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Toward an Effective Minilateralism: The Polish Experience in the Visegrad Group after 2004

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Summary

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This analysis has three predominant goals. The first is to provide a retrospective overview of the political and economic changes in Poland after its accession to the European Union in 2004. The second is a prospective one, which aims to analyze the Polish perspective on the Visegrad cooperation as well as on European integration in the next years. The third is to present a foreign policy strategy for Poland until 2020.

The concept of regionalization is one of the backbones of this analysis. In the current context, the role of the Visegrad Group (V4) – as a subregional grouping within the EU – should be perceived as crucial. A smart V4 cooperation will not lead to further fragmentation of the EU. On the contrary, the process of regionalization will be transformed into an effective “minilateralism”. The Visegrad Group can be regarded as the best example of cooperation in the minilateral format, with Polish participation. It is an antidote to the newly voiced skepticism to EU integration. Its foundation was built on the ability of these four countries to propose projects and initiatives that go beyond the common denominator of purely regional interests, leading to a formation of a coalition with other countries (V4 Plus).

Contents

1. Retrospective Overview	4
1.1 Evolution of Polish Foreign Policy	4
1.2 How did Poland survive the Economic Crisis?	7
1.3 Political Controversies: The Lisbon Treaty – a Challenge or a Chance for Poland?	8
2. Perspectives	9
2.1 Toward V4 Minilateralism	9
2.2 EU Economic Integration	11
2.3 Energy Policy	13
2.4 Security Policy	14
2.5 Economic and Political Partnerships	17
Conclusions	21
Notes	24

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It all started with a simple but more than accurate question. Does Central Europe exist? It was asked by Timothy Garton Ash in his famous 1983 article for the *The New York Review of Books*.¹ In fact, he not only proved that this region has played a vital role in European history, but also foresaw its forthcoming revival; “In the last few years we have begun to talk again about Central Europe, and in the present tense. This new discussion originated not in Berlin or Vienna, but in Prague and Budapest. The man who more than anyone else has given it currency in the West is a Czech, Milan Kundera. Subsequently, the Germans and the Austrians have gingerly begun to rehabilitate, in their different ways, a concept that was once so much their own. The East German leader, Erich Honecker, talks of the danger of nuclear war in Mitteleuropa. The West German Social Democrat, Peter Glotz, says the Federal Republic is ‘a guarantee-power of the culture of Mitteleuropa’; whatever that means. And Kurt Waldheim’s Vienna recently hosted a symposium with the electrifying title *Heimat Mitteleuropa*. A backhanded tribute to the new actuality of the Central European idea comes even from the central organ of the Polish United Workers’ Party, *Trybuna Ludu*, which earlier this year published a splenetic attack on what it called “The Myth of Central Europe.””²

The re-emergence of the region as a whole caused some novel challenges. For some, it meant an intellectual revolution; various intellectuals commenced their search of a true “Homo Visegradicus” (as if Central

European societies had ever been homogenous). One of the definitions was coined by the Hungarian historian Róbert Kiss-Szemán: “Here is the Visegrad man, explosive but generous with his hospitality, cautious and careful but fresh and capable of winning, because he looks to the future in an ingenious and optimistic fashion.”³ For others, it triggered a mental and linguistic change. One recalls the lexical difficulty that former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had when delivering a speech in Warsaw in 1990. The sentence “I am delighted to be here in Eastern, I mean Central Europe” has gone down in history.⁴

Nowadays, there is no longer any need to ask the famous Central European existential question. Indeed, Central Europe – the emanation of which is the Visegrad Group (V4) – has finally secured its place on the European scene.

This analysis has two predominant goals. The first is to provide a retrospective overview of the political and economic changes in Poland after its accession to the European Union in 2004. The second is a prospective one: to analyze the Polish perspective on the Visegrad cooperation as well as the European integration in the forthcoming years.

The Polish perspective on the V4 is especially vital in a situation where one deals with two – to some extent contradictory – trends: growing regionalization in Europe and a political willingness to continue deepening EU integration.

The concept of regionalization is one of the backbones of this analysis. In general, subregional cooperation has been defined as “a process of regularized, significant political and economic interaction among a group of neighboring states. This interaction takes place between national governments, local authorities, private business, and civil society actors across a wide range of issues.”⁵ The rapid proliferation of groupings after the fall of the Berlin Wall – with the V4 among them – generated a need to understand the rationale, potential, and limitations of the “children of the post–Cold War era”.⁶ When one takes into consideration the link between EU integration and subregional cooperation, postwar experiences suggest four categories of groupings: pioneer, substitute, complement, and involuntary alternative.⁷

However, as Marko Papić emphasizes, “regionalization is currently most evident in security matters, but it is only a matter of time before it begins to manifest itself in political and economic matters as well. The security regionalization of Europe is not a good sign for the future of the eurozone. A monetary union cannot be grafted onto security disunion, especially if the solution to the eurozone crisis becomes more integration.”⁸ In this context, the role of the V4 – as a subregional grouping within the EU – should be perceived as crucial. A smart V4 cooperation will not lead to further fragmentation of the EU. On the contrary, the process of regionalization will be transformed into an effective “minilateralism”.

