

BETWEEN SAMARA AND BRUSSELS

Poland's European and Eastern Policy
in the First Half of 2007

ANTONI PODOLSKI

Introduction

The first half of 2007 has abounded in important events and decisions linked to Polish European policy and bilateral relations, both in regard to internal EU affairs and external issues, especially those connected with Russia. Decisions reached on these matters may carry long term consequences for Poland's international stature, especially in eastern policy. The present analysis pertains to activities of the Polish executive (the government and the president) over the six month period in the domain of European and eastern policy, proclaimed and perceptible motives behind these activities and their upshots, both immediate and longer term.

The EU summit in June was meant to decide on the success or failure of the German presidency's attempt to resolve the treaty-related and functional impasse which Europe found itself in following the fiasco of an ambitious earlier effort to implement the so called Constitutional Treaty. And although its ratification was halted by the referendum fiascos in France and Holland, Poland was viewed as one of the principal naysayers. The reason was the initial public declaration deeming the European Constitution issue as settled, followed by a flurry of rash counterproposals to the German offer that virtually all member states had supported.¹ The essence of the Polish proposals was not entirely clear and comprehensible for European partners and public opinion, giving the general—though perhaps wrong—impression that incumbent authorities in Warsaw are opposed to closer and more effective European integration, and especially to the variant touted by Berlin, in principle and for ideological reasons. Such interpretation of Polish

attitudes was reinforced by insufficiently transparent, disjointed and amateurish presentation of Poland's stance. Although Britons, among others, raised serious and more fundamental reservations to the project, the opprobrium for braking the integration process was heaped by the media squarely on Poland. On the other hand, Polish government's incoherent diplomacy and ineffective communications on Europe could well have been due to its lacking a clear conception and strategy in regard to the Constitutional Treaty.

European policy—between ideology and internal politics

The question of identification and of the form of subsequent public and diplomatic presentation of Polish foreign policy objectives and proposals constitutes one of the principal problems enfeebling Poland's position. A common criticism levelled at this policy is its overemphasis on secondary issues, and sometimes outright emotiveness and populist historicism.² Such accusation are not the sole preserve of Polish commentators, with foreign media echoing them just as often in more or less objective or malicious manner, reflecting opinions of their own political and diplomatic elites. This in turn breeds further tension on the Polish side, paradoxically accompanied by the conviction that such external criticism but confirms the accuracy of the diagnosis upon which the ruling Law and Justice Party's (PiS) foreign policy is founded.

It is irrelevant to what extent such policy is rational or irrational from the standpoint of PiS leaders, since in order to evaluate it we, and especially our foreign partners, need first and foremost understand it. For irrespective of how ardently opponents contest the way in which the ruling party perceives the inner workings of global and European politics, this shall have little or no tangible

1 As was the case *inter alia* with the Polish postulate to introduce the so called square root voting system. Tabled late and insufficiently marketed, without first winning support from any group of nations, it was then dropped at the very outset of the Brussels summit in favour of an entirely new proposal by the Polish government to extend the Nice system by a decade.

2 Such claims were made, for instance, in the aftermath of the Polish veto in regard to opening talks with Russia on the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

effect on the efficacy of Polish foreign policy, especially in its European dimension. In addition, any charges of the initial diagnosis's irrationality have hitherto tended to raise the hackles of its followers, who tend to reject any further discussion of the matter.³ Moreover, criticism of the government frequently met with responses involving sundry allegations questioning the sincerity, intentions and even patriotism of the critics, often labelled *Party of the White Flag*.

What then is, broadly speaking, the diagnosis espoused by politicians who have ruled Poland over the past two years? It rests on a belief, frequently evinced in various official statements by the president and the prime minister, that antagonistic national interests of particular states remain the decisive factor in international politics, and that this factor's purport is augmented further still within the European Union. Signally, while among proponents of closer European integration such tendencies cause concern and spur the adoption of certain countermeasures, authorities in Warsaw view each perceived symptom of renationalization of European politics with singular glee.⁴ Such renationalization, weakening of integrationist trends in favour of an increased role of nation states within the Union is, according to this group, self-evident and only the naive, or traitors even, waving the banner of the *Party of the White Flag* fail to grasp this.

