



POLAND AND RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF XXI CENTURY. BETWEEN A LIBERAL ILLUSION AND IMPERIAL REALISM¹

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Abstract:

In this article the author examines how Poland and Russia perceive international relations and the objectives of foreign policy using specific research approaches. Later, the article tries to illustrate the incompatibility of the ways these two countries perceive the world. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to refer to concepts explaining these two approaches. In this regard, the author takes advantage of selected currents of structural and offensive realism, the concept of interdependence, institutionalism and liberal theory, which in the context of identification of preferences and perceptions were complemented by research reflections originating in constructivism.

Keywords: Poland, Russia, realism, liberal theory, interdependence, institutionalism, perceptions, constructivism.

Resumen:

La autora de este artículo examina cómo Polonia y Rusia perciben las relaciones internacionales y los objetivos de la política exterior utilizando diversas aproximaciones de investigación. Posteriormente el artículo trata de ilustrar sobre la incompatibilidad con la que los dos países perciben el mundo. A este fin se exponen las concepciones que subyacen en las dos aproximaciones, recurriendo a los planteamientos del realismo estructural y ofensivo, el concepto de interdependencia, el institucionalismo y la teoría liberal, complementados con algunas reflexiones propias del constructivismo.

Palabras clave: *Polonia, Rusia, realismo, teoría liberal, institucionalismo, interdependencia, percepciones, constructivismo.*

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Many problems in our relations arise from failure to understand the other side, from ascribing false motivations.³

1. Introduction

The analysis conducted in the article constitutes an attempt to answer the following question: Are states having different theoretical paradigms that shape their perception of international relations capable of lasting agreement? The author shall operationalise the two main theoretical proposals in international relations – the liberal and the realist one – on the example of two countries – Poland and Russia. Given the purpose of the analysis, two assumptions had to be made, and both shall be justified in the course of the article. The first one is that in the execution of its foreign policy, Poland (Polish decision-makers) refers to the perception of the world in line with the liberal paradigm; the second one is that Russia (the Russian decision-makers) sees and explains the world from the angle of realism. These assumptions lead us to the fundamental question: Is the regular fluctuation between short periods of relative agreement and long periods of conflict between Poland and Russia the result of completely different interpretation of the same phenomena, events and processes? The analysis presented below shall seek to provide an answer to that question.

The article is divided into four main parts. The first part contains a brief analysis of how a state perceives international relations from the liberal and from the realist perspective. Three criteria that will be taken into account are: the characteristics of international relations and the behaviour of states, the attitude towards institutions as cooperation forums, and identification of interest. The second and third parts are devoted to the analysis of Polish and Russian perception of the world in accordance with the said criteria. In the fourth part, on the example of the perception of Ukraine by these two countries and the optimal architecture from their points of view, the author examines the extent to which the goals and visions of the two countries, referring to entirely different perceptions of the same phenomena, clash with each other.

The starting point for the analysis is Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, as it brought about a fundamental change in all the aspects of the functioning of the state, especially in foreign policy.⁴

Accession to the European Union was expected not only to allow Poland neutralise the difference in potential in its relations with Russia but also give it the opportunity to affect and

³ Address of the Chairman of the State Duma's International Committee Konstatin Kosachev at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Sejm on 27 May 2010, *Biuletyn z posiedzenia Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Sejmu*, No. 165, No. 3785/VI kad., 27.05.2010, p. 6.

⁴ Membership of the EU was perceived as an element that changed the perception of Poland's potential by both foreign partners and Poland itself. It seems that it was of particular significance for the relations with Russia as it created an illusion that Russia's domination in terms of the asymmetry of potentials between Poland and Russia would be quickly neutralised. In other words, strengthened by membership in the European Union, Poland was to become a stronger partner in Russia's eyes. This optimistic view has been shared by consecutive Polish ministers of foreign affairs and prime ministers since 2002, that is since the negotiations of Poland's Treaty of Accession were concluded. Membership in the EU gave rise to the conviction that it would make it possible to realise more complex interests in the East, that it would include Polish interests in the framework of the emerging concept of relations between the EU and Russia, Ukraine and Belarus as well as the other former members of the Soviet Union (as per information of Minister of Foreign Affairs Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz on Polish foreign policy in 2002, available at https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/priorytety_polityki_zagr_2012_2016/expose2/expose_2002/).



co-develop the Eastern policy of the entire community.⁵ Thus the breakthrough of 2004 gave Poland the chance to realise its interests regarding its eastern neighbours by including them in cooperation with the European Union and, consequently, expanding the sphere of development, security and predictability to Poland's immediate neighbours.⁶

2. Analytical Premises

The analytical model used in this article is eclectic in nature.⁷ Today, none of the main currents in international relations theory, neither the realist nor the liberal one, is homogeneous or consistent any longer and, even more importantly, they both lost their capability to provide a comprehensive and universal explication of the increasingly complex reality (provided they had had it in the first place). The new currents and approaches that keep emerging prove once again that this complexity exceeds and perhaps even renders impossible any comprehensive and universalising attempts at constructing models, at explaining the causality of phenomena and processes and at synthesising. Constant development of the main theoretical paradigms and debates between their supporters proves that this work is infinite because reality is infinitely dynamic. Considering this cognitive impotence, recently there have been some calls for a dialogue between the approaches and for attempts to integrate them, which would make it possible to take advantage of synergy, and this, in turn, could bring us closer to a holistic perception of international relations and the laws governing them.

The second foundation of the analytical model, beside eclecticism, will be a trans-paradigmatic approach in examining the international reality. Its explanatory value is proven by certain premises useful in both of the main theoretical research currents. One of these, which is key for this analysis, is the hypothesis of R. Jervis on the influence of information and views (perception) of decision-makers on the perception of reality and, consequently, on foreign policy.⁸

The analytical model is based on the analysis of the three elements that are crucial from the angle of the perception of the international reality: the characteristics of international relations and behaviour of states, the attitude to institutions as forums for cooperation, as well as identification of interests. The matrix thus created and enriched by constructivist thought is applied in the next part to Poland's liberal and Russia's realist perception of the world.

The liberal current in international relations theory is internally diverse and has a rich internal discourse.⁹ For the purpose of this analysis, two approaches within the broad current

⁵ It should be emphasised that because of the lack of unanimity in the perception of the Eastern policy among the EU Member States as well as due to the differences between their interests as regards, for example, the different directions of the EU's external activity under the European Neighbourhood Policy, this proved to be a much harder task than had been assumed.

⁶ The fundamental weakness of such an approach, albeit one that the decision-makers failed to take into account, was the assumption that these states were somehow predestined to keep deepening their cooperation with the European Union and NATO. Cf.: Dębski, Sławomir: "Ewolucja doktryny polityki wschodniej Polski", in Gil, Andrzej., Kapuśniak, Tomasz (eds) (2009); *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania, koncepcje, realizacja*, Lublin-Warszawa, p. 195.

⁷ Sil, Rudra, Katzenstein, Peter.J.: "Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (June 2010), pp. 411-431.

⁸ Jervis, Robert: "Hypotheses on Misperception", *World Politics*, Vol. 20, No 3 (April 1968), p. 455.

⁹ Haliżak, Edward: "Liberalna wizja porządku międzynarodowego", in Kuźniar, Roman (ed.) (2005): *Porządek międzynarodowy u progu XXI wieku. Wizje – koncepcje – paradygmaty*, Warszawa; Lake, David.A.: "Why 'isms' Are Evil: Theory, Epistemology, and Academic Sects as Impediments to Understanding and Progress", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 55, (June 2011), no. 2, pp.465-480; Milner Helen V. (1997): *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*, New York, Princeton University Press; Keohane, Robert.O., Nye, Joseph.S. (2001): *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd edition, New York,



of liberal theories are of particular significance: the interdependence theory complemented by the international regime theory as well as liberal institutionalism.

A state that perceives the world from the angle of the liberal approach¹⁰ primarily sits deep in a network of interdependences, which, on the one hand, is almost an endogenous attribute of that world, but on the other hand, if properly used, can be the source of the state power.¹¹ It is only natural that ideally symmetrical interdependences are rather rare in this complex reality; therefore, asymmetric relations – where one party remains more dependent on the other party – predominate. The state, however, does not struggle against an asymmetric interdependence; it accepts this situation and only tries to optimise the environment so that it can pursue its interests as effectively as possible. For the stronger party, an asymmetrical interdependence is the source of power; for the weaker party, it remains a challenge; but neither contests the other's positions and, consequently, neither strives to change the very nature of the relation of interdependence.¹² The relations between Poland and Russia are a good example of such an asymmetrical interdependence, where Poland, dependent on imports of oil and gas from Russia, is the weaker side.

So, what can a state do to neutralise this asymmetry? It can apply two mechanisms – institutions and/or regime. A state that perceives the world through the liberal paradigm 'believes' in the effectiveness of such mechanisms. Therefore, when attempting to deal with the aforementioned asymmetry in its relations with Russia, Poland was an active proponent of an energy regime within the European Union in the form of the Energy Union. What is more, we can assume that the Eastern Partnership is also a kind of variation of such a regime. By creating rules, including primarily the commitment to maintain broadly defined solidarity, an international regime would strengthen Poland's position as a country dependent on imports of resources. This is because regimes make the behaviour of states more predictable and thus "reduce the sensitivity of states".¹³

International institutions are the second mechanism that gives the state a chance to realise its interests according to the liberal perception of reality. It is, of course, a broader term than international organisations. By offering a forum for cooperation institutions are to become the instrument for realising state interests. Obviously, not all institutions of international cooperation offer such possibilities, and their usefulness depends not only on the institution itself but also on the position the given state enjoys therein. Therefore, we can consider the striving to gain more influence in an institution, with this influence not resulting directly from how the state is perceived by the other members or from its potential, to be an example of state activity aimed at optimising the environment. It can take the form of contribution to the conceptualisation of the institution's or organisation's directions of activity, participation in its decision-making bodies or acts of solidarity in undertaking joint action towards third parties. It needs to be noted, however, that this inclination of states to

Longman; Ruggie, John.Gerard (2002): *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization*, New York, Routledge.