1. Retrospective Overview

1.1 Evolution of Polish Foreign Policy

The beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by an important change on the Polish political scene. In fact, 2003 was a turning point for the ruling party, of the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD). A variety of factors caused a considerable decline in support for the government. These included discontent with government spending cuts (especially for healthcare and education), the high unemployment rate, and a

series of corruption scandals (the so called “Rywin scandal” and “Starachowice scandal”). This led to the resignation of the prime minister, Leszek Miller, in May 2004. On May 2, 2004, Marek Belka was sworn in as the new head of the government. Just one day earlier, Poland and nine other countries became members of the European Union.

Parliamentary elections were held on September 25, 2005. The defeat of the governing parties came as no surprise (SLD lost 162 seats); the right-wing parties won a large parliamentary majority. The conservative Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) won 155 of 460 seats in Polish parliament, the Sejm (27 percent of the votes), and the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) won 133 (24 percent of the votes). After a failed attempt to create a government with a coalition of both parties, it was Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz from PiS who was sworn as prime minister. His minority cabinet was appointed on October 31, 2005.

The foreign policy of the new government was aimed at “making optimum use of the vast possibilities given by the European Union.”⁹ In 2006, the minister of foreign affairs, Stefan Meller, emphasized that “we must elaborate a studied, analysis-based strategy for our actions in the Union. This is facilitated by the period of reflection inside the Union, which should address not only institutional change but also restitution of the Europeans’ faith in the integration project. This period of reflection should be treated in Poland as an impulse for a broader debate on our EU strategy.”¹⁰ The role of regional groupings was also stressed in the annual address to the Sejm. Indeed, both bilateral and regional relations played a crucial role in the foreign policy concept of the Law and Justice party, as they “remain the prime foundation of international life.”¹¹ The V4 was considered to be a good platform for cooperation on European Union issues and East European policy. Moreover, “its effectiveness would be boosted if Baltic and Scandinavian partners joined in this cooperation on matters of common interest. You could say that the focus on the East-West axis, so characteristic of Polish foreign policy, should be increasingly supplemented with new accents and greater attention to the North-South axis.”¹²

Like the new government, Polish society also understood the need for deeper European integration. The number of Poles satisfied with EU membership was constantly rising. In 2006, 56 percent of Poles thought that membership was beneficial for the country. Only 7 percent had a negative assessment.¹³ This percentage of those who considered that EU membership was something good was higher than it was immediately after accession in 2004 (42 percent). Moreover, both government and the public shared the view that further enlargement of the European Union was needed. Only 16 percent of Poles opposed enlargement, while 72 percent supported it.¹⁴

On July 7, 2006, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz informed the political committee of the Law and Justice party of his resignation. He was succeeded by the leader of the party, Jarosław Kaczyński, on July 14, 2006. Anna Fotyga became the minister of foreign affairs in the new government. In the annual address in 2007, she underlined that membership in the European Union to date should be judged as undeniably positive. “Efficient and stable political institutions, dynamic economic growth, and a prudent European policy all enhance Poland’s authority and prestige. Thanks to our membership in the European Union we have gained many new political and economic opportunities, which we are using to reduce the gap separating us from the most advanced countries of the world.”¹⁵

According to the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 2007, Poles rarely believed that their voice counted in the EU (only 37 percent). At the same time, they were convinced that Poland’s voice did count (68 percent respectively).¹⁶ Moreover, despite the government’s reservation, the majority of Poles (69 percent) were in favor of a new European treaty. In fact, the support for the treaty in Poland was higher than the European average (66 percent).¹⁷

Simultaneously, in 2007, support for the government decreased considerably. In these circumstances, the Sejm voted its own dissolution on September 6, 2007. The Civic Platform party won the elections (41.5 percent; 209 seats) and its leader, Donald Tusk, was sworn in as the new prime minister on November 16, 2007.¹⁸ The new minis-

ter of foreign affairs, Radosław Sikorski, presented the foreign policy concept in May 2008. He highlighted the fact that national interests should not be perceived as contrary to the process of European integration – “the European Union is not a dangerous ‘them’; Europe and the EU, it is us.”¹⁹ In fact, this annual address laid the foundations for the revival of the “Piast concept.”²⁰ Both historically and currently, it is identified with the idea of westernization, attachment to Europe and its ideas, a close relationship with western countries, and pragmatism in international relations, while avoiding imprudent adventures in the east.

In 2008, support for Polish membership in the EU remained at a high level (65 percent). However, trust in the EU was decreasing. In 2007, the EU was trusted by 68 percent, by 2008 only by 55 percent.²¹ Moreover, 2008 marked the beginning of the economic crisis, which was also reflected in the polls. Consequently, its impact was seen in the attitude of Poles toward the European Monetary Union (EMU). Compared to the previous two years (a stable support of 63 percent), only 44 percent of Poles were in favor of the EMU.²²

Over the next few years, Poland’s position in the EU gradually strengthened. Two issues were of special importance: firstly, Polish involvement – especially of President Lech Kaczyński – in solving the Georgian crisis in August 2008; secondly, the Eastern Partnership (initially, a Polish-Swedish initiative), which was ultimately transformed into a joint European project. This allowed the government to draw optimistic conclusions about Poland’s role in the EU: “After twenty years of successful system transformation and integration with the Western structures, Poland takes its deserved place among the leading players of the European league.”²³

The next parliamentary elections in Poland were held on October 9, 2011, during the Polish presidency of the Council of the European Union (July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011). The Civic Platform party won once again (39 percent; 209 seats in the Sejm), and Donald Tusk became the first prime minister of Poland to be appointed for a second consecutive term since 1990. During its Council presidency, Poland promoted three slogans: Euro-

pean integration as a source of growth; a secure Europe; and a Europe benefiting from openness. Since then, Polish European policy has not been greatly modified. The mid-term foreign policy goals were for the first time presented in a special document released by the ministry of foreign affairs in March 2012. Its publication was linked to the adoption by Poland’s council of ministers of Polish foreign policy priorities, including Poland’s strategy for the European Union for the years 2012–16. This document had two primary aims: to present to the citizens the vision, priorities, and overall foreign policy tasks, as well as to coordinate the work of government agencies.