The second component of the these politicians' abovementioned initial diagnosis is the belief in Poland's unutilized national potential, both economic and, more importantly, political, or perhaps even military. This potential, in abeyance

under communist yoke, must be developed for Poland to catch up with European countries which grabbed their opportunity in the post-war years. Only a strengthened nation state, with a sense of patriotism, pride and national interest inculcated in its elite and society, strong national industries, banking sector and other strategic branches of the economy (as well as powerful army and intelligence services) can participate in and help shape the process of European integration on an equal footing, commensurate with its aspirations and demographic and geographic potential. Leading politicians and advisers in the government and presidential administration have oft reiterated the opinion that Poland is still too weak to be cast into Europe's political free market without any sort of temporary protection period needed to reform and consolidate the structures of a new state—the so called 4th Republic. Thus, according to this logic, European integration ought to be slowed rather than speeded up, at least until the edifice of the 4th Republic is complete, unless prohibitive Polish postulates, like those pertaining to the voting system, are approved. Guaranteed the option to block any proposals that go against what it considers its *raison d'état*, Poland might even consider ratifying a new, trimmed EU Reforming Treaty, since it would not advance the cause of European integration against the will of Polish ruling elite.

This is why the strategy's many European and Polish critics have claimed ideology as the principal reason behind Polish government's blurred, passive yet verbally belligerent stance, which paid scant heed to external opinion. In particular, they pointed to the negatively charged belief that common European policy—be it in the domain of foreign affairs, security or energy—not only fails to live up to expectations and to secure Polish national interests, but in some respects actually threatens

3 Here, it is worth recalling the case of Paweł Zalewski, chairman of the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee and vice-chairman of PiS, who was almost expelled from the party for publically inquiring about the course of the Brussels negotiations and actions of minister A. Fotyga's FO, during a Committee meeting.

4 Such an opinion was, for instance, presented by one of the deputy foreign ministers during a CIR seminar on the potential renationalization of German foreign policy.

them.⁵ This threat is seen to stem mainly from the danger, frequently underscored in internal propaganda, of German dominance of the EU, formally enshrined in the new double majority voting system.

The “policy of selective integrationism”⁶, which its proponents regard as the basis for a Poland new European policy, calls for unequivocal delineation of areas that are to remain outside the EU’s remit. “For now” one such area, they claim, is foreign policy, as today and in the foreseeable future any integration would entail huge risk of having to formulate a common foreign policy under the diktat of the EU’s biggest states, or of Germany itself. This conception has been advanced by the opposition to instituting the post of EU foreign minister.⁷ How and why common European foreign policy actually threatens Polish interests has not as yet been elucidated, barring the slogan of “big state diktat.”

It is also worthy of note that the above views are burdened with a fundamental logical inconsistency. For if Poland is sufficiently strong to conduct an effective independent and fully sovereign foreign and security policy, especially in regard to the East, which would justify the redundancy of EU support in this domain, then it would also deserve the label of one of “EU biggest states,” not just due to its size

and population, but also because of its political potential. Thus, a member of the eurosceptics’ purported “diktat” posse, Poland would have no reason to fear the unionization of foreign policy. If, however, authors of the Polish conception of selective integration do not regard Poland as belonging to the group of Europe’s major powers, they are by the same token questioning its ability to conduct effective foreign policy in the contemporary world.

This diagnosis, based upon a very traditional notion of patriotism, leads to the belief that integration with European structures had been premature and based on conditions that were not entirely beneficial. It also engenders the conviction in untimely and detrimental character of the privatization of purportedly valuable national assets, including the media and banks, which fell into foreign hands as a result of premature opening of the domestic market. Finally, it entails the emphasis on traditionally construed aspects of national security founded on strong autonomous defence potential.⁸

However, this is by no means not to say that such an interpretation of Poland’s situation and development prospects calls into question Polish presence in the EU. Just that this is construed in purely instrumental terms, as a source of cash to narrow the civilizational gap, and not as an attractive political project in its own right.⁹

Polish politicians’ take on Polish national interest would in effect be of scant significance in the

5 Further evidence adduced in favour of this thesis includes cordial bilateral relations between European leaders (German, in particular) and Russia’s president, which supposedly lead to docile policy towards Moscow, displayed in an unwillingness to back Ukraine’s European aspirations and in support for the Northern European Gas Pipeline.