¹⁰ Especially from the angle of interdependence theory, cf.: Keohane, Robert.O., Nye, Joseph.S. (1987): *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition*, Boston.

¹¹ Keohane, Robert O., Nye, Joseph S. (1989): *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition*, Boston, Little Brown.

¹² Even though asymmetry of interdependence is an obvious phenomenon, it is not always properly identified. What seems to be an inadequate example of asymmetry of interdependence is the relation between Russia and the European Union, where the EU (or actually a part of it) depends on the supply of Russian gas and thus would be identified as the weaker party. Cf.: Kozub-Karkut, Magdalena: "Liberalizm: charakterystyka teorii w świetle założeń A. Moravcsika", in Fijałkowski, Łukasz, Stadtmuller, Elżbieta (eds)(2015): *Normy, wartości i instytucje we współczesnych stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa, p. 80.

¹³ Czuputowicz, Jacek (2007): *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa, p. 219.



cooperate results from an assumption that is fundamental for the liberal perception of the world: that peace and cooperation are the key to development.

This virtual predestination of the state to cooperation and positive rivalry stems from a number of factors, but a detailed analysis in this respect would not be relevant to the purpose of this article. Taking into account the initial research premises, one of them is, however, worth drawing attention to: the ascribing of considerable, possibly decisive, influence on the choices made by states and on the identification of interests to individuals and social groups (bottom-up).¹⁴ Through their influence on decision-makers social groups (using various channels) 'force' the state to redefine its interests so that it is consistent with social (their) preferences. Therefore, a decision-maker that directly stems from such a group or is under its strong influence makes choices aimed at avoiding conflicts and situations that would raise the sense of threat (rational actor model); in other words, the decision-maker makes rational choices, which translates into rational and therefore cooperative behaviour of states. Thus the way liberals perceive the mechanism of identifying preferences and transforming them into state interests leads to what we might call the opening of a 'black box'. Incidentally, it is also worth noting that direct influence of social groups and individuals on the identification of preferences and goals of the state means that a change of the political provenance of the decision-makers leads to a change in these preferences.¹⁵ What lies at the source of the process of emergence of state interests is the identification of preferences by the individuals that have the decisive influence on state policy, the values, convictions and experiences they carry.

The world perceived from the angle of the realist approach¹⁶ is a space of interests subject to constant rivalry, where every state strives to maximise its power¹⁷ (defined relatively by offensive realists) and thus achieve domination. The principles of offensive realism constitute a particularly useful instrument in studying the major powers' foreign policies.¹⁸ Maximisation of power, and consequently relative domination over others, guarantees optimal realisation of interests and survival. Major powers such as Russia are predestined or condemned to perceiving the goals of foreign policy in these terms because in the anarchical international environment this is the only path to security and survival.¹⁹ For example, Russia will therefore perceive its potential through the comparison with the potentials of its main rivals, mainly the United States, and will be striving to maximise its power through all the means and activities available to it; if possible, it will also do so at the expense of the rival.

¹⁴ Moravcsik, Andrew: "Taking Preferences Seriously: A liberal Theory of International Politics", *International Organization*, vol. 51, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), p. 517.

¹⁵ The source and ways of identifying preferences were also the subject of interest of constructivists, who placed them in the broad context of experiences of individuals and of cultural influences. Cf.: Wendt, Alexander (2008): *Spoleczna teoria stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa.

¹⁶ Just as the liberal approach, the realist approach in international relations has a strong tendency to internal discourse. The conceptualisation of new approaches became especially dynamic with the publication of Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* in 1979 (Waltz, Kenneth (1979): *Theory of International Politics*, New York, McGraw Hill).

¹⁷ Maximisation of power as the dominant goal of foreign policy is an element of one of the two currents of realism introduced to theoretical discourse by Jack Snyder. In 1991, in the book *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* he proposed the concepts of offensive and defensive realism. (Snyder, Jack (1991): *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Ithaca).

¹⁸ Zajączkowski, Jakub: "Strategie morskie Indii, Chin i USA w regionie Oceanu Indyjskiego: analiza w kategoriach realizmu ofensywnego", in *Stosunki Międzynarodowe-International Relations*, No. 2, Vol. 51 (2015), pp. 37-70, p. 40.

¹⁹ Mearsheimer, John J. (2001): *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton.



The international environment including a 'realist' state is anarchical, but this does not mean that it is chaotic.²⁰ The fact that it lacks any semblance of an effective global decision-making centre or sanction mechanisms to be applied if the recognised and functioning rules are violated does not imply disorder. Such a world and its 'organisation' are based to a greater extent on rivalry, especially in the area of security, and on allowing the escalation of conflicts of interests. This rivalry puts it in the state of a kind of homeostasis, makes it a system that is relatively balanced internally. Thus the activities in such a system are not coincidental, and the fact that in the world of realists there is no place for a 'government over governments' makes it highly flexible and adaptable.²¹

This dynamic balance results in the imperative of resorting to self-help²² or specifically understood 'lone wolf' behaviour. This is not only due to the fact that the environment is anarchical but also because states can never be sure of the intentions and motives of other states. Assuming that the others perceive the world in the same way and pursue similar goals (maximisation of power), states need to act mainly out of self-interest.²³

Given all the above, institutions of cooperation seem a rather unconvincing instrument to a state that perceives the world in realist terms, or even – to quote J. Maersheimer – an instrument that gives false promises. As a matter of fact, within institutions states behave in the same way as they do outside them – they try to maximise their own benefits regardless of the position of others and achieve their own goals, especially towards the other partners. Under this approach, an institution is an agreement concluded in bad faith because all parties declare different goals than the ones they actually want to achieve. In such circumstances, the lack of effective governance mechanisms in institutions of international cooperation is the consequence of the states' deeply hidden dislike of these mechanisms as they would limit the states' freedom in pursuing their particular interests within the institutions. Of course, this does not mean that there is no possibility of cooperation within institutions; it is, however, a signal that the weight they are given should be adequate to their significance and that they should be treated only as a complementary channel providing the opportunity to exercise a state's advantage over weaker actors. For gains can be relative or absolute; in the opinion of realists the situation is optimal when both relative and absolute gains can be achieved, although relative gains remain more important and are always dependent on the gains or losses of the rival – just as it is the case with realist perception of power.²⁴

From the point of view of stability, the optimum arrangement for a state that perceives the world from the angle of offensive realism is multipolarity as it ensures relatively equal division of influence between major powers.²⁵ Fulfilling the ambitions of the major powers through distribution of influence reduces, in a way, the risk of conflict and stabilises the international system. In this situation, each of the major powers builds its power on the foundation of its sphere of influence.²⁶ At the core of this category lays the unchallenged

²⁰ Łoś-Nowak, Teresa: "Paradygmat realistyczny – projekcje porządku międzynarodowego w XXI wieku", in Kuźniar, Roman (2005): *Porządek międzynarodowy u progu XXI wieku. Wizje-koncepcje-paradygmaty*, Warszawa.

²¹ Mearsheimer, John J.: "The False Promise of International Institutions", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 5-49, p. 10.

²² Waltz, Kenneth (2008): *Realism and International Politics*, Abingdon, Routledge.

²³ Mearsheimer, *op. cit.* p. 11.

²⁴ Powell, Robert L.: "Absolute and relative gains in international relation theory", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (December 1991), pp. 1303-1320.

²⁵ Morgenthau, Hans (1978): *Politics Among Nations. The Nations. The struggle for Power and Peace*, New York.

²⁶ Bryła, Jolanta (2002): *Strefy wpływów w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Aspekty teoretyczne i praktyczne na przykładzie supermocarstw*, Poznań.



domination of a single power and the lack of agreement, including active opposition against any attempts to disturb or weaken its domination in this area. The 'inviolability' of the sphere of influence is the result of it being perceived not only in terms of security but also in terms of prestige.

The behaviour of a state in the realist world derives from the influence of the entire system.²⁷ The identification of interests and objectives in foreign policy is determined by the impact of external factors as the ones the state's policy and position depends on. What remains crucial to defining state interests and goals is the structure of the system as well as the state's position in it, and while identifying its goals and interests the state is guided by its perception of the international environment, especially its key rivals and their subjectively perceived potential. These factors make it possible to understand the motives behind the activity of states. According to this approach, neither the characteristics of the political system nor the internal situation are really important because they perform similar tasks.²⁸ In a situation where it is the system that determines a state's choices, the primary goal is to optimise this system in such a way as to facilitate the successful execution of the other goals. In contrast to the liberal world, however, this activity takes the form of a solitary rivalry with the aim of increasing one's own power, without any delusions of abnegative cooperation within institutions or regimes. For the sake of accuracy, it also needs to be noted that internal variables, such as personalities of decision-makers, remain important for a state's foreign policy as they determine how the state reacts and takes advantage of its place in the system.²⁹

Given limited information about the motives and capabilities of the other actors, the world seen from the angle of the realist paradigm is in a sense marked by rivalry. The assumption that others share a similar inclination to striving to improve their position makes states more willing to engage in risky behaviour, including revisionist activity, if only it will increase their power, also at the expense of others. The arsenal of activities states consider acceptable and effective still includes those that are directly related to the material potential, especially military power; thus they still include, for example, blackmail, bleeding out or war.³⁰

3. The Polish Perception of the World

From the Polish point of view, the world is based on interdependencies and cooperation founded on a community of values. Poland is clearly anxious about 'rationally understood

²⁷ In accordance with the principles of structural realism. Cf.: Waltz, Kenneth (1979): *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

²⁸ Halizak, Edward and Czaputowicz, Jacek (2014) (eds): *Teoria realizmu w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze*, Warszawa, Rambler.

