance within the implemented strategy? By taking on the role of supporter of Ukraine, the ruling party is taking on a highly insecure and risky undertaking. Ukraine is not capable of controlling its internal revolt, which is an attempt at resolving many different issues. Due to the economic instability, the unchanged structure of the ruling powers that are dominated by the 'oligarchs', and the nationalism and hostility toward Poland, and finally due to the increased inflow to Poland of desperate Ukrainians, the outcomes may be of a very unexpected nature. Simply put, Poland is unable to meet the expectations of the Ukrainians. From that point of view, the problem that Poland is facing is not Russia, it is Ukraine. In showing their support for the Ukrainian Revolution, which is an emanation of mutiny against Russia, a mutiny which is not civic or democratic in nature and which may bring totally unforeseen consequences, Polish politicians use highly elevated slogans. Furthermore, they elevate a local conflict, however justified, into a global matter. Presenting a radical point of view, they are trying to convince the nations of the EU to forgo the care, restraint and moderation that are rooted in the care for the mutual interests of the EU. Polish leaders are enticing them to step onto

a risky path, justifying this by waving high ideals and assuming the character of the 'EU's conscience'.

It is worth recalling the results of the research by Gallup, which shows that the country that poses the greatest risk to world peace is the USA (24% of respondents). Russia, with 2%, is outside the top ten. However, 17.9% of Poles believe that it is Russia that poses the greatest threat to world peace, assigning the US sixth place (5.8%) after China and ahead of Syria (Gallup, 2013). A visible correlation with the last month's events is shown by the polls conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) that show that 80% of respondents fear Russia the most, listed next are Ukraine and Germany (CBOS, 3–9.04.2014). 39% of respondents expressed their dislike of Russians (versus 31% sympathy), while 41% did not like Romanians and 52% did not like Roma people (*Stosunek Polaków*, CBOS, February 2013). 47% of Poles expressed reservations with regard to sovereignty (as compared to 20% in December) and almost half (45%) see threats to the economy and tie them to Poland's economic dependency. At the same time, the percentage of Poles expressing the opinion that Poland faces a threat to its sovereignty has decreased from 37% in December to 18% at the moment. Poles strongly support Poland's membership of NATO. Currently, 81% (a 19% increase from February) support membership, versus 5% who oppose it. 64% desire to have an increased military presence of NATO in Poland, and 21% support the permanent presence of a NATO contingent in Poland (CBOS, 3–9.04.2014).

It would be wise to be cautious in regard to the results of public opinion polls, but by the same token, these should not be disregarded, taking into consideration the fact that both sides – the politicians and the society – influence one another. The Gallup research surely reflects the consciousness of respondents who notice the hypocrisy of the USA. The US shows no reservations in regard to applying manipulation or deceit in order to push through its agenda (Iraq). Whereas, when considering the state of the awareness of Poles, particularly as shown by the CBOS research, consideration should be given, when looking at the dynamics, to the general lack of knowledge in regard to political phenomena and processes, the instability of social attitudes, as well as to the influence of political correctness (the spiral of silence). A sizeable chunk of the Polish nation turns out to be very receptive to marketing, particularly when it comes to raising emotions. Secondly, consideration should be paid to the strength of the efforts at socialisation that are being taken on by the leading political groups, and their political domination within the open political market where the postures of the electorate are fluid and characterized by a highly adaptable subservience.

In general, it may be said that this way of conducting political policy is not targeted at achieving the substantial interests of Poland. It rather constitutes a reflection of an unrefined strategy, rooted in the notions of carrying out a civilising mission, martyrology, phobias, frustrations, exaggeration and quarrelsomeness. The inability to dispose of the ballast of the past makes it difficult to apply professionalism to the policies directed at the East. It also reveals the conceptual poverty of the politicians as well as the intellectual weakness of their power base, and finally, the lack of willingness and ability to step outside their own intellectual horizons and political experience. The lack of consideration given to the ingenious conclusions drawn, among others, by Stanisław Bieleń (Bieleń, 2014) or Ryszard Zięba (Zięba, 2014) bears further consideration. Nonetheless, the deci-

sion makers remain convinced that Poland is the leader of an East-bound mission to bring European civilisation to those countries. As a result, instead of becoming a bridge between the West and the East, Poland had become the civilisational rampart, posing as the key propagator of the ideological values of the West. Polish foreign policy toward the East is not an applied art, but rather the magnitude of “empty grandiose words, sentiments, the romantic spirit and an absolute absence of a rational and positivistic thinking” (Lazari, 2009, p. 193).