In the document, the Polish vision of the EU was described by three words: competitiveness, solidarity, and openness. “Pursuing deeper European integration, both economic and political, is

important. European institutions should also be strengthened so that they can effectively implement their tasks. Hopefully, the European Union will eventually become a political union. This vision should not be regarded as a super state that wipes out economic or identity interests of individual member states. From Poland’s point of view, the following elements are needed: an efficient and effective single market, including a single digital market and a single energy market; an effectively operating labor market, without barriers to the free movement of workers when it comes to recognizing their professional qualifications or the transfer of their pension rights; creating a European research space; an ambitious EU budget, with an adequate share for the Cohesion Policy and Common Agricultural Policy.”²⁴ Table 1 presents the tasks to be achieved by Poland in the EU by 2016.

Table 1: Tasks to be achieved by Poland in the EU by 2016

1. Gradual implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy
2. Progress on the path to membership in the euro zone in line with developments
3. Preserving the EU’s ambitious budget in the 2014–2020 financial perspective, with adequate share allocated to the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy; leveling direct payments for farmers
4. Completion of the EU’s single market and support for measures boosting the EU’s competitiveness, including developing a common trade policy, which adequately realizes the EU’s economic interests in the world
5. Creation of an effective common EU energy policy: development of a single energy market, improving security of supplies, increasing energy efficiency, shifting emphasis from “low-coal economy” to a “low-emission economy”, supporting the exploration of natural gas and crude oil from unconventional deposits
6. Actions aimed at the full implementation of 2008 decisions that the EU will reduce its emissions by 20 percent by the year 2020. Actions to formulate EU climate policy until 2030 should respect member states’ sovereign right to decide about the structure of their energy mix and will be adjusted to the level of development and the structure of member states’ economies.
7. Enhancing Poland’s say on the implementation of the Eastern policy and on the future of the European Neighbourhood Policy
8. Ensuring that the EU speaks with one voice at G20 meetings, in international organizations, as well as in relations with strategic partners
9. Active participation in the EU’s actions aimed at creating an effective system of migration control, guaranteeing security, and preventing terrorist threats.

Source: Polish Foreign Policy Priorities 2012–2016 (Warsaw, 2012) pp. 12–13. <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/d31571cf-d24f-4479-af09-c9a46cc85cf6:JCR>

In 2012, public opinion polls showed a decrease in confidence in the EU among Poles (from 55 percent in 2008 to 48 percent in 2012).²⁵ By 2012 Poles also indicated that they were more aware of the problems within the European Union, and that they wanted to see more individual benefits of EU membership. Some 68 percent of the Polish population expected mainly economic action from the EU, i.e. measures aimed at improving the standard of living, increasing wages and pensions, and creating new jobs.

It cannot be denied that there has been a change in the attitude of Poles toward the EU. Their confidence and enthusiasm has become less obvious. The reasons for this can be found both in the crisis that emerged in 2008 as well as in the growing expectations of the population. Poles see some clear benefits that membership in the EU offered to their country, but the benefits have become less visible on a personal level.

1.2 How did Poland survive the Economic Crisis?

One could say that Poland is the only country in the EU to have confidently withstood the recent widespread financial and economic crisis. Indeed, as the rest of Europe found itself in a deep recession – followed by an unstable recovery – Poland enjoyed continuous growth, ranging from 1.6 percent in 2009 to 4 percent in 2011 (with 2.1 percent in 2012). Moreover, since 2008, Poland has managed to increase its GDP by 19 percent, while the EU's GDP as a whole has struggled to return to pre-crisis levels.²⁶ As a result, the nation has improved its position within Europe, raising its GDP per capita from 54 percent of the EU average in 2007 to 67 percent in 2012.

On November 30, 2008, the Polish government presented its program: “Stability and Development Plan – Strengthening the Polish Economy in the Time of the World Financial Crisis.”²⁷ Its primary goal was to protect the Polish economy from the negative impact of the global downturn. The priority of the National Reforms Program for 2008–11 (Krajowy Program Reform na lata 2008–2011) was

to improve the quality of life of the citizens and thus create a favorable environment for the development of entrepreneurship and ensure effective management of public funds by institutions. The national reforms program was therefore to be carried out in three priority areas: active society, innovative economy, and efficient institutions.²⁸ The government's plan amounted to 22.5 billion euros (91 billion PLN). Its main activities included maintaining the stability of public finances, initiatives aimed at making the financial system stable (e.g. guarantees for deposits and credit schemes for small and medium enterprises), the acceleration of investments financed with EU structural funds, and setting up a financial stability committee.