6 Marcin Libicki, “Unia zmiennych sojuszy” [Union of alternating alliances], GW no. 29/2006 after: <http://www.europartner.com.pl/czytaj.php?jaki=398&archiw>

7 By way of reminder, the post of EU foreign minister, propounded in the draft European Constitution, was to harmonize and tidy the complicated structure of representing EU interests abroad. This was to be achieved by combining the hitherto separate posts of External Relations Commissioner (currently held by Benita Ferrero-Waldner) and of Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, located within intergovernmental structures (currently held by Javier Solana). Such a minister would head the European External Action Service, a fledgling EU-wide diplomatic corps.

8 “Of course, taking a bird’s eye view of the world one could well ask: why the need for armed forces? But since time immemorial, they have always turned out indispensable, and though perhaps one day some new world will obviate this need, we are not there yet. Poland must have an army commensurate with its role as the European Union’s sixth power, and one of NATO’s larger members,” president Lech Kaczyński at a press conference following the briefing of chief representatives of the Ministry of National Defence and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland: <http://www.bbn.gov.pl/?lin=2&gal=1&idtext=896>

9 Prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński’s policy address to the Lower House of Parliament, 19.07.2006: http://www.kprm.gov.pl/1433_18017.htm

European dimension, were it not for their projection of this ideology and phraseology onto the alleged motives of other states. Putting it briefly, this amounts to saying that other European politicians in essence think and act like them, that the traditional and narrow construal of national interest demarcates the political horizons of other EU leaders.

For example, such projection of attitudes appears to move the present Polish authorities to place excessive emphasis on the role ascribed to the German government in various actions of German business, comments in German media, or even activity of independent organizations or individuals, which are viewed as either detrimental or at least uncongenial to Polish interests. Paradoxically, this picture of the world provides a better starting point for talks with Russian politicians, who seem inclined to view the mechanisms governing the contemporary world in similar light, bearing in mind that their interests are at odds with those of Poland and that they interpret opinions prevalent in the Polish media as reflecting the intentions of the government in Warsaw. Authorities of the People's Republic of Poland, like those of other totalitarian states, never accepted the truth that critical press articles, BBC radio broadcasts, verbal interventions by the International PEN Club or Amnesty International are actually entirely independent of government. The current authorities, driven by a priori preconceptions, are inadvertently slipping into the same old rut.

The specific polonocentric approach to international matters is not purely negative (accusing others, usually Germans, of some ulterior ideological motives purportedly informing wholly pragmatic or incidental actions or lying behind the co-occurrence of unrelated events or circumstances), but paradoxically takes centre stage in situations where Polish authorities wish to make a positive

contribution to European or international debate. This was the case with the famed Musketeer Pact on energy, otherwise known as NATO Energy Pact, a paramilitary proposition running parallel to the European discussions of the time and to pro-market proposals to liberalize the energy market and forge a common energy policy. It is also the case presently, with media reporting that Polish leaders view the creation of a European army as European integration's most pressing issue, in place of, say, resolving the problem of the Constitutional Treaty. Similarly, obdurate promotion of EU enlargement to the East runs counter to ever more assertive warnings by remaining EU members that this shall be impossible without first settling internal issues, in particular that of the aforementioned Constitution.¹⁰ However, it is not just Poland's governing elite who have trouble grasping its European partners' foreign policy intentions and objectives. At present, in Poland the very notion of national interest has an ideological-historic hue distinct from the practical-economic approach prevalent in Germany or France. The strong emphasis on the role of an historic national community, the Church, causal power of the state and centralized government, anti-liberal remonstrations, close ties with Radio Maryja, and even actions aimed at sexual or cultural minorities, are all frequently interpreted as evidence for a decent towards authoritarianism. Misinterpretation of Polish government's motives and objectives thus favours simplifications which are meant to help comprehend the Polish phenomenon by invoking extreme political currents of yore.¹¹

10 Such opinions have been voiced by the European Commission president, German chancellor and Belgian prime minister, among others.