Considering these assumptions it seems appropriate to formulate the thesis that it is not Russia that presents a problem for Poland, at least, not in the sense in which it is being seen by the Polish leadership. Neither territorial sovereignty nor borders, nor its independence is being jeopardized. The analysis of the neighbourhood bordering Kaliningrad contradicts the Cassandra-like prophecies. Russia remains pragmatic in its own perceptions, which means it is fending for its identity, its position in Europe and in the world, while distancing itself from globalisation, which constitutes a tool of large corporations, particularly in the US. According to the 2001 Nobel Laureate, Joseph E. Stiglitz, “[i]n the ‘new’, post-communist Russian revolution [...] the front guard is kept by the international bureaucrats who coerce the unwilling people into unwanted changes by using Bolshevik-like methods.” Stiglitz emphasises the role of those US and IMF consultants who supported those who led Russia and many other economies onto the “chosen path, putting forward arguments supporting the new religion – market fundamentalism” (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 151 and 127).

Russia does not accept the *Pax Americana*, however the possibilities of questioning it are limited. The US attempts, with different results, to influence the areas surrounding Russia. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has been unable to maintain control over the countries that departed from the Soviet Bloc. All the same, it tries to hold them within the sphere of own influence, or to influence their conduct using various instruments of pressure, i.e. the ethnic argument – the protection of Russians who are the inhabitants of a given country or region. Nevertheless, it would be hard to support the thesis that Poland’s sovereignty is threatened by Russia. Such arguments only serve to preserve the hostile relations with Russia, whereas it should be considered that it is not Russia who needs Poland, but it is Poland for whom Russia is the more attractive partner. By casting aside its civilising mission and attitudes of a political crusade, Poland could gain a chance to create new relations with Russia. Without jeopardising its dignity or independence – even as a member of the EU – Poland faces the challenge of establishing its relations with Russia on the basis of mutual benefits. Holding up the attitude and the icon of the most unfriendly and aggressive toward Russia country amongst the nations of the EU constitutes a path that leads nowhere, only to further losses that will be borne by Poland. In the foreseeable future, regardless of the current conflict, Russia will not cease to be an important partner for Europe and for the US. The condition for the rebirth of positive relations between Poland and Russia is to dispose of the attitude of supremacy of one’s own arguments and convictions, and to treat the domain of international relations as an area of conflicting interests forcing of which is not only the right, but also the responsibility of each partner.

It is therefore clear that, when examining the manner in which Poland establishes relations with its neighbours within the region, it can be argued that the most important matter

for Poland is to root itself strongly within the safe zone that is guaranteed by integration into the West, while establishing rational, practical and not quarrelsome relationships with the East – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic countries, particularly Latvia. This would demonstrate the power of the Poland, as a country, to realistically and rationally grasp its national interests, the Polish *raison d'état*, within the given geopolitical conditions of competing interests, gaining supremacy or entering into alliances or compromises and choosing long-term options.

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Dylematy polityki wschodnie RP. Od równowagi dynamicznej do nierównowagi

Streszczenie

O ile poddać analizie sposób układania przez Polskę stosunków z sąsiadami w regionie, nasuwa się wniosek, iż pozostaje on pod presją syndromów, z którymi zdołały sobie poradzić – bądź odrzucić – kraje Europy. Nadal tedy pozostaje znalezienie się (ugruntowanie) w strefie bezpieczeństwa gwarantowanego integracją z Zachodem, ale równocześnie racjonalne i pragmatyczne ułożenie poprawnych (niekonfliktowych) stosunków ze Wschodem – Rosją, Ukrainą, Białorusią, krajami nadbałtyckimi, osobliwie Litwą. Oznacza to zdolność do racjonalnego i realnego pojmowania interesów narodowych, tj. racji stanu w konkretnych warunkach geopolitycznych – konkurencji, uzyskiwania przewagi bądź zawierania sojuszy czy kompromisów, dokonywania długofalowych wyborów.

Słowa kluczowe: interes, polityka zagraniczna, racja stanu, Rosja, syndrom