Witold M. Orłowski has outlined six key elements of Polish success during the crisis. First, Poland has remained attractive to foreign investors and has enjoyed the competitive advantage as a production site. Second, Poland did not join the eurozone prior to the crisis and has therefore had a more flexible exchange rate regime. In fact, Poland was able to devalue the zloty, which helped maintain its exports and keep jobs in the country. Third, households and firms did not become overly indebted, which led to a high degree of financial stability. Fourth, Poland has a relatively large internal market that proved resilient to the economic slowdown. Fifth, the continuous inflow of EU structural funds allowed Poland to continue its infrastructure development projects (e.g. in relation to the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship). Six, the German market – key to the Polish economy – was not hurt drastically during the crisis and currently continues to grow.²⁹

Mitchell A. Orenstein added one more aspect to this: the education system. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* he emphasized that “since 1989, Poles have continued to invest heavily in their education, learning English, building new private universities, and participating in the Erasmus student-exchange program among European universities. Poland now has the second-highest rate of college enrollment in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.”³⁰

However, one should note that the economic crisis has significantly changed the political landscape within the European Union, causing a shift in the European integration process. Therefore, from a political perspective, the position of Poland on the international scene has been considerably challenged.

1.3 Political Controversies: The Lisbon Treaty – a Challenge or a Chance for Poland?

One of the biggest EU-related controversies at the national level was the protracted ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. In May 2007, the government stressed the necessity to reach a compromise. Anna Fotyga stressed that “a constitutional treaty, or, putting it differently, a basic treaty, is not essential for streamlining the decision-making process in the European Union. It is needed to put the legal system in order. Poland supports this. However, we do want the debate to be calm and prudent, without coercion, because we are talking about the most crucial elements. Here, in this country, there should be no rush to a quick adoption of the treaty, because it is important that the treaty should be good.”³¹

A compromise was finally reached in December 2007 in Lisbon and was based on the agreement that the principle of double majority – regulating the qualified majority voting scheme – will come into force gradually. The compromise thus introduced a transitional period beneficial to the smaller EU member states. In fact, the Lisbon Treaty stipulates that the voting arrangements of the Nice Treaty will apply until October 31, 2014. Moreover, until March 31, 2017, any member state can request that the Nice Treaty rules be used for a particular vote.

In Poland the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty was conducted in accordance with Article 90 Paragraph 2 of the Polish constitution.³² It therefore excluded the possibility of conducting a nationwide referendum on this issue – a solution supported primarily by the Law and Justice party.

In fact, this party raised numerous reservations about the treaty itself. According to the Law and Justice party, the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty could endanger the sovereignty of the nation states, as it was supposed to grant more powers to the EU and its institutions. Moreover, it would better serve the interests of the big EU states at the expense of the smaller ones. Finally, some expressed their concerns about the possible negative impact of the treaty on the cultural and social heritage of the member states.³³

On April 1, 2008, the Sejm passed a special law (384 deputies in favor; 56 against; 12 abstentions) allowing the president to ratify the treaty. On April 2, 2008, the Senate accepted the law voted by the Sejm (74 senators in favor; 17 against; 6 abstentions).

However, the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in a referendum in Ireland on June 12, 2008, stopped the ratification process in Poland. Lech Kaczyński was only ready to sign the treaty after the Irish position was subsequently changed in 2009. This stance caused tensions between the Polish president and the government. In 2009, Radosław Sikorski stated: “The crisis surrounding ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is the joint failure of Europe. We are certain that the treaty serves our interests by strengthening the political dimension of the European Union, reinforcing solidarity and deepening integration, in particular in foreign and security policy. We already know that it is safer to sail the stormy waves of global politics and economy not on a national boat, but on a European liner. The government believes that finalization of the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty lies in our interest since we need the European Union to thrive and to act in unison in external relations, to guard the principles of free competition, and draw power from the diversity of its member states in internal affairs.”³⁴

Finally, a second referendum in Ireland was held on October 2, 2009, with 67 percent of Irish voters in favor. This positive outcome allowed Lech Kaczyński to ratify the treaty on October 10, 2009.

2. Perspectives

2.1 Toward V4 Minilateralism

Europe as we knew it no longer exists. The whole continent is undergoing a process of dramatic change. Since 2008 “the crisis” has been the term most frequently repeated to describe the political, economic, and social condition of the “old continent”. Irrespective of whether the assessment is made on the level of the EU member states or in terms of the European Union as a whole, the message remains predominantly negative. European decision makers – including Polish ones – have believed that the crisis would evolve into a catalyst for a positive adjustment in the functioning of the EU as well as constituting a solid foundation for creating a new model for political, economic, and social development in Europe.³⁵ The crisis provided an opportunity to reduce the deficit of democratic legitimacy³⁶ and to allow greater involvement of European societies in the decision-making process. Such an approach could in turn facilitate further European integration, which could in the long term lead to a transformation of the EU into a European federation.³⁷ As Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels stated, “although a federal Europe must be open to all EU member states, forward movement toward it should not be blocked because some are not yet willing to go there, but nor should it be imposed from on high. The democratic public of each state will have to decide whether it is in its long-term interest to join the federation or opt out. It is an illusion to believe that a strong political union can be built on the weak allegiance that results from tweaking treaties. Its foundation must be a popular mandate.” Yet this approach remains fairly distant from the official standpoint of many EU member states and challenges the real vision of the integration presented by European societies.

In fact, the opportunity to use the crisis as an impetus to introduce overall changes in Europe has inexorably been moving toward an end. This situation is due to at least three reasons.