11 Similar fears have more often been expressed by the media than by official government structures or politicians. Articles portraying Poland to that effect have appeared specifically in the Financial Times, as well as in German and French press. One typical remark regarding Poland was uttered in August by Günter Nooke, CDU member and German government commissioner for human rights, when he warned of impending *gleisaltung*—a term signifying forced of opinion

These phenomena's negative tenor is exacerbated by a breakdown in communication between the new ruling elite, ensconced in its ideological milieu, and opinion-forming, intellectual, professional, academic and, for the most part, media circles, concerned about such proclivities.¹² This reflects not only a political divide, but also what could be termed worldview, intellectual or cultural one.

Lacking any real communication, other factors take centre stage, to wit intentions, suppositions, rumours, and sometimes even prejudices and personal or group animosities. Strident, often exceedingly superficial, "vulgarized" ideologization of foreign policy, viewed as yet another element of PR, inevitably provoked a reaction on the part of its opponents, often from outside official political opposition. Arguments are replaced by a veritable profession of faith in the party leader or programme, by underscoring one's own patriotism or gainsaying that of one's antagonist, or by more or less overt insults. Both sides of the political conflict have ceased to talk to one another. Worse still, the middle ground of apolitical punditry has been eradicated: deliberately or inadvertently, virtually everyone must declare their allegiance, or risk having it done for them.¹³

and referring to the situation in the Third Reich (GW, 21.08.2006).

12 Experience of CIR or similar bodies suggests that, with a few exceptions, politicians of the ruling coalition shun seminars and conferences organized by institutions from outside their ideological sphere, despite reiterated invitations.

13 Such was the reaction of the president and prime minister, both linked to PiS, to the letter signed by 8 former foreign ministers, including postcommunists, post-solidarity figures and apolitical technocrats (Władysław Bartoszewski, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Bronisław Geremek, Stefan Meller, Andrzej Olechowski, Dariusz Rosati, Adam Daniel Rotfeld i Krzysztof Skubiszewski). They were most vociferously attacked by Antoni Macierewicz, the deputy defence minister, who labelled them former soviet agents: "...some of these people are ex-members of Polish United Workers' Party, a soviet proxy if ever there was one. And most of them had in the past been agents of the soviet intelligence services. (...) In connection with this action of their, we need to consider some external action. This cannot be precluded, especially if we take into account the degree of damage to the state that their act has done. Here, we are dealing with a group act that is presented as that of individuals from different ends of the political spectrum, while in reality they all represent the interests of postsoviet structures. Almost all, for there is the dramatic problem of Mr Bartoszewski's participation,

Thus, up until the Samara and Brussels summits Polish authorities seemed to ground their European policy in euroscepticism and/or misunderstanding of the essence of European integration, a conviction that any acceleration or specification thereof always threatens anachronistically construed Polish national interests—viewed both as interests of the state, and (as junior coalition partner League of Polish Families would have it) as the very existence of a nation imperilled in its moral rectitude by the liberal scourge engulfing the West. European legislation and scheduled regulatory changes have increasingly been standing in the way of various government projects aimed at hastening the moral revolution, the fight against the establishment, decommunization, lustration, etc., perceived as restrictive or confrontational in relation to the rights of the nation state and policy in regard to its citizens. Clearly, this approach to the issue of European integration had, and still has a significant internal aspect closely tied to the ruling party's political calculations and its espousal of a highly specific electorate. Whence, perhaps, the spurious impression that in truth the ruling party does not implement a foreign policy in any strict sense, but treats it solely as an element of internal politicking, or even a means of mounting a permanent election campaign. Similar phenomena certainly occur elsewhere, but in view of the fact that at least over the past four years every subsequent government has suffered from a lingering sense of impermanence, and practically every month sees political tensions and crises that could well result in an early general election, this is particularly egregious and damaging to the country's international standing.

One specific class of behaviour is utter disregard of the consequences, not so much for worldwide opinion of Poland, as for the very possibility of which I'm still at pains to grasp," GW, 21.08.2006.

conducting an effective foreign policy on the European and transatlantic level, of inclusion in the Polish government of extreme nationalist and quasi-catholic fundamentalists, widely depicted by Polish and foreign media as sympathizing with, or even heirs to xenophobic or Nazi traditions.

Between Russia and Germany...