²⁹ This new approach constitutes the contribution of neoclassical realism to discourse within the realist theories. Neoclassical realists pointed out that alongside the still important external variables, internal variables, such as the decision-makers' perception of the state's place in the system or power in international relation, also influence state policy. Cf.: Byman, Daniel.L., Pollack, Kenneth .M (2001): "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 107–46; Rose Gideon (1998), "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 144–72.

³⁰ John Mearsheimer wrote: '[...] what strategies do states pursue to gain power or to maintain It when another great power threatens to upset the balance of power? Blackmail and the war are the main strategies that states employ to acquire power, and balancing and back-passing are the principal strategies that great power use to maintain the distribution of power when facing a dangerous rival. With balancing the threatened state accepts the burden of deterring its adversary and commits substantial resource to achieving that goal. With the back-passing, the endangered great power tries to get another state to shoulder the burden of deterring or defeating the threatening state'; Mearsheimer, John (2001): *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, Norton, Introduction.



national interests', which means that the axiological approach is the basis in the process of identifying preferences.³¹ It is in these terms that Poland perceives the institutions of cooperation that it considers the most important – the European Union and NATO – as well as the broadly understood West; it is also this approach that it applies in its policy towards its Eastern neighbours. It seems that the so called Eastern policy³² is an excellent example of the importance of values in Poland's perception and understanding of international relations because it is affected by lasting discourse between the two fundamental historiosophic approaches – the pragmatic (realist) one and the romantic (prometheist) one.³³ Very generally speaking, the pragmatic approach can be described as accepting our Eastern partners as they are – and vice versa of course – and basing the relations with them mainly on economic interests, while avoiding a *iunctim* between cooperation and reforms towards democracy and towards Western values. The romantic vision, in turn, is based on the imperative of democracy and internal reforms in the countries beyond Poland's eastern border; especially in Ukraine. These processes should facilitate their deeper integration with the West, which, in turn, would turn them into a belt of independent and stable states forming a safety buffer against Russia's 'revisionist' policy.³⁴

As previously mentioned, the Polish vision of the state of international relations has a cooperative nature. Polish decision-makers acknowledge that the world is clearly heading towards multipolarity where the West will only be one of the elements and the centre will shift towards the Pacific. A strategic challenge that remains for Poland is to find its place in this new balance of power so as not to be condemned to marginalisation and limited to regional interactions.³⁵ This was the viewpoint of the previous Polish minister of foreign affairs, Grzegorz Schetyna, but it also needs to be noted that given the recent government change in Poland, there have been indications that the region of Central Europe will become

³¹ Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Barbara Tuge-Erecińska spoke along these lines at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm on 27 April 2006. *Biuletyn z posiedzenia Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych*, No. 34; at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Biuletyn.nsf/B5?Open>.

³² The Eastern policy is usually understood as the policy towards Poland's Eastern neighbours. It should be noted that in terms of methodology this term is incorrect because there is no clear division in Polish foreign policy into other directions, e.g. Northern, Southern or Western. The notion, however, has been adopted by means of *usus* in Polish academic discourse with regard to Poland's policy towards its Eastern neighbours.

³³ The discourse between realists and prometheists has been taking place virtually since Poland regained independence after World War I. It became particularly intense after 1989, although the 1990s were a period of clear domination of the prometheist approach. The scale of polarisation and emotions involved was spectacularly shown during a debate held in the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* that had begun with the article by B. Sienkiewicz titled "Pochwała minimalizmu" (A Praise to Minimalism), where the author presented arguments for a pragmatic policy towards Poland's eastern neighbours. The subsequent articles in the debate: Sienkiewicz, B.: "Pochwała minimalizmu", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 24-31 December 2000; Sienkiewicz, B.: "Szkodliwe marzycielstwo" (Harmful dreaming), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 21 January 2001; Maziarski, W.: "Szkodliwe poglądy" (Harmful views), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4 February 2001; Sienkiewicz, B.: "Podejmijmy poważny spór" (Let's start a serious debate), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4 February 2001; Berdychowska, B.: "Giedroyc nadal aktualny" (Giedroyc still relevant), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4 March 2001; Miłosz, Cz.: "Przeciw minimalizmowi" (Against minimalism), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4 March 2001; Olszański, T.A.: "Po pierwsze: interes państwa" (The state interest comes first), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 18 March 2001; Pomianowski, J.: "Wszystkie błędy zostały już popełnione" (All the errors have already been made), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 25 March 2001.

³⁴ Nowak, Andrzej.: "Polityka wschodnia Polski: historyczne inspiracje i współczesne dylematy"; Unger, Leopold.: "Polityka wschodnia Polski w wizji paryskiej „Kultury”", in Gil, Andrzej., Kapuśniak, Tomasz (eds) (2009): *Polityka Wschodnia Polski Uwarunkowania Koncepcje Realizacja*, Warszawa-Lublin.

³⁵ In Polish politics, this vision is described as globalisation of the Polish foreign policy, which should be based on four pillars: multidimensional dialogue with non-European partners, influencing European policy towards non-European countries, cooperation with non-European regional organisations, and working towards a consensus among Polish political, local government, scientific, and business circles on the global priorities of Polish foreign policy.



the most important arena of Polish activity, including as an alliance of states within the framework of the European Union.³⁶

Poland puts special weight on the cooperative aspect of its own activity in the international arena; it is convinced that institutions guarantee stability and space for dialogue even in the most difficult of situations. One could get the impression that this specific unquestioning trust in the effectiveness of such solutions applies not only to multilateral cooperation but to bilateral relations as well. Relations with Russia are a special example, as they have never been particularly close and warm and as they involve an entire network of various institutions of Polish–Russian cooperation.³⁷ In the decision-makers' opinion, this complex infrastructure was justified by the fact that focusing on institutionalisation on many levels of the relations between Poland and Russia resulted from the conviction that while the moods in the relations change, institutions last; that mood was fragile and institutions provided opportunities for communication, even in the most difficult circumstances.³⁸

This belief in the effectiveness of policy implemented through institutions of multilateral cooperation is especially prominent in the way Poland strives to achieve its priorities in foreign policy – primarily through international organisations. Since 1989, the priorities of Polish foreign policy have remained unchanged. These are security and development, and the effective way to achieve them has always been through institutions of international cooperation. Consequently, in 1992 NATO became the instrument for ensuring security, and even today it remains the foundation of Poland's security; Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna even called it the most important instrument.³⁹ The European Union has remained the forum for cooperation that provides development opportunities. Since 1989, Poland has been perceiving the EU as an opportunity to pursue its interests with regard to the other EU members, but at the same time membership of the EU was also meant to improve Poland's position towards third countries, especially those with whom the relation of interdependence is clearly asymmetrical, such as Russia.

Due to the significance of the European Union as an instrument for realising foreign policy, one of the fundamental foreign policy goals (perhaps even the most important one) of all Polish governments without exception has been to secure Poland's position in the EU and constantly consolidate it.⁴⁰ A strong position in the EU, complemented by an alliance with Germany, was expected to strengthen Poland's relative position in bilateral relations outside

³⁶ Although the new minister of foreign affairs has not yet presented any information on the directions of Polish foreign policy, in her expose of 18 November 2015 Prime Minister Beata Szydło stressed that the government 'shall strive to empower not only our policy but also the policy of the entire region to which we belong'; at <https://www.premier.gov.pl/en/policy-statement-by-prime-minister-beata-szydlo-stenographic-record.html>.

³⁷ Bilateral institutional infrastructure comprises the Polish–Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation (established in 2004), the Committee for Polish-Russian Cooperation Strategy (2002), the Polish–Russian Group for Difficult Issues (2002), the Forum for Polish–Russian Dialogue (2001).

³⁸ A statement made by Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm on 4 April 2013. Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Sejm Committees, full record of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee (No. 73), 4 April 2013; at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/65378854C6F54EA5C1257B4E004B1622/%24File/0169407.pdf>.

³⁹ Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs Grzegorz Schetyna at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm on 22 April 2015. Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Sejm Committees, full record of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 22 April 2015, p. 3; at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/5EAB382551C0B3DBC1257E360048A2F1/%24File/0449207.pdf>.