Firstly, there is an increase of anti-EU (and anti-elite) populism – the result of both the radicalization of the political scene in many EU countries as well as the weakness of European elites. The latter were extremely exposed to criticism as they were offering technocratic solutions to political problems.³⁸ “Populism is politics without policies; technocracy is policy without politics.”³⁹

Secondly, Europe has started to move away from its roots. Jakub Grygiel noted that “Europe’s mess and decline pose a policy problem that requires civilizational solutions. The fiscal crisis can be measured; the political inefficiency can be described; the tax rates can be adjusted upward or downward; policies can be tinkered with. But Europe’s underlying sense of a *raison d’être* can be restored only by a slow regeneration of its foundations based on history, religion, and culture.”⁴⁰ A similar argument was presented by Dominique Moïsi, who coined the term “culture of fear”, which has been dominating the old continent.⁴¹ It is characterized by a gradual move away from European roots, caused, *inter alia*, by a massive increase of the number of immigrants to Europe. A “culture of fear”, compounded by a lack of belief in one’s own abilities, has paralyzed the actions of Europeans in many areas, including in the sphere of external relations.

Thirdly, European societies are not ready to seek far-reaching objectives. This stance therefore decreases their interest in the outside world, even in the closest one: its neighborhood. Despite the accelerating rate of globalization – which allows the flow of ideas, people, capital, and technology on a global scale – what counts among European societies today is primarily the ability to solve current problems.

Poland – like many other EU member states – has not been immune to these European diseases. In order to overcome them, Poland’s rationale has been to seek inclusion in Western European affairs and establish its place as one of the top five member states of the EU. Roderick Parkes pointed out that “Warsaw’s understanding of power was not about increasing the country’s coercive influence, but about being dynamic, enjoying the exercise of power, and realizing its potential.”⁴² Yet the

growing number of member states has altered the reality of the decision-making process within the EU. In these circumstances, from a Polish perspective, two issues remain crucial to achieving long-term national goals: to determine a group of countries intent on pursuing concrete joint interests (exceeding a simple economic integration rationale); to define these joint interests and the scope of a potential cooperation.⁴³

The participation of Poland in deepening the integration process requires a continuous improvement of effectiveness in the state's functioning, i.e. economic efficiency, proven management skills, and a clear integration strategy. An alternative scenario – in which one does not prioritize its internal institutional and economic effectiveness – leads to self-marginalization.

Poland's position in the EU also derives from the quality of the integration itself. The further erosion of EU institutional capabilities could therefore constitute a serious challenge for Poland. In this situation, one should look for ways of consolidating and strengthening the European integration process. A potential answer might be hidden in minilateralism.

The essence of minilateralism lies in the ability to build lasting coalitions. The term was introduced into international literature in the 1980s.⁴⁴ At the beginning, it was mainly associated with the process of liberalization of international trade, including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization.⁴⁵ At that time, minilateralism did not have a clear positive connotation, as it was perceived as a potential threat to multilateralism – still being treated as a model solution in international politics. Indeed, one feared that minilateralism could lead to the weakening of international cooperation, as it could cause further divisions among countries and reduce the scale of liberalization of international trade.⁴⁶ Accordingly, minilateral solutions could be seen as a temptation to return to economic protectionism.

The concept of minilateralism won more positive renown in 2009, thanks to Moisés Naím. In his article “Minilateralism: The Magic Number to Get Real International Action”, he defined minilateralism as the “smallest possible number of countries

needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem.”⁴⁷ The number of countries will vary accordingly with the character of the problems and their significance for international relations. For Naím, to solve a global problem, this number should oscillate around twenty. In fact, the G20 could be perceived as the best exemplification of this rule: it includes countries from six continents and accounts for 85 percent of the world's economy. Naím offered other examples: “Same with climate change. There, too, the magic number is about 20: The world's 20 top polluters account for 75 percent of the planet's greenhouse gas emissions. As for HIV/AIDS, 19 countries account for nearly two thirds of the world's AIDS-related deaths.”⁴⁸

Minilateralism therefore offers a tangible solution to overcoming the crises of multilateralism, including the erosion of EU integration. In reality, the agreements concluded in a framework of a smaller grouping may constitute a starting point for further negotiations and an inclusion of new members in the process. However, the innate nature of minilateralism hides some potential challenges. In fact, if not sufficiently and properly coordinated, minilateral agreements might lead to a growing exclusiveness of the formats, and eventually to an uncontrolled version of a multi-speed Europe. Thus, minilateralism should in principle be inclusive and transparent.

Moreover, one should not confine minilateralism to solving global issues. The use of this approach is justified and also represents an added value in regional cooperation. In this case, the number of participating countries can be considerably smaller. However, a prerequisite for success of such an initiative is the inclusion of a regional leader in the establishment of such a coalition.