The stigma of internal politics extends to relations with Russia and Germany. One could get the impression that besides the declared tactical objectives Poland's protracted silence with regard to German proposals to rekindle the constitutional debate had a largely internal, Polish political context, linked to rivalry over "rightwing hearts and minds" and support for father Tadeusz Rydzyk's media empire, of particular value given the ongoing risk of early general elections. Evidently, in official or diplomatic exchanges or interviews with the foreign press, politicians of the ruling party can distance themselves from such nefarious tendencies, ensure that it is purely a question of tactics, that in truth neither the prime minister, nor the president or the foreign minister do not hold anti-European or anti-German prejudices. Yet, each following week brought another batch of generalized and oversimplified statements about negative trends in German public life, or the country's economic policy, generally calling into question the point of any previous policy of Polish-German cooperation, as well as the patriotism of its Polish exponents.

On the contrary, relations with Russia provide an illustration of possible common European policies. Previously, EU's larger member states did in fact seem excessively lenient and not so much acquiescent, as dismissive of the upshots of a peculiar Russian policy consisting in different treatment of old and new EU members. They also

heeded Moscow's suggestions that new EU members are driven by some postcolonial complexes, etc. Until the Samara summit, the policy of Schröder or Chirac amply exemplified the threats posed by a foreign policy whereby Poland would, say, possess no means to block actions that disregarded or even impinged upon its interests. However, taking into account nation states' rights, this would be no common policy. Moreover, had EU leaders in Samara reneged on the principle of member solidarity would any chance for a compromise on the EU Reforming Treaty would surely have been scuppered, providing Warsaw with a deeply justified argument in favour of continuing its opposition to such a compromise. President Putin also did his fair share to remedy the situation, since his policy has been causing growing concerns in Europe and the world. After Samara, this pretext became obsolete, and thus both European and Polish opinion expected the government in Warsaw to display greater willingness to compromise on the treaty. What is more, if Polish ruling elite's real motive for its tactical, and not strategic, euroscepticism was not ideology but broader apprehension over the EU's undue submissiveness towards Russia and a disbelief in European solidarity, then the Samara summit should have done plenty to dispel any such fears.

It also seems that paradoxically—albeit with disparate motivations—both Warsaw and Moscow failed to perceive the shift in European political and business elites' attitude towards Russia, an end to the era of Schröder, Berlusconi and Chirac. Being on Gazprom's payroll and overtly defending Russian economic and political interests, the former German chancellor has done more than anyone to discredit the notion of a strategic partnership between Russia and Germany, making it into a simple lobbying issue. The scandal over the murder

of Alexander Litvinenko, a former FSB operative and, importantly, British citizen, or the death of Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian journalist and darling of the Western media, won Russia little favour. As did subsequent addresses by the Russian president during international summits or in Russia itself, unequivocally perceived as aggressive and confrontational. Attempts by Russian oligarchs to take up shares in, or even take over strategically significant western companies not just in the energy sector (e.g. the discrete purchase via European bourses of a big stake in the European defence giant EADS), have lent credence to Polish, and others', warnings against inordinate dependence on the Russian partner and endorsement of its undemocratic practices. Systematic cuts in energy supplies to recalcitrant neighbours, mysterious pipeline breakdowns, refinery fires, cyber-attacks on Estonian institutions and anti-Estonian hooligan riots in Tallinn and Moscow, inspired by the upper echelons of Russia's ruling establishment, or finally a series of evasive actions against EU mediation and absurd accusations over Polish meat, have sufficed to convince EU leaders to send a clear warning to the Russian authorities. All the more so given the concomitant furore over the future of European integration and a lingering threat of Polish veto over the European constitution.

EU compromise—success or failure?

At present, in the aftermath of the Brussels and Samara summits it transpired that the EU is not just capable of reaching internal consensus, but also of concerted action towards the outside world. It is prepared to rise above particular interests of its largest members, arriving at a workable compromise in Brussels or standing shoulder to shoulder against Russia in defence of Poland,

Estonia or Lithuania, even though not all member states share these countries' motives or attitude toward Moscow. The Samara summit in particular ended in a way that took Polish authorities by surprise, perhaps even somewhat modifying their stance, or rather strategy, as evinced by Poland's greater propensity to compromise a month later in Brussels.