⁴⁰ However, the declarations made by Prime Minister Beata Szydło on empowerment and caring for a strong position of Poland in the European Union as well as the undisguised scepticism of the leader of the governing party, Jarosław Kaczyński, about the European Union, could indicate changes in this well-established approach towards the EU. It would seem that the procedure of monitoring the rule of law in Poland launched by the European Commission on 14 January 2014 and statements made by top politicians on the EU's actions towards Poland herald a change in the mood of the dialogue between Poland and the EU.



the EU, including relations with Russia and the East in general. This was the basic programme of the Polish foreign policy that Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski presented in 2009, referring in it to the 'Piast vision' of foreign policy as opposed to the 'Jagiellonian vision'.⁴¹ It is also worth pointing out that until the dissolution of the USSR, Russia's position on Poland's accession to NATO was explicitly negative as it would mean chipping away at the Eastern Bloc and Russia's sphere of influence of the Cold War era. At the same time, this was an excellent opportunity to try and obtain concession for Russia from NATO. The Polish belief in the effectiveness of the EU's activity and the impact of membership on relative improvement of Poland's international position is especially visible in crisis situations, such as when Russia imposed an embargo on Polish goods.⁴² At that time, Poland's view was that the main activity in this matter is between Warsaw and the Union and then between the European Commission and Moscow, that it was the Commission that should represent us in this dispute with Russia, defending our opinion that the restrictions were groundless.⁴³ On the other hand, Poland remains a loyal member of the European Union and follows its guidelines where EU solidarity is necessary.⁴⁴

While development as the main priority of Polish foreign policy has been pursued under EU membership, security has been approached mainly from the angle of institutional cooperation within NATO. During the Cold War security had been guaranteed by another institution, the Warsaw Pact, and a year after its dissolution in 1991 Poland declared that obtaining membership of NATO was its strategic goal for the 1990s.⁴⁵

⁴¹ In the tradition of thought on Eastern policy, after Poland's accession to the EU the Jagiellonian vision is associated with the Law and Justice (PiS) party. Generally speaking, it remains close to the prometheist vision. Pursuant to the principles of these approaches, it is the strategic vision of a community of interests between Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine as well as Latvia and Estonia that should be the foundation of Poland's policy towards all its Eastern neighbours. This concept refers to the period of the First Polish Republic of the 17th century ruled by the Jagiellonian dynasty – the age in Poland's history when at the height of its territorial extent the country encompassed present-day Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Prussia (as a vassal), as well as parts of present-day Estonia and Lithuania. The Jagiellonian vision was anti-Russian because the proposed alliance of the said countries was to constitute a barrier to Russian imperialism. The Piast vision referred to earlier periods in Polish history – between the 10th and the 14th centuries – and emphasises integration and enhanced cooperation with the West as well as focusing on improving Poland's prestige in this respect. The concept was presented in the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* by Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski; cf.: Sikorski, Radosław: "1 września – lekcja historii", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 sierpnia 2009.

⁴² In November 2005, Russia introduced bans on imports of certain products from plants and animals claiming that Polish exporters were forging certificates of origin. In the following year, Ukraine joined Russia in this respect by introducing a ban on imports of meat and meat products on 26 March 2006 and justifying this move with smuggling and the lack of veterinary certificates in the transport of these products from Poland to Ukraine. Cf.: Krzyżanowski, Julian T.: "Polski handel zagraniczny produktami rolno-spożywczymi ze wschodem (Europa wschodnia, kraje bliskiego i dalekiego wschodu) – bariery dla eksportu", at http://www.wne.sggw.pl/czasopisma/pdf/PRS_2006_T15_s293.pdf

⁴³ Interview with Katarzyna Pelczyńska-Nałęcz for the Polish Press Agency, among other on Polish-Russian relations, 7 August 2014, at https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/msz_w_mediach/wywiad_ambasador_katarzyny_pelczynskiej_nalecz_dla_pap_m_in_o_stosunkach_polsko_rosyjskich_7_sierpnia_2014_r_printMode=true.

⁴⁴ The informal agreement within the EU made in the first half of 2014 to suspend any and all regular meetings between the EU Member States and Russia that did not directly concern the resolution of the Ukraine crisis is a good example of this. Under the agreement Poland suspended its participation in the meetings of the Committee for Polish-Russian Cooperation Strategy because it decided that there was no justification to hold regular talks with Russia at that time. The Committee had been established in 2002 as a forum for annual meetings chaired by the Polish and Russian ministers of foreign affairs with the aim of discussing the key issues in bilateral relations.

⁴⁵ It was entered in the Principles of Polish Security Policy and in the Security Policy and Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland adopted on 2 November 1992. Of course, it is the expansion of own defensive capability that remains the foundation in this regard, but mainly as contribution to the security of NATO, which remains the key multilateral instrument of the Polish security policy in the political and military aspect. For more see:



For Poland, institutions of international cooperation are the most effective mechanism of pursuing own interests and preventing conflicts and instability in international relations. In situations of political or economic crises Poland stresses the need to streamline the functioning of the institutions responsible for the areas affected by crisis. The three main priorities in the Polish foreign policy strategy after 2012 concern cooperation within institutions – the European Union, NATO and the Visegrad Group, the latter perceived as an example of regional cooperation. It is also telling that Poland believes institutions to be the primary effective mechanisms of crisis prevention or resolution rather than the system (the international environment) understood as unorganised activity of states. Thus in Poland's opinion, the economic crisis that engulfed the world in 2008 should have been a stimulus for reforms of the existing institutions of cooperation (the IMF, the World Bank, the G20), and the Lisbon Treaty was to be used as an instrument for improving the effectiveness of the decision-making processes in the European Union, given their apparent ineffectiveness.⁴⁶

Next to interdependence and the importance of multilateral cooperation, the third crucial element of the Polish perception of the world are international regimes as mechanisms that organise the relations between states and thus give Poland a bigger chance to improve its position and mitigate the risks resulting from asymmetric interdependencies. In the analysed direction of foreign policy, we can observe confirmation of these preferences in Poland's particular engagement in two directions: towards the conceptual development of European Union's Eastern Policy and the European Union's energy security.⁴⁷ Both elements were on the list of priorities of the Polish Presidency in the EU in 2011,⁴⁸ and Poland in fact worked on them during that period.⁴⁹ They remain among the key issues of Polish Eastern policy within the framework of the asymmetric interdependence with Russia as Poland is strongly dependent on Russian resources.⁵⁰ The solutions proposed by Poland include energy solidarity to mitigate the risks resulting from possible supply disruptions, joint purchase of gas (which would eliminate the differences between the prices of gas offered to the individual Member States in accordance with the *divide et impera* principle) as well as the obligation to present gas purchase contracts to the EU before they are signed.⁵¹ Poland associates them not only

Tabor, Marek: "Polska w Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckim", in Parzymies, Stanisław; Popiuk-Rysińska, Irena (eds)(2002): *Polska w organizacjach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa, p. 14.

⁴⁶ *Priorytety polskiej polityki zagranicznej 2012-2016* (Priorities of Polish foreign policy 2012-2016), Warszawa, March 2012, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁷ It took the form of a proposal presented in April 2014 by Prime Minister Donald Tusk: "Mapa drogowa na rzecz Unii Energetycznej dla Europy. Non-paper adresujący wyzwania zależności energetycznej UE", at <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/fc25e49c-a646-4b8a-bc7d-5336dac99670:JCR>.

⁴⁸ Energy security was included in the second of the three main thematic areas of the presidency: 'Secure Europe', and the Eastern Partnership in the third one: 'Europe benefiting from openness'; "Programme of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 July 2011 – 31 December 2011", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pp. 5-9, at https://www.bmbf.gv.at/schulen/euint/rp/polen_20863.pdf?4dzi3h.

⁴⁹ "Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Final Report: preparations, achievements, conclusions submitted by the Government Plenipotentiary for the Preparation of Governmental Administrative Agencies to Poland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union". Adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17 April 2012, at: http://www.mf.gov.pl/en/documents/764034/1137013/Report_Polish_presidency.pdf.

⁵⁰ Poland is dependent on imports of resources from Russia; Russia covers more than 90 % of Poland's oil needs and more than 70 % of its gas needs. The dependence on Russian gas will decrease significantly (by almost 30 %) due to LNG imports from Qatar thanks to the opening of the LNG import terminal in Świnoujście in autumn 2015. "Strategia Bezpieczeństwo Energetyczne i Środowisko perspektywa do 2020 roku" (Energy Security and Environment Strategy – 2020 Perspective), Warszawa 2014, at http://www.kigeit.org.pl/FTP/PRCIP/Literatura/008_3_Strategia_Bezpieczenstwo_Energetyczne_i_Srodowisko_2020.pdf, accessed on: 17 January 2016.

⁵¹ Some of the Polish proposals were adopted, but the idea of joint gas purchase was not. The package concerning the Energy Union was published by the European Commission in February 2015. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee,



with its own energy security and a chance to decrease the interdependence asymmetry caused by the need to import resources from Russia but also with its place on the geopolitical map of Europe.⁵² It seems that from the point of view of Polish interests, the idea to include energy security in the list of subjects of intra-EU debates as well as the fact that Polish (although not solely Polish) activities in this regard were successful to a certain extent could reinforce the belief that using a regime as a mechanism facilitating the realisation of state interests is an effective solution.

Furthermore, in the early 21st century, Poland showed clear determination to become a participant in the debate on the European Union's Eastern policy and its development. Poland prepared its first concrete proposal already in 2003, even before it became a member of the European Union.⁵³ After 2004 it remained an active proponent of definitive development of the Eastern dimension of EU policy as a separate dimension of EU's external activity.⁵⁴ Poland's efforts eventually resulted in an institutional success – the Eastern Partnership.⁵⁵ The key interest that the Eastern Partnership has made achievable for Poland is the establishment of a stable and predictable zone at the EU's eastern border.⁵⁶

From the angle of the liberal approach and in reference to the model proposed in the first part of the article, the most essential issue is the identification of preferences and, consequently, the goals of state foreign policy. Also in this case Poland seems to confirm that the liberal vision of international relations is the key to Poland's perception of the world and its place in it. The identification of goals and directions of Polish foreign policy shows a noticeable correlation with political provenance of the governing elites. While between 1989 and 2004 there was a certain consensus as regards the main priorities of foreign policy and membership of NATO and the European Union remained the most important objectives, we need to remember that this period saw the systemic transformation of Poland and the emergence of the party system and that all consecutive governments were coalitions, which meant that no single party could push through its own vision of foreign policy without consulting (negotiating) it with the other members of the coalition. The situation changed considerably after 2004, when two dominant visions of foreign policy, represented by the two dominant political parties of that period – Law and Justice⁵⁷ and the Civic Platform – clashed

the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank of 25 February 2015 on A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate.

⁵² Polish Foreign Policy Priorities 2012-2016, Warszawa, March 2012, pp. 4-5, 10, at <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/d31571cf-d24f-4479-af09-e9a46cc85cf6:JCR>.