How does the V4 fit into this scheme? For Edward Lucas, it is an unnecessary structure. “Visegrad has a whiff of the Commonwealth – a haphazard collection of countries held together by memories of shared history, some strong common cultural ties in the elite, and a love of cricket. No British prime minister would dream of trying to wind up the Commonwealth, or of ignoring it. It has a use-

ful role in keeping diplomatic channels open that might otherwise be closed. It does good work on culture, development, and other soft issues. But it would be foolish to put it at the heart of British foreign policy. The other stuff is more important. The same goes for Visegrad.”⁴⁹

However, the effectiveness of this coalition to date has proved to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia that the presence of a major partner in the V4, i.e. Poland, has been vital to the promotion of their national interests. From a Polish perspective, it also appears that the Visegrad cooperation not only does not weaken the Polish position in relations with major EU partners but in fact strengthens it. One could also note that the V4 goal is to balance relations with its large neighbor, Germany. Germany is the principal focus of each of the V4’s foreign and economic policies, and the European Union provides a means of reframing the relationship on a more equal and stable basis.⁵⁰

The scale of the V4’s clout can be also represented by comparing the voting weights of the member states in the Council of the European Union. Indeed, the total number of votes held by the V4 countries (Poland 27, the Czech Republic 12, Hungary 12, Slovakia 7) equals that of Germany and France combined (Germany 29, France 29).

The Visegrad Group can therefore be regarded as the best example of cooperation in the minilateral format with Polish participation. It is an antidote to the newly voiced skepticism toward EU integration. Its foundation was built on the ability of these four countries to propose projects and initiatives that go beyond the common denominator of purely regional interests, leading to a formation of a coalition with other countries (V4 Plus). This allows the V4 to be progressively more effective in tackling the challenges linked to globalization.

The strengthening of the V4 consequently became one of the priorities of Polish foreign policy. In 2013, in his yearly address to the Sejm, Sikorski stated: “A strong Poland in the EU also means a stronger Visegrad Group. This is because Central Europe is no longer – as Milan Kundera once wrote in his famous essay – a land of tragedy. It is

more reminiscent of the dream, at last fulfilled, of the free and prosperous region described by the Hungarian writer György Konrád, or of the integrated region of Czechoslovakian Prime Minister Milan Hodža. The potential of our part of Europe is already quite significant – and getting ever stronger. In recent years, the growth rate of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary surpassed the EU average. In the mid-1990s, the GDP of the four Visegrad Group countries amounted to almost USD 270 billion. Today, it is almost four times larger. Together, we are Germany’s biggest trading partner – more important than, for example, France.”⁵¹

2.2 EU Economic Integration

The current sovereign debt crisis has caused a shift in the European integration process. In fact, 18 eurozone members have been pushed toward a deeper economic and – more importantly – political integration. This situation raises crucial questions for the remaining EU member states. It cannot be denied that a “deeper cooperation among a subgroup of member states is not a new phenomenon within the European Union, the euro zone crisis has given ‘differentiated integration’ a new and altered quality.”⁵² What 18 euro zone members have created could actually be called an integrated core of the EU. Its further development could have an effect on numerous other EU policies as the core intensifies its cooperation both within and outside the EU treaty framework.

Further integration of this sort within the eurozone thus remains a challenge for Poland (which is committed to adopting the euro). However, in the last three years, the adoption of the common currency has not been a highly discussed issue in Poland. The country still does not fulfill the criteria necessary to enter the eurozone. There is nevertheless agreement among the political elites that the decision about currency change should only be taken after the stabilization of the eurozone.⁵³ Yet, both the National Bank of Poland and the Polish government believe that setting a date for the adoption of the euro by Poland could strengthen its position in the EU integration process and simultaneously place it near its core. At the same

time, this standpoint could provoke social tensions, as public support for the euro is at a record low.⁵⁴ In fact, in March 2013, only 29 percent of Poles supported Poland's adhesion to the eurozone (compared to 44 percent in 2007), while 64 percent were against it (compared to 46 percent in 2007).⁵⁵ The government is therefore afraid that the domestic costs of compliance with the eurozone criteria will undermine its electoral support.

Agata Gostyńska and Nicolai von Ondarza stressed that “since 2011, differentiated forms of cooperation have become regular tools in eurozone reform, with eurozone members signing a declaration on the Euro Plus Pact (signed by at that time 17 euro members plus six non-eurozone members) and entering into two international agreements – the European Stability Mechanism (ESM, only for the euro members) and the Treaty on the Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (the so called fiscal compact, which was signed by at that time by 17 eurozone members plus eight non-eurozone members). Moreover, in October 2012 a group of 11 eurozone members agreed to initiate enhanced cooperation for a Financial Transactions Tax (FTT).”⁵⁶

In these circumstances, Poland had to act to dismiss a perspective of eventually finding itself on Europe's periphery. Poland has signed two pacts: the Euro Plus Pact and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination, and Governance in the EMU, both aimed at tightening economic coordination in Europe. In fact, Polish strategy regarding further euro area integration could be based on three pillars.

The first pillar is that Poland should counteract any initiatives leading toward a further fragmentation of the single market. The second is that it should argue that only the EU framework ensures a sufficient level of economic and political coherence. Consequently, all future projects concerning the integration of the euro area should be organized within the EU's institutional, legal, and political framework. And last but not least the third pillar is that EU integrity should constitute a basis for any discussions on how to increase the democratic legitimization of the integration project.

Furthermore, from a Polish perspective, the banking union is a potentially contentious topic and poses an important dilemma. On the one hand, any initiative aimed at reducing instability and fragmentation in the eurozone's financial sector is in the Polish interest. Such activities “spread the benefits of the eurozone's single monetary policy through greater market integration and create macro-prudential tools to prevent uncontrolled cross-border capital flows.”⁵⁷

On the other hand, Poland should not unconditionally support the strengthening of the European supervisory system. In fact, there is a legitimate fear that common supervision will have a negative impact on the safety and soundness of Poland's own banking sector, since its ownership is mainly controlled by the large banking groups from the eurozone. Therefore it cannot be excluded that the new supervisory system could back their interests at the expense of the subsidiaries in Central Europe.