With a Brussels triumph under its belt, Poland's government would—were it not for the aforementioned primacy of internal politics and pre-election propaganda—have had a unique opportunity to celebrate more than just successful enlivening European solidarity and the EU's eastern policy. Politically, at the European level, it found itself stuck. With Warsaw authorities having trumpeted the success of negotiations, and with Polish postulates (including those pertaining to the Nice voting system) largely satisfied, virtually everyone in Europe expected the country to return the favour at the level of practical, everyday European policy, and Poland's government and president to show less intransigence and a more proactive approach. On the other hand, the Brussels compromise, possibly too hastily hailed as a unilateral Polish victory, provoked an almost unanimous uproar among the opposition—be it parliamentary, e.g. Civic Platform (PO), or intragovernmental, i.e. League of Polish Families (LPR) and Self Defence. PO accused the government of too easily dropping the so-called square root voting system, while LPR censured it for practically betraying Polish interest by agreeing to the new Reforming Treaty. In the midst of a government crisis this engendered a decisive reaction on the part of prime minister Kaczyński, who dismissed LPR's deputy foreign minister, with immediate effect, for having criticized the foreign minister Anna Fotyga.¹⁴

14 IAR, PAP, 28.07.2007

Were it not for the internal political factor, which hinders any braver turns in European policy, the government and president could, given the will, prove that accusations of anti-European motives and prejudices levelled at them are spurious. That these are, if anything, a thing of the past, with Polish authorities now currently inclined to participate more actively in propping up the European project, in the strategic interest of Poland itself, and of Europe as a whole. Polish government's retreat from earlier ideas to reopen negotiations concluded in Brussels on the so called Ioannina mechanism and its acceptance of the Portuguese presidency's continued work on the Treaty, give room for hope.

This is all the more significant, as there is now a good chance that the EU's eastern policy, long postulated by Poland, will take greater account of our perspective. However, counting on others to pay full heed to our priorities constituted yet another illusion and error, which could well prompt a paradoxical outcome: creation of an EU eastern policy spearheaded by a different, apparently less troublesome and testy country, e.g. Romania, with the so called European Neighbourhood Policy Black Sea Synergy, which is to cover all postsoviet states bordering the Black Sea region, barring Belarus.

Another danger for Polish policy lies in ill-fated triumphalism with regard to Russia. For now the Russian authorities have been sent a powerful message to desist from trying to cause rifts within the EU, and to temper their economic and political activity in areas they view—rightly or wrongly—as lying in their sphere of influence. Moscow is to accept that its erstwhile satellites and countries once belonging to the former USSR are now fully fledged members of the European Union. If these facts impel the Russian authorities to mull over the matter—and flexibility in the face of resistance is a

hallmark of its diplomacy—then the current cooling of European-Russian relations may prove short-lived, and will certainly not amount to the full adoption of the Polish or Baltic perspective in EU policy towards Russia. Especially since it remains, due to its relative stability and predictability, a desirable and important potential partner in grappling with more or less probable crises beyond the EU eastern frontier, or in relations with Iran. Russia also retains its value as an important and, despite recent turmoil, for the most part credible supplier of energy resources Europe desperately needs. Irrespective of the Samara success, Poland is in no position to change this. The crisis over Polish meat also illustrated the painful truth that the Kremlin pays scant heed to Poland as such, but that it cannot ignore Poland qua member of the European Union.

In the East...

There is a further aspect proponents of a fully autonomous, non-EU policy (not only towards the East) ought to bear in mind. A Poland with a different political climate, unperturbed by ruinous internal strife, could become a leader of pro-European transition to the East of its borders, and continue the policy of guiding its neighbours towards a free market economy and liberal democracy. As things stand, however, the actual clout of Polish foreign policy, towards the East and elsewhere, has dwindled. Poland's internal politics has actually deprived the country of an important means of swaying other postsoviet elites—its exemplary systemic convergence. Poland had until recently been hailed beyond our eastern borders as the paragon of successful transformation from a totalitarian state to a free market and democratic one. What postsoviet economic-political, military and spook elites found particularly attractive, to the dismay of many in Poland, was the fact that their

Polish counterparts seamlessly settled in the new state, often to their advantage. This was one reason for president A. Kwaśniewski's allure as a mediator between the fractious Ukrainian elites during the so called orange revolution. Now, however, with the spectre of vindictive legislation, lustration, decommunization, demotion and depriving the old regime's officialdom of state pensions, the obvious credibility of a potential Polish mediator or tutor to the Belorussian top brass has been undermined. Such "hardening" of Polish foreign policy has proceeded hand in hand with a whole raft of personnel changes in the country's diplomatic corps—some arise from the natural political calendar (ambassadors),¹⁵ others from biological processes (members of post-PPR diplomatic corps reaching retirement age), but many were linked to the ruling party's political doctrine (lustration, decommunization).¹⁶

Thus, Poland's internal political and historical score settling—irrespective of particular moral appraisal thereof—deprive Poland of one of its most potent eastern policy tools. Let us call it the policy of exemplary convergence in regard to postcommunist postsoviet apparatus. For it is hard to believe that success there is attainable by turning one's attention to the democratic opposition, which for now lacks any real social backing.