⁵³ "Non-paper z polskimi propozycjami ws. kształtu polityki rozszerzonej UE wobec nowych wschodnich sąsiadów, Polityka rozszerzonej Unii Europejskiej wobec nowych sąsiadów (Non-paper with Polish proposals on a future shape of the policy of the enlarged EU towards its Eastern neighbours), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Warszawa, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, 2003, pp. 93–107.

⁵⁴ The Polish position and initiatives in this regard is discussed in: Kowal, Paweł: "Kluczowe elementy stanowiska Polski wobec polityki wschodniej Unii europejskiej", at <http://www.lazarski.pl/pl/pobierz/1009/>

⁵⁵ A detailed discussion of the origins, principles and effects of the initiative can be found in another article included in this publication.

⁵⁶ A secure Europe in a better world – European security strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003, p. 7; at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> For more on this issue see: Dudek Adriana: "Partnerstwo wschodnie i polski interes narodowy", in Nadolska, Jadwiga, Wojtaszczyk, Konstanty A. (eds) (2010): *Prezydencja Polski w Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa.

⁵⁷ Law and Justice is first and foremost a Eurosceptic party. Their anxiety about deepening European integration results from the imperative of protecting the plenitude of sovereignty and concerns that the EU would become dominated by the strongest actors (primarily Germany). The party is a proponent of the concept of a Europe of Homelands and is clearly unfriendly towards Germany, which it perceives as a source of threat to Poland's territorial integrity and economic sovereignty. Law and Justice is also unfriendly towards Russia and advocates the Jagiellonian vision of foreign policy; this is also why it strongly supports Ukraine's independence, development and deepening ties with the European Union. In the party's viewpoint, the United States remain Poland's traditionally most important partner and Poland should remain its loyal ally. Furthermore, the party puts



with each other. The influence of the political provenance of the governing coalition's dominant member was most prominent after the elections of 2005, won by Law and Justice, and in 2007, when the Civic Platform received the most support in early elections to the Sejm. Following the latter, there was noticeable improvement in the relations with Russia, which withdrew its embargo on Polish meat⁵⁸ that it had imposed in November 2005 (immediately after Law and Justice had assumed power); the cooperation within the EU deepened as well, and a significant rapprochement with Germany could be observed. The latter direction, which led to the emergence of a lasting Polish–German alliance in the EU, was especially conducive to improving Poland's position in the integrated Europe, but the Law and Justice government formed after the 2015 elections – the first non-coalition government – will not continue with it.

4. The Russian Perception of the World

A world consistent with Russia's interests and aspirations is a world where the most powerful states play the dominant role. The relation between these top powers is based upon rivalry resulting from conflicting interests, upon maximisation of power.⁵⁹ The United States and China remain Russia's key rivals, and its main objectives are to weaken the influence of United States (NATO) and undermine the US's role as the sole global superpower.⁶⁰

The world based on domination by a single power – the United States – is becoming a thing of the past; new trends, like the relative weakening of the West, the shift of the centre of gravity to the Asia-Pacific region and the emergence of new major powers, imply a change in the present *status quo* in the direction optimal for Russia. Therefore, Russia attempts to strengthen these trends and take advantage of them, also in its closest neighbourhood. Some examples of such attempts to overcome the *status quo* include the war with Georgia in 2008 as well as the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and Ossetia in 2009. These actions were a manifestation of Russia's determination to exercise dominance in the areas that it treats as its sphere of influence and at the same time a display of its position as major power. The use of force against Georgia can be considered a sign of outright realist perception of the

strong emphasis on regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the Visegrad Group area (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary). For more see: Smolar, Aleksander (2006): "Polityka zagraniczna Prawa i Sprawiedliwości – próba rzeczywistości", in *Ciągłość i zmiana w polskiej polityce zagranicznej*, Warszawa, Fundacja im. S. Batorego, pp. 57-73.

⁵⁸ Russia imposed the embargo on Polish dairy and meat products in November 2005, justifying it with the accusation that Polish exporters were falsifying certificates of origin. The efforts Poland undertook at that time to deal with the situation and mitigate the conflict were received with noticeable reluctance in Russia. Poland managed to raise the problem to the European level when it used its veto right in the vote on the mandate to conduct negotiations between the EU and Russia on a new framework agreement given the expiry of the earlier partnership and cooperation agreement. Despite explicit declarations by Chancellor Angela Merkel, who held Presidency in the Council at that time, that the problem was a European and not a bilateral one, Russia did not withdraw the embargo until 2007, right after the elections won by the Civic Platform. Cf.: Cichocki, Bartosz., Świeżak, Paweł.(2008): "Co Polska może na wschodzie?" *Raport BBN, Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, No. 7-8, 2008, pp. 65-82; Słowikowski, Michał.(2007): "Stosunki unijno-rosyjskie w okresie niemieckiej prezydencji. Stagnacja zamiast przełomu?", *Analizy natolińskie*, Vol. 6 No. 19.

⁵⁹ Russia uses all the means available to it to make its activity aimed at a multipolar world effective. The Eurasian Economic Union is a good example of this as on the one hand, it undermines or outright rejects US domination, and on the other hand, makes it easier for Russia to play its intended role of a bridge between Europe and Asia. Cf.: Jarosiewicz, Aleksandra, Fischer, Ewa., "Eurazjatycka Unia Gospodarcza – więcej polityki, mniej gospodarki", *Komentarze OSW*, No. 157, 20 January 2015, Warszawa, at http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/komentarze_157_0.pdf.

⁶⁰ Kuczyński, Grzegorz. (2009): "Strategia Rosji wobec zachodu", *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, No. 9-10. 2009, pp. 155-171.



struggle for inviolability of Russian domination in the post-Soviet space. Another example of this is the annexation of Crimea and the events in Ukraine in 2014.⁶¹

Transforming Russia into one of the main global powers in a multipolar world was named as Russia's national interest in the latest National Security Strategy⁶² and in the Russian Federation's foreign policy strategy of 2013. This world is characterised by contradictions and conflicts between states' national interests. Of course, this approach is not new to Russian policy because Russia has never ceased perceiving itself as a superpower and an empire. However, after a period of self-identification and search for a new identity,⁶³ according to Russian Decision makers only by the end of the first decade of the 21st century the conditions were right to transform the Russian Federation into one of the key powers in terms of technological progress, quality of life, and influence on global affairs.⁶⁴

Russian imperialism involves Russia's perception of itself as an empire and does not carry explicitly pejorative meanings. In the opinion of other countries, typical Russian expansionism has become its attribute,⁶⁵ evidenced by both the aforementioned war in Georgia of 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.⁶⁶ For Russia, in turn, it remains a sign of trying to maintain inviolability of its sphere of influence as well as the eternal struggle to deter threats, which in Russian history have always come from the outside.⁶⁷ This is why Russia shows considerable mistrust towards its neighbours and even greater mistrust towards its partners from Europe. To Russia, the interests and motives of each of them seem unclear, which increases the degree of unpredictability of the developments in its immediate and broader neighbourhood. This is also why it exhibits a typical self-help behaviour and unilateral activity; its priority is strategic self-reliance as the only way to consolidate its position of an independent pole in a multipolar world.⁶⁸

In a multipolar world where the key role is played by the major powers their respective spheres of influence are the attributes of their positions; for Russia this sphere covers the entire area of the former Russian Federation. Russia has been stressing this in every strategic document addressing the issues of security or foreign policy, including the latest foreign policy strategy of 2013.⁶⁹ Therefore, beside the activity conducted on the global scale, which is to involve primarily participation in the shaping of a new global order, Russia identifies

⁶¹ Mearsheimer, John (2014): "Why Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5 (Sep/Oct 2014), pp. 77-89.

⁶² The strategy was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on 31 December 2015. For its main principles see: <http://csis.org/publication/unpacking-russias-new-national-security-strategy>.

⁶³ For more see: Bieleń, Stanisław, and Góralski, Witold M., (eds) (1999): *Nowa tożsamość Niemiec i Rosji w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Warszawa, SCHOLAR; Czarnocki, Andrzej., Topolski, Ireneusz. (eds) (2006): *Federacja Rosyjska w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, Lublin, Wydawnictwo UMCS; Bryc, Agnieszka. (2005): *Cele polityki zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Toruń, Wyd. Adam Marszałek.

⁶⁴ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, approved by decree of the President of the Russian Federation Dmitrij Medvedev of 12 May 2009. For English translation, see for example: <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>.

⁶⁵ Bryc, Agnieszka.: "Wpływ geopolityki na tożsamość międzynarodową Polski i Rosji", in Bieleń Stanisław, Skrzypek, Andrzej (eds) (2012): *Geopolityka w stosunkach polsko-rosyjskich*, Warszawa, p. 27.

⁶⁶ It is also worth mentioning the petition the Russian Federation filed in the UN for extending the Russian territory in the Arctic by 1.2 million square kilometres. Most probably the reasons behind this concern obtaining rights to oil and gas deposits as well as the ability to control sea traffic between the Pacific and the Atlantic.

⁶⁷ Russian historians claim that the country's neighbours are sources of potential threats because whenever Russian statehood was threatened, the threat always came from the outside, from aggressive empires. Bryc, A.: "Wpływ geopolityki...", *op.cit.*, p. 27.

⁶⁸ Lukianow, Fiodor(2008): "Rosja w globalnej awanturze", *Nowa Europa Wschodnia*, No. 2, 2008, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, Approved by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, 12 February 2013, at http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.



regional priorities and focuses particularly strongly on the post-Soviet area, especially the Commonwealth of Independent States, which it understands as the Russian sphere of influence.⁷⁰ The importance of the sphere of influence in Russian foreign policy is proven by Russia's reactions to the attempts to infringe on its 'monopoly' in this region by the plans to extend the NATO's influence on the region's states as well as some attempts to consolidate economic ties (and in fact political as well) through new cooperation concepts (association agreements between the EU and Ukraine or Georgia).