So how should the banking union be designed? It is in Poland's interest to shape the discussion in such a way that it includes the core assumption of multilateralism: inclusiveness. Indeed, the banking union should provide a level playing field for both current and future members of the eurozone. As Paweł Tokarski rightly emphasized, the design should not only assure “participation in the decision-making process and access to information but also the bank recapitalization tools.”⁵⁸ A solid solution was offered in the Hübner Report, which suggested an extension of the EU balance-of-payments mechanism tasks for the recapitalization of non-eurozone banks.

The Polish banking sector – which is the largest in Central Europe – has survived the crisis without any significant problems. Indeed, both the Polish deposit guarantee system and financial supervisory commission are functioning better than in many eurozone states. This may, however, not be sufficient in the medium and long terms. Paweł Tokarski concluded that “one should remember that a national guarantee system is only as strong as the sovereign government behind it. Poland's debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to shrink due to the changes to

the private pension scheme, yet it is still above the levels of Spain and Ireland before the global financial meltdown.”⁵⁹

2.3 Energy Policy

Energy policy – including its security dimension – has also been an important aspect of Polish foreign policy. In fact, the Polish approach to energy policy is to a large degree unique on a European scale. Firstly, Poland is the largest coal producer in the European Union; close to 90 percent of electricity generated in the country comes from coal. Secondly, the considerable role of fossil fuels from internal sources in Poland’s energy mix has allowed a low level of dependence on energy imports. The Polish score in this regard is therefore 31 percent – well below the EU average of 53 percent.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the predominant position of coal in the Polish energy mix has been considered by some European political circles as contradictory to the EU’s ambitious strategy to combat climate change. For Poland, major challenges have already been posed by the binding targets for the reduction of CO₂ emissions and the increase in the share of renewables by 2020. Poland has stressed that the EU should respect member states’ sovereign right to decide about the structure of their energy mix, which should be adjusted to the level of development and the structure of member states’ economies. “So far, Poland has fulfilled all of the limits set by the Kyoto Protocol, but mainly as an outcome of the economy’s transformation after 1989 and the decrease in the role of heavy industry. However, there are claims that future EU climate policy, focused on a further decrease of carbon dioxide emissions, will be too great a burden on the Polish economy.”⁶¹

Yet Poland has already been on track to meet its binding targets. In 2009, the government adopted a new energy strategy that envisages a considerable change over the next two decades. The share of renewable energy sources (from 6 percent in 2009 to 19 percent in 2020),⁶² and of crude oil, natural gas, and nuclear energy will increase in the Polish energy mix, while the significance of coal should decrease. The Polish commitment to meet the tar-

gets is based on a fundamental assumption that any action aiming at a formulation of the EU climate policy until 2030 should respect member states’ sovereign right to decide about the structure of their energy mix as well as take into account the level of development and the structure of member states’ economies. In a report published in 2011 by a team of strategic advisors to the prime minister, the potential cost of the necessary modernization of the Polish energy sector by 2030 amounts to 100 billion euros.⁶³ Moreover, in an analysis published by the National Bank of Poland in 2012, this cost – within the same timeframe – was estimated at a level of 200 billion euros.⁶⁴

One of the most important aspects of this transition will be linked to natural gas. As the geopolitics and technology of natural gas continue to change rapidly – with such developments as shale gas production and liquefied natural gas (LNG) transport – the EU would do well to consider the strategic value of supply diversification. Crises in 2006 and 2009, both the result of intentional supply decreases from Russia, highlight the risks of overdependence on any one source for this vital commodity. But overreliance on Russia is not the only possible source of distress for the European market; from environmental concerns to instability in other potential supplier nations, every natural gas supply comes with its own set of challenges and risks. For this reason, an “all sources” strategy for natural gas production – one that spreads the risk and minimizes the impact of a reduction in any one source of supply – should typify the European approach in the years to come.

To illustrate why, one need look no further than the aforementioned 2006 and 2009 crises. In both cases, Russian disagreements with Ukraine resulted in a decrease of supply from the former to the latter, a move that by extension decreased supplies to large swathes of Europe, since the massive Druzhba pipeline crosses Ukraine to reach the European destinations. In 2006, this supply decrease directly affected Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia in mid winter. In 2009, affected countries were Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece,

Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Turkey. Clearly, such large-scale impact from the reduction of a single source is unacceptable. More gas sources are crucial to European energy security.⁶⁵

One reason this is so challenging is the very scope of Russia's share of the world's natural gas reserves. The country owns the largest natural gas reserves in the world: more than 27 percent of the global total. Gazprom, a company in which Russia holds a majority stake, is the key exporter and one of the largest conventional natural gas companies in the world. Gazprom alone supplies one quarter of Europe's conventional natural gas and more than 70 percent of the conventional natural gas for the countries of the former Soviet Union. In some European countries, all gas supplies are imported solely from Russia. Even as the Russian share of European gas imports is predicted to level off (with Norway and some North African countries providing diminishing amounts, and countries from the Caucasus and Middle East providing an increasing share), the sheer volume of Russia's gas supply will make it a formidable factor for the foreseeable future.