15 Paweł Dobrowolski, the FO spokesman justified the minister's decision in an official communiqué stating: "1. New authorities of the Republic of Poland are inspecting the state's senior civil servants. With regard to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this procedure pertains to senior posts in diplomatic missions. The process is of a long term character. 2. New requirements of Polish foreign policy and the ministry's streamlining of human resources management practices imply that persons returning to work in the Head Office shall be assigned new tasks. 3. At the same time, we consider it deeply unjust that the posts of ambassador of the Republic of Poland be held by persons with former links to the security services and PZPR apparatus. Republic of Poland authorities responsible for shaping the country's foreign policy have lost confidence in such persons," www.msz.gov.pl

16 Such motive was claimed by the media to lie behind recalling ambassadors in Berlin, Rome and Copenhagen, all of whom confessed to having cooperated with the PRP intelligence service.

This problem is especially glaring in the case of Ukraine. The present Polish authorities' ability to influence the situation there is visibly less pronounced than under their predecessors, both presidential and in government. President L. Kaczyński's offer to mediate during the conflict between Ukraine's prime minister and president was largely ignored. This attempt was not helped by prime minister Kaczyński publicly declaring his sympathies with the "orange" camp, therefore effectively limiting Poland's ability to pressure the "blue" camp of prime minister Yanukovich, also after the seemingly imminent elections. Let us note that at the same time in Kiev, Poland's ex-president A. Kwaśniewski organized talks, perhaps somewhat overoptimistically portrayed as an element of mediation. Yet even he had nothing constructive to proffer to the Kiev authorities, since in contrast to 2004 he lacked the backing of a strong Poland, not even to mention the European Union, and had to rely solely on his personal attributes, contacts and experience. However, touting the attractiveness of Poland's Round Table compromise to the Ukrainians at a time when it is being officially questioned and reviled in Poland itself, as is anyone involved, turned out to be too parlous a mission. A similar regularity will in all likelihood crop up in the event of an escalation of conflict in Belarus, where the Poles side with a single faction of the country's fragmented opposition, leaving them with little sway over the incumbent president's entourage.

It would, of course, be absurd to claim that Poland's sole means of impacting on eastern elites are "reformed" former apparatchiks, of whom the country's administration is being purged. Decommunization of state structures, somewhat belated and hardly enticing to neighbours, would not constitute such propaganda baggage in eastern policy were Poland able to occupy the centre, and

not the fringes, or even the rearguard, (“naysayers”) of EU policy. For we must preferably present ourselves to our eastern neighbours both as an alluring example of democratic and pro-European transition for their societies, and as a specimen of successful, relatively painless systemic transformation which for their former elites does not end in prison or on a paltry pension. However, if on the one hand the present authorities dissociate themselves from the success of Polish transition and paint almost as gloomy a picture of European integration as Lukashenko’s propaganda, and the fate of their Polish comrades impels other postsoviet elites to demand whether it is in their best interest to follow this path, then instruments of influence are significantly weakened.

CONCLUSIONS:

Polish foreign policy has become one of many battlefields of internal political strife, a battlefield that is witnessing some of the most demagogic, populist and aggressive skirmishes. As a result, the prospects for a bipartisan consensus, similar to that present throughout the 1990s, are nonexistent, especially given no common objectives or preferred means of attaining them. This is already evident at the stage where particular parties articulate their priorities. Escalation of political turmoil as parliamentary and presidential terms draw to a close shall have deleterious consequences for Poland’s ability to shape and implement its foreign policy, significantly diminishing the present government’s proclivity to compromise both in its relations with the EU, and Germany in particular, and those with Russia.