The Russian sphere of influence encompasses the post-Soviet area, where Russia will not allow anyone to oust it from the position of the dominant power. Russia has been emphasising this virtually since the establishment of the Russian Federation although initially its vehement objection to the plans to expand the EU and NATO into this area was only verbal. The situation changed in 2008, when Russia decided to turn to using the argument of force. This way it definitively ended the period of Western strategy consisting in planned and gradual 'taming of the geopolitical legacy of the Soviet Union',⁷¹ and launched a struggle aimed at protecting the inviolability of its sphere of influence using measures that the West had not considered until then; the aforementioned war with Georgia of 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 are good examples of this. Russia declared that it would not allow rapprochement between the two countries and the West within the frameworks of NATO and the European Union. Russia treats Georgia and Ukraine as constituents of the Russian sphere of influence in a special way – without Ukraine it would no longer be an Eurasian empire⁷² that is predestined to the role of a bridge between Europe and Asia and to a special status in the region and in the relations between major powers in general.⁷³

To increase its influence and ties with the countries of the area, Russia not only resorts to traditional bilateral mechanisms but also takes advantage of institutional solutions in order to expand and consolidate its influence in every aspect under the guise economic cooperation. One of such instruments is the Eurasian Economic Union,⁷⁴ which is an attempt to unite Ruthenian lands, strengthen the Russian state and halt the economic expansion of the European Union and China; the ties between the members of the CIS and of the Russian Federation need to be arranged so as to ensure lasting political and economic influence of Russia at least throughout the former Soviet Union.⁷⁵ Although the concept of the Eurasian Economic Union refers to economic mechanisms leading to the deepening of the interdependencies between individual economies, in fact it facilitates the growth of Russia's political domination in the region. The consolidation of Russia and its power has a directly proportional impact on the support enjoyed by decision-makers – in this case, President Vladimir Putin as the initiator and promoter of the idea.⁷⁶

Military factors still remain Russia's key material foundation of increasing power, and economic, legal or scientific factors only play a secondary role,⁷⁷ but in the latest foreign policy concept reference can already be found to soft power instruments, which Russia has

⁷⁰ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, *op.cit.*

⁷¹ Łukianow, Feodor., *op.cit.*, p. 22.

⁷² For more on this issue see: Paradowski, R. (2003): *Eurazjatyckie imperium Rosji. Studium idei*, Warszawa.

⁷³ Brzeziński, Zbigniew (1998): *Wielka szachownica* (The Grand Chessboard), Warszawa, Elipsa, p. 49.

⁷⁴ For more on this issue see: Евразийская интеграция: экономика, право, политика Международный научно-аналитический журнал, No. 1, 2015.

⁷⁵ Massaka, Iwona.: "Possible benefits of the creation the Eurasian Union", pp. 52-61, in Евразийская интеграция..., *op.cit.*

⁷⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁷ Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, *op.cit.*



been employing for some time especially with regard to the 'near abroad'.⁷⁸ Perceiving military potential as the foundation of power affects the choice of instruments applied in foreign policy, which still include blackmail, threats and war. A good example of this are Russia's reactions to plans of deploying elements of the missile defence system in Central European countries, when Russia threatened to not only withdraw from armament control agreements such as the CFE (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) and the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) but also deploy Iskander missile complexes in Kaliningrad.⁷⁹ Russia has been taking advantage of such instruments on many occasions, especially when essential decisions on association agreements initialled or signed within the framework of the Eastern Partnership were made.

In line with the realist perception of the world – especially its offensive variety – Russia engages in rivalry with the main global powers. The purpose of this rivalry is more than a simple change of the existing *status quo* with the dominant position of a single power; it is much rather to weaken it as much as possible. Thus, out of necessity, Russia pursues a revisionist strategy, seeking to increase its own power at the expense of others,⁸⁰ and specifically by weakening the influence of the United States. In the opinion of Russia, NATO remains an instrument of the United States; weakening NATO is therefore a permanent element of Russian activity towards the US.⁸¹

In the 'National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020' of May 2009, NATO was deemed a rising threat to international security. At the same time, it was emphasised that Russia would not accept NATO's attempts at moving military infrastructure to Russia's borders.⁸² The Strategy also noted that there was an increasing common sense of threat among states due to changes in the international environment and that a qualitatively new geopolitical situation was emerging. The trend it highlighted was the need to focus on solutions on the regional level, without interference from the outside. Combined with the opinion that NATO is one of the factors that cause exacerbation of threats to international security, this gives Russia a very special mission – that of the power responsible for the situation in the region. This basically means that Russia's activity in the post-Soviet area is to be perceived as ensuring peace and security in that region and, as a result, throughout the world. Russia emphasises that there can be no global order without Russia as one of the key

⁷⁸ Włodkowska-Bagan, Agata.: "Soft power w polityce zagranicznej Rosji wobec państw 'bliskiej zagranicy", *Kwartalnik Naukowy OAP UW "e-Politikon"*, No. 3, 2012, at <http://oapuw.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wlodkowska-Bagan-A.-Soft-Power-w-polityce-zagranicznej.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Russia reacted by threats also to the possibility of Denmark joining the NATO missile defence system. In March 2015, Russian Ambassador in Copenhagen Mikhail Vanin warned Denmark that if this happened, Danish ships could become targets for Russian nuclear missiles.

⁸⁰ Zajączkowski, J., *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁸¹ Russian elites deeply long for a return of the time when the Warsaw Pact was in force and when the Soviet Union and the United States were the only global powers. Echoes of such reflections can be found in statements by Russian politicians of virtually every level of administration. For example, in his speech delivered during a visit to Warsaw, State Duma Member Leonid Kalashnikov commented on NATO remarking that Warsaw had once been the site of the signing of another alliance, one that no longer existed, and that Russia was also worried that NATO, called a defensive pact in Poland and the West, grew to become twice the size it used to be. He further stressed that such issues should be discussed in the forum of the NATO–Russia Council. The speech was delivered at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm on 27 May 2010, which was attended by a delegation of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, *Biuletyn z posiedzenia Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Sejmu*, No. 165, No. 3785/VI kad., 27 May 2010, p. 43.

⁸² As it was put: since the unreasonable nature of the existing global and regional architecture oriented at NATO gives rise to an increasing threat to ensuring international security, what shall remain the determining factor for the relations with NATO is Russia's disapproval of the plans to move NATO's military infrastructure towards its borders and attempts at giving the Alliance global functions, contrary to the standards of international law. Cf.: National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020, *op.cit.*



powers, but it prefers working alone, co-developing the order but also taking responsibility for security on both the regional and the global levels.⁸³

Weakening the United States and NATO remains one of the major objectives of Russian policy for two fundamental reasons: first, it would lead to a relative strengthening of Russia itself and increase its influence on the global scale; and second, it would give Russia the opportunity to gain absolute dominance in its sphere of influence since the weakened United States would not want to become involved in that region. Russia's actions in various fields are subordinated to this particular goal, also those actions that are seemingly unrelated to it. A good example of this is the contract that accompanied the annexation of Crimea.⁸⁴ The contract, worth USD 400 billion and concerning exports of gas to the PRC for 30 years, was signed by the Russian Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in Shanghai on 21 May 2014 and is an element of a specific Russian–Chinese alliance *par excellence*. It should be noted that the economic dimension is neither the sole nor the main element of this alliance; it is primarily about creating a counterbalance to the United States and NATO as well as about strengthening Russia.⁸⁵ This activity is not strategic, because Russian and Chinese interests are on a collision course (albeit the pace is constantly accelerated). In the meantime, however, when a new system is emerging and when powers are vying for increasing their power, every instance of weakening the United States could mean more power for Russia.

As one of the major powers, Russia identifies its objectives and interests from the angle of its place in the international system and in relation to the potential of the main rival. As already mentioned, Russia has a single fundamental interest – to achieve the position of one of the strongest powers. Therefore, the choice of instruments and methods is determined by the actions of Russia's rivals, its potential in the given moment and the possibilities of optimising the state of the international environment. Another element of the system is the European Union, which Russia perceives not as a community but a concert of powers, where Germany, France and Italy are the major actors. In practice, Russia applies a strategy of selective partnership towards the European Union by establishing bilateral dialogues with the strongest Member States while ignoring the EU as a whole and its less important members, such as Poland. The reason behind this strategy is the desire to weaken the EU's coherence as well as to make it more difficult for the EU to develop a single concept of a policy towards the East or communitisation of energy security.⁸⁶ Instead of the EU's common policy towards the East, Russia proposed its own concept of the Greater Europe.⁸⁷

5. A clash (Conflict) of Worlds

The above necessarily brief analysis of the perceptions of the state of international relations and foreign policy by Poland and Russia leads us to the conclusion that the two countries represent completely different approaches. The Polish perception is close to the liberal

⁸³ Kaczmarek, Marcin.: "Rosyjski rewizjonizm wobec Zachodu", *Prace OSW*, No.33 (December 2009), p. 18 ff.

⁸⁴ This eventually became a fact on 18 March 2014, when Russian President V. Putin signed an agreement with the president of the Crimean parliament, the prime minister of Crimea and the mayor of Sevastopol that made the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol constituents of the Russian Federation.

⁸⁵ It is worth noting, however, that it is in fact China that benefits the most from it. For more see: Grochmalski, Piotr: "Afroeurazja Centralna – nowa, geopolityczna przestrzeń chronicznej niestabilności", in Marszałek-Kawa, Joanna., Wawrzyński, Patryk (eds)(2014): *Prawo i polityka na wschód od Europy*, Toruń, pp. 396-446.

⁸⁶ Kuczyński, Grzegorz (2009): "Strategia Rosji wobec Zachodu", in *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, No. 9-10, 2009, pp. 155-171, 163.

⁸⁷ Menkiszak, Marek.: "Wielka Europa. Putinowska wizja (dez)integracji europejskiej", *Prace OSW*, No. 46 (October 2013), Warszawa.



current, taking into account its various varieties, while Russia remains a pragmatic realist with clearly offensive inclinations. Is it therefore possible for countries that ascribe entirely different meanings to the same notions to establish dialogue or are they somehow naturally condemned to a cool-to-lukewarm atmosphere in mutual relations that can never end in a lasting agreement? More broadly, and this merits deeper reflection in a separate analysis: If the size and potential of a state determine its perception of the world and of international relations, does this mean that only major powers are capable of understanding each other, even if this takes place in the circumstances of rivalry, which they consider natural for them?

5.1. Ukraine

Poland and Russia perceive the countries that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 in diametrically different ways, which affects not only into the policies pursued by these two states but also the relations between them. Two countries of the post-Soviet area in particular play a special role in the disagreements between Poland and Russia, and these are Georgia⁸⁸ and Ukraine. In this article, we will focus only on the latter due to the gravity of the situation there.

In Russia, Ukraine still evokes memories of the great Russian empire, and Russia has never come to terms with its fall.⁸⁹ It was very hard for Russia to recognise Ukraine's independence in the first place, which was aptly proven by how it was delaying the signing of an agreement on the relations between the two countries until 1997. For Poland, Ukraine's sovereignty has always been an opportunity and as such it was welcomed with enthusiasm, and so Poland was the first country to recognise its independence. Because of reminiscences related to the aforementioned Jagiellonian era and historiosophic tradition of prometheist thought, Ukraine was considered the cornerstone of the Polish Eastern policy concept. A democratic and stable Ukraine included in the European Union's 'common neighbourhood' and tied to the broadly defined West would be the fulfilment of Poland's missionary ambitions in the East and would ensure stability at Poland's eastern border. The main objectives of the Polish Eastern policy are democratisation, stabilisation and integration of Ukraine with Europe, as close as possible. Poland declares that no matters in Polish-Russian relations could prevent it from pursuing a policy aimed at achieving this goal, which is a strategic goal not only for Poland.⁹⁰

Ukraine is therefore the stage of rivalry between Poland and Russia, between two different visions of Ukraine and its place in the European international community. This rivalry is, however, not a fight for the sphere of influence but a veritable clash of 'civilisations', because Poland would like to have Ukraine in the Western value system, while Russia wants it in its own cultural, civilisational and political sphere.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Polish diplomacy became actively involved in the war in Georgia of 2008. The position of Polish President Lech Kaczyński was very explicit and proactive from the very beginning; he condemned Russia's actions towards Georgia in a joint declaration with the presidents of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, he paid a visit to Tbilisi (alongside the presidents of Ukraine, Lithuania and Estonia as well as the Latvian prime minister), which was followed by a joint statement calling for a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. He also highlighted the need to develop a NATO membership plan for Georgia, which he deemed the fundamental guarantee of eliminating aggressive behaviour in the region.

⁸⁹ Broda, Marian.: "Mocarstwowy imperatyw i imperialno-autorytarne fatum współczesnej Rosji?", in Bieleń, Stanisław, Skrzypek, Andrzej (eds)(2015): *Rosja. Rozważania imperiologiczne*, Warszawa, pp. 19-38.

⁹⁰ Statement by Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm held on 13 March 2014. Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Sejm Committees, full record of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 13 March 2014, at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy7.nsf/0/FEF5C316D1584AF1C1257CA1004F773E/%24File/0305707.pdf>.

⁹¹ Some scholars perceive the relations between Poland and Russia in terms of rivalry for the sphere of influence; such interpretations can be found in academic literature on the subject. Cf.: Bryc, Agnieszka.: "Wpływ



It should be noted that Poland is well aware that in light of the Russian strategy its pro-Ukrainian position is interpreted as anti-Russian. Thus, it is aware that the perceptions of the two countries are entirely different. But still it contests the Russian approach, declaring that from the Polish perspective there is nothing more important for Russia than casting aside its imperialist sentiments as harmful, while noting at the same time that this is the Polish logic and that the Russian perception is entirely different.⁹² In this context, the question that arises is whether beside the axiological element of this approach there is a pragmatic one as well and whether agreement is possible without it.

In these circumstances, any kind of Polish involvement in Ukraine aimed at including it in the Western sphere of influence will be perceived by Russia as interfering with the Russian sphere of influence.⁹³ This happened both during the Orange Revolution and in 2014. Poland's involvement in the events of 2014 in Ukraine not only worsened the atmosphere in state-level relations between Poland and Russia but also had a negative impact on how the two nations perceive each other.⁹⁴ As a public opinion survey report noted, Russians perceive Poland as a country that is not independent in its strategic choices and foreign policy, one that submits to Western influence and is on the opposing side to Russia in the new Cold War.⁹⁵ Poland, as Russians see it, has not become a partner to Russia and Russians and has in fact never been one, but after the events in Ukraine it is becoming less and less an actor in international relations and increasingly just a pawn in the game played by major powers. This is supposedly confirmed by Polish efforts to include Ukraine-related issues in interregional and international discourse.

Given Russia's position, the issue of Ukraine's (and Georgia's) rapprochement with NATO is also bound to give rise to conflicts. Russia has always considered Poland the driving force behind the idea and explained its motives pragmatically as striving to no longer be a border country.⁹⁶ At the same time, Russia stressed that the opinion of Ukraine itself on this issue was not clear, which led it to the conclusion that dragging Ukraine into NATO could destabilise both Ukraine and its immediate neighbourhood. The war in Georgia was

geopolityki na tożsamość międzynarodową Polski i Rosji", in Bieleń, Stanisław., Skrzypek, Andrzej (eds)(2012): *Geopolityka w stosunkach polsko-rosyjskich*, Warszawa, p. 44.

⁹² *Ibidem*, Statement by Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm held on 13 March 2014.

⁹³ We should not forget the internal function of foreign policy that is visible in Russia. It is a factor that has immense influence on the levels of support for President V. Putin and consolidation of his power. According to a survey conducted by the Yuri Levada Analytical Centre, only 48 % of Russia's citizens had a positive opinion of V. Putin in 2012, but in May 2014 this was already 85.9 %, which was largely due to his decisions on the annexation of Crimea. Cf.: Zamarajewa, AAleksandra.: "Lease or chaos : the metaphor of "disintegration" in the symbolic politics of Russia", in Massaka, Iwona (ed.) (2012): *Symbol in politics*, Torun, p. 232.

⁹⁴ Public opinion surveys conducted in the two countries in 2013 recorded clear separation of the perception of states from the perception of nations. 47 % of Poles considered Russia rather hostile towards Poland, and 22 % perceived it as definitely hostile, but 48 % considered Russians rather friendly, and only 6 % believed them to be definitely hostile towards Poland. Cf.: "Polska-Rosja. Diagnoza społeczna 2013, Raport z badań opinii publicznej w Polsce i Rosji", Warszawa 2013, at

http://www.cprdip.pl/assets/media/Wydawnictwa/Raporty/Polska_Rosja_Diagnoza_spoleczna_2013.pdf. The events in Ukraine caused mutual perception to deteriorate, in terms of both states and nations. In a 2014 survey, already 41 % considered Russia definitely hostile to Poland (which is an increase of 21 percentage points compared to 2013), while 42 % perceived Russians as rather friendly to Poland (a decrease of 6 percentage points) and 22 % as definitely hostile to Poland (an increase of 16 percentage points). Cf.: "Polska-Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2015", *op.cit.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Statement by Chairman of the State Duma's International Committee Konstatin Kosachev at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm held on 27 May 2010, which was attended by a delegation from the International Committee, *Biuletyn z posiedzenia Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Sejmu*, No.165, No. 3785/VI kad., 27 May 2010, p. 46.



interpreted in a similar manner.⁹⁷ From the Russian point of view, NATO does not constitute a direct threat to Russia, but it becomes one when it attempts to assume responsibility for various issues beyond its own borders.⁹⁸

The place of Eastern Europe in Polish and Russian visions is fundamentally different.⁹⁹ Poland strives after integrating its eastern neighbours as much as possible and especially after Ukrainian cooperation with Western cooperation institutions. Russia, in turn, perceives this process as an infringement on its sphere of influence because it wants to keep the countries of this region in deep dependence in all possible fields. This is the context in which Russia evaluates the association agreements between the European Union and the countries of the Eastern Partnership, and this is why Russia attempts to block them or discourage the parties from signing them. The association agreement between the EU and Ukraine is a very good example of this. In September 2015, by making threats that it would escalate the war in Donbas and increase economic sanctions, Russia coerced Ukraine into postponing the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area,¹⁰⁰ and immediately after the agreement entered into force at the beginning of 2016, it introduced sanctions against Ukraine.¹⁰¹ Russia's actions against Ukraine should be interpreted as reactions to violation of its sphere of influence, using threats as a tool. Their effectiveness – the postponing of the free trade agreement's entry into force – proves to Russia that such methods are the way to go and that as a third country it can have considerable influence on decisions concerning Ukraine, with the consent of the European Union.