Radical political projects, such as decomunization, deubekization (from UB, acronym for communist Poland’s internal intelligence service) and universal lustration, which challenge the very foundations of Poland’s transition and detract from its success, greatly reduce the attractiveness of Poland as leader and instigator of prodemocracy and pro-market reforms in the East.

Precarious political situation in Poland, and particularly the permanent pre-election campaign, negatively affect both substantive shape and presentation of Poland’s strategic and tactical foreign policy objectives, sometimes making it indiscernible, especially to foreign partners.

The assertion that particular EU member states possess their own interests ought not to lead one to repudiate the point of deeper European integration. Besides exceptional circumstances, criticized not just by Poland, member states’ national interests are in fact secured through the EU, and not against it. Whence the conclusion that Poland could follow suit if it achieved a level of efficacy in this domain, as measured by capability to cooperate and forge substantive and rational alliances, and not ideological or wishful ones. However, a Poland that is conceived as anti-European, uncooperative and culturally alien (in its forbearance towards xenophobia or anti-Semitism) lacks coalition building capacity on the European arena.

Perceiving Poland’s weakness, eastern political elites turn away from Warsaw and towards Brussels or other major capitals, and especially Berlin and Paris, for advice and protection. Within the European Union

this undermines our standing as a source of analyses and realistic political proposals which would inform the EU's common eastern policy.

Poland's diminished clout in the European Union, amounting to the present government's isolation, also reduces our attractiveness as an ally of the United States. Accepting elements of the Missile Defence System on Polish soil does, of course, bind Poland's security to America's ever more tightly, but does not extend its ability to nudge EU partners in the pro-Atlantic direction. And this is something Washington is especially keen on.

Postscript (August 23rd 2007)

The above analysis was written just before the latest crisis, with the definitive breakup of the coalition and announcement of an early general election.

The prospect of a brisk formation of a new government creates new possibilities also in foreign policy. On the condition that negative experiences of the current approach to formulating foreign policy objectives and selecting means of implementing them are analyzed.

Both president Lech Kaczyński and prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński jointly underscore that their "assertive" policy has meant that the EU can no longer ignore Polish interests. The best way to ensure that any essential, truly strategic Polish interests are secured is active and positive participation in a common European Union policy.

Antoni Podolski - MA in history from Warsaw University. 1991-1996 - in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. 1996-1999 Managing Editor in the External Services of Polish Radio. 1997-1999 - NATO Research Fellowship. 1999-2001 Deputy Minister of Interior and Administration, responsible for civil protection, crisis management, border protection, migration and transborder cooperation. Published numerous articles on national security, foreign policy, European integration and Eastern issues in Gazeta Wyborcza and other newspapers.

CENTRUM STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH CIR is an independent, non-governmental, 12-year old think-tank, dedicated to the study of international relations and those foreign policy issues, which are of crucial importance to Poland, Europe and transatlantic relations in both the long and the short-term.

CIR carries out its own research projects, prepares reports and analyses and participates in international projects in cooperation with similar institutions in several countries.

CIR has also founded the Foreign Policy Club – an influential forum for foreign policy analysis and debate, involving hundreds of leading politicians, diplomats, civil servants, local government officials, academics, students, journalists and representatives of other NGOs.

Our goals are:

- to create a Polish 'foreign policy community', involving politicians, civil servants, diplomats, scholars, business people and journalists, who by force of arguments influence the thinking about foreign affairs in Poland and abroad,

- to deepen the knowledge of international relations in Polish society,

- to influence the understanding of the goals of Polish foreign policy among the political and diplomatic elites in other countries as well as to make Polish leaders aware of foreign policy objectives of other countries.

Our sponsors: We acknowledge with gratitude that a number of projects implemented by CIR have been sponsored over the years by: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Poland, The Ford Foundation, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, The Robert Bosch Stiftung, The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland, The Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw.

The President of the CIR is Eugeniusz Smolar. The members of the board are Prof. Jerzy Kranz and Dr. Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Deputy Chairman of European Parliament. The founder and first president of the CIR was Janusz Reiter, now Ambassador of Poland in the USA, previously Ambassador in Germany.

Monitoring of Polish Foreign Policy reports are available on-line at the CIR website: www.csm.org.pl or via email (info@csm.org.pl) or fax. +48 22 646 52 58.