It seems that presently Russian policy is aimed at deescalating the conflict in Ukraine, reintegrating Donbas on Russian conditions, which, combined with the lack of consensus regarding the necessary internal reforms among Ukrainian political elites, will result in a slow-down or suspension of reforms and oligarchic revenge in the form of groupings linked to Kolomoyskyi and Yulia Tymoshenko, which will cause Ukraine to float and will make a systemic reconstruction and improvement of the state impossible.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Chairman of the State Duma's International Committee Konstatin Kosachev commented that he was certain that had the West not been sending Georgia the false message to 'come and join NATO', there would have been no conflict in South Ossetia; this was significant in terms of stabilisation of the situation in the Caucasus because in the end a war broke out there. He further stated that the fact that NATO was at some point interested in having Georgia join it was not a stabilising element but in fact a destabilising one. Statement by Chairman of the State Duma's International Committee, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁹⁸ Statement by Chairman of the State Duma's International Committee, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

⁹⁹ Balcer, Adam (2015): *Na wschodzie bez zmian? Polska polityka wschodnia, stan obecny i perspektywy*, Wrocław-Wojnowice, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) is an element of the association agreement between the European Union and Ukraine ratified on 16 September 2015 by the European Parliament and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Negotiations were held trilaterally – between ministers from Ukraine and Russia as well as representatives of the European Union. The free trade agreement provides for the establishment of a free trade area and Ukraine adopting approximately 60 % of EU law (in the area of energy, technical, sanitary, phytosanitary, and customs provisions and those concerning to protection of intellectual property).

¹⁰¹ On 1 January 2016, Russia put Ukraine on the list of countries subject to sanctions in response to the entry into force of the free trade agreement and to Ukraine joining the anti-Russian sanctions in summer 2015. As part of the sanctions against Ukraine, Russia suspended the free trade agreement between the two countries, which means a return to regular tariffs within the WTO. Russia's gesture is primarily symbolical because given the decreasing share of the Russian market in Ukrainian food exports, this will have no considerable impact on the Ukrainian economy.

¹⁰² The opinion of one of the most renowned Polish think tanks focusing on Poland's eastern neighbours – the Centre for Eastern Studies (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, OSW). Statement by OSW Deputy Director Adam Eberhardt at the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm on 2 December 2015. Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Sejm Committees, full record of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee (No. 3) of 2 December 2015, at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy8.nsf/0/2C28A925FC945DDCC1257F14005017DD/%24File/0005408.pdf>.



5.2. European Security Architecture

Another area where fundamental differences of interests exist is the vision of the security architecture, which remains closely related to the issues presented above and as such can complement them. Since the issue has been extensively analysed and discussed elsewhere, here the author shall present only a brief outline.

For the pragmatic Russia, which perceives the world in realist terms, military potential remains the key element of the measure and maximisation of power, while international institutions that function in the area of security and bear the trappings of an alliance are an instrument that allows it to fulfil the most important objective. Until 1991, the Warsaw Pact had been such an instrument; it guaranteed the position and dependence of its member countries and ‘disciplined’ the Soviet sphere of influence through the Brezhnev Doctrine (until 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev abolished it). Since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 Russia has had no alliance-type institution that would perform similar functions, while its greatest rival, the United States, still ‘have’ NATO. This is why almost from the very beginning of the 1990s Russia advocated the need to limit the role of NATO and instead turn the then Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) into the main institution coordinating security-related issues in Europe.¹⁰³

In Russia’s eyes NATO and its involvement in areas outside its competence remains a source of destabilisation, especially when this activity concerns the Russian sphere of influence. Russia stresses that it will never join NATO because it is a ‘different phenomenon in the area of security’ and as such it advocates the need to create a new security system.

For Poland, NATO remains the key instrument for ensuring security, but Poland also emphasises that its most important goal within the NATO is to strengthen the Alliance’s eastern flank and that in order to achieve this, it is necessary to fully implement the Readiness Action Plan.¹⁰⁴ Poland tried to obtain support for increasing NATO presence at the eastern flank, especially given Russia’s policy towards Ukraine in 2014. Before the Newport Summit,¹⁰⁵ a meeting was held in Warsaw in July 2014 between Polish President Bronisław Komorowski and the presidents of the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Estonia), the the Visegrad Group (apart from Poland – the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) as well as Bulgaria and Romania. The parties agreed that it was necessary to strengthen NATO’s eastern flank. The second most important instrument of security next to NATO is cooperation with the United States, followed by deepening cooperation in this area within the EU and the OSCE.

Poland will be the host of the coming NATO summit scheduled to be held in Warsaw in July 2016. It will not involve any breakthrough, but as the host Poland will want to obtain support for its position that it is necessary to strengthen NATO’s eastern flank,¹⁰⁶ induce the allies to make a decision on the possibility of stationing allied troops and erecting allied bases

¹⁰³ The concept was first presented by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev in 1994. For more see: Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, Katarzyna (2010): *Dokąd sięgają granice zachodu? Rosyjsko-polskie konflikty strategiczne 1990-2010*, Warszawa, OSW, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ The minister referred to the agreements made at the NATO Summit in Newport of 4–5 September 2014, where the Readiness Action Plan was adopted, which meant increasing NATO presence in the countries accepted to the organisation in 1999.

¹⁰⁵ Koziej, Stanisław, Pietrzak, Paweł (2014): "Szczyt NATO w Walii: uwarunkowania, rezultaty, wnioski dla Polski", *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe*, 2014/III, pp. 11-29.

¹⁰⁶ This would take place through implementation of the principles adopted earlier and concerning the Response Force, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, that is the so called Spearhead Force, Integration Units, and the Multinational Corps Northeast.



in Poland as well as to implement the decisions made at the Newport Summit.¹⁰⁷ It seems, however, that no considerable changes will take place regarding the most important issues discussed in this article; cooperation will remain based on the NATO–Russia Council, and NATO’s presence in this region of Europe will not be increased to any significant degree.

6. Conclusion

The complexity and changeability of the contemporary world makes it very hard to explain it using a single specific research approach. This is illustrated to a certain extent by the relations between Poland and Russia, characterised by the fact that they have a European context and that they influence entities that are not directly part to these relations. The aforementioned volatile and turbulent nature of these relations as well the scale of complexity are the source of one of the main proposals for future directions of research: the need to undertake efforts to combine different approaches and methods.

This analysis is an example of a positive reply to this request. Rejecting the clear intellectual cognitive helplessness of a single approach, it draws upon Katzenstein’s and Sil’s analytic eclecticism. Its explanatory potential is invaluable as it makes it possible to use research categories and notions hailing from different approaches and traditions in order to create the optimal and holistic (from the point of view of the research subject) analytical model. In this case the subject were the relations between Poland and Russia, and therefore the principles of the analytical model described in the introduction have taken into account the eclectic approach of the creators of this concept.

The analysis presented in this article is not an examination of cause and effect and is not aimed at providing a historical description of the relations between Poland and Russia for the simple reason that there is ample academic literature available that discusses the subject in static narration. The idea behind the research was to examine how Poland and Russia perceive international relations and the objectives of foreign policy using specific research approaches, followed by an attempt to illustrate the incompatibility of the ways these two countries perceive the world. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to refer to concepts explaining these two approaches. Therefore, when the analytical model was developed, the author took advantage of selected currents of structural and offensive realism, the concept of interdependence, institutionalism and liberal theory, which in the context of identification of preferences and perceptions were complemented by research reflections originating in constructivism.

The model created and operationalised in the article and based on the principles of eclecticism made it possible to identify rudimentary differences between Poland and Russia in their perception of international relations as well as the behaviour of states and the nature of foreign policy. The analysis has led to the conclusion that the two countries perceive the international reality and the mechanisms that govern it in an entirely different way. They describe it using different terms, and even when they apply similar cognitive categories, these carry entirely different meanings, making it impossible for the other party to decode them. This in turn suggests that the chronically bad condition of Polish–Russian relations is not the result of the lack of will to improve it or of intentional attempts to undermine it but much

¹⁰⁷ Statement by Minister of Defence A. Macierewicz at the meeting of the National Defence Committee of the Sejm on 25 November 2015. Chancellery of the Sejm, Office of the Sejm Committees, full record of the meeting of the National Defence Committee (No. 2), 25 November 2015, at <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy8.nsf/0/803C0C9871A75558C1257F0D004FDA91/%24File/0004308.pdf>.



rather of the fact that the two parties perceive and explain reality in a different way. We are therefore dealing with a kind of objectively existing determinants that largely hinder dialogue and compromise. The two countries are neither rivals nor enemies, they function on entirely different levels of international activity that have very little in common. As a country whose perception of its partners' behaviour is dominated by values and belief in the effectiveness of multilateral forms of cooperation, Poland will be unable to pragmatically interpret Russia's behaviour. The Russian Federation, in turn, which resorts to the categories of power, strength and spheres of influence and which sees only the other major powers as its partners, will not engage in dialogue with Poland, which is driven by axiology rather than state interest, and which Russia simply does not understand.

Such an assessment of the impact of divergent perceptions has grave implications for mutual relations and possibilities of cooperation. More broadly, however, it affects the entire continent since from the European perspective the relations between Poland and Russia remain a constituent of broadly defined EU–Russia relations. Due to its tradition and location, Poland could be playing the role of a 'translator', facilitating communication between the West and Russia. It even declared the desire to play such a role, believing that its experiences and knowledge of Russia made it naturally predestined to do so. But if Poland ever truly had such an advantage in knowledge and experience, the time when it could have used it is long gone, and it has managed to play the role of middleman only to a very limited extent.

Finally, we should come back to the question posed in the introduction: Are countries that perceive international relations in a different way, following a different logic and driven by different motivations in fact able to develop mutual relations based on understanding and dialogue? The answers provided by the analysis conducted in this paper are not optimistic. It seems that in such circumstances developing positive relations is a considerable challenge to both parties, which makes it extremely important for the two states to have the will to understand how the other partner perceives the world and to explain one's own perception. This is, however, unlikely given the dramatic difference in potential in the analysed case.