Other sources of gas must be explored and exploited, and two major developments have already started to revolutionize the European gas market. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments to Europe, especially from the United States, have already impacted Russia's market share, and terminals to receive LNG have been constructed in the UK, Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Greece, and Norway. Poland has started to build its own LNG terminal in Świnoujście, the completion of which is foreseen for 2014–15.

Even more crucial is the advent of shale gas, which has the potential to change radically the energy security paradigm for Europe. In the EU, Poland has led the way as the country with one of the largest shale deposits and with the greatest commitment to making unconventional gas commercially viable. As the pioneer in European commercialization of shale gas, Poland is trying to learn and implement the most effective practices used in the USA and Canada.⁶⁶ However, as Andrew Michta rightly emphasized, “moving from [shale gas]

exploration to production involves a delicate balancing act that must factor in not only how to price Polish production permits but also how to design a tax regime that satisfies the government and guarantees a healthy investment environment. That balancing act must also factor in the added costs of the infrastructure improvements needed to move heavy equipment into and gas out of the country. In short, the key challenge for Polish legislators will be to ensure that unconventional gas will be not just a small addition to Poland's energy mix but a game-changer that redefines how Europe develops and prices energy.”⁶⁷

Yet Polish shale gas, if produced in sufficient quantities under workable regulatory, tax, and environmental regimes, could end Europe's dependence on Russia and, in the process, revolutionize how energy is produced, priced, and delivered across Europe. This would fundamentally change the nature of Europe's relations with Russia, rearranging Europe's security equation as well as its energy markets.

2.4 Security Policy

The days when security policy was the most important domain of any state's foreign policy are gone. The first years of the twenty-first century have confirmed that European states strive to economize their international activity. In this way, they build their positions based on strengthening economic and social aspects. Furthermore, with the intensification of the economic crisis, the European defense expenditures have been considerably reduced. In fact, this trend negatively affects the condition of security policy in Europe. As a result of the search for savings – often accidental and without very much needed consultation with allies and partners – combined with a growing belief by European societies about the absence of threats on the old continent, the debate about the future of European security policy has become mundane. Indeed, talks on European security policy are no longer trendy. Many European politicians admit that it is pointless to highlight security aspects in their election programs. In fact, Europeans are simply not interested in security policy. Some would argue that Walter Hallstein was right when he

stated: “Do not waste time talking about defense. In the first place we do not understand it. In the second place, we will all disagree.”⁶⁸

However, it is wrong to believe that the significance of security policy was marginalized. For years, there have been significant changes in the European security environment. Factors include the growing assertiveness of Russia, which was clearly reflected in the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014; the expeditionary character of NATO’s out-of-area involvement (in Afghanistan and Libya); revolutions and unrest in North Africa and the Middle East; political and financial challenges facing the United States; the economic expansion and political ambitions of China, including its growing involvement in the Asia-Pacific region; and America’s strategic response to Chinese regional expansion, which resulted in an uncertain level of U.S. presence in Europe. Furthermore, while Europe spends less and less on defense, the world treats it as a priority; in the new arms race, Europe is at the very end of the line. All these processes carry one risk, namely that the importance of the old continent will decrease and its security and defense policy will continue to depreciate.⁶⁹

Insufficient involvement of the European states in the debate about the condition of its security, including the challenges, threats, and opportunities that European defense policy faces, should be interpreted as a syndrome of self-depreciation. In Poland’s opinion, any deepening of this trend will lead to a further weakening of European security and – in a worst-case scenario – it will give rise to national self-centeredness.

Poland’s attachment to the issue of the security policy naturally derives from its historical experience, geographical location, and its own limited potential. Warsaw cannot afford to refrain from being involved in building stronger and more effective European security. Despite the economic crisis, Poland actively co-leads the debate about a new vision of the “Europe of Defence” and, more importantly, puts its political postulates into practice.

Poland believes that investment in the national defense potential – its modernization and development – is nothing other than sharing the responsibility for the security of the transatlantic area and preparing to act beyond it in the future should the need arise. Ultimately, NATO and the EU will be effective only if their member states are strong and efficient. Therefore, despite the economic crisis, Poland has made the modernization of its armed forces a top priority.

Since August 2012, when President Bronisław Komorowski announced the Polish defense modernization initiative, the air and missile defense system has been in the limelight, becoming the buzzword on both sides of the Atlantic. The scope of the modernization effort is, however, far more complex, and consists of four distinct elements.

First, the Polish army will be considerably strengthened. Armored forces, even if perceived by some European states as a hulking, overpriced holdover from a bygone era, play a crucial role in Poland’s defense strategy. This will render the Polish army one of the heaviest in both Central and Western Europe.

Second, Poland has accelerated its naval force modernization program, which foresees a total spending of 2.5 billion euros (10 billion PLN) by 2030. Without this major investment, the Polish navy would soon lose its operational capacity, as 17 of its 41 combat vessels are scheduled to be withdrawn from service by 2022.

Third, the most modern component of the Polish armed forces – the air force – will also be further enhanced by introducing a new advanced jet trainer system of eight aircraft by 2017. In addition, the helicopter fleet, which is to be used by different sections of the armed forces, will be fully modernized.

Fourth, the Polish defense industry, which could play the role of a linchpin in the modernization effort, needs clear strategic guidance. In 2013, the ministry of economy, the ministry of treasury, and the ministry of national defense set out a plan for the consolidation of the industry to help Polish

companies deal with the challenges of an evolving European market. The ongoing debate on strengthening Europe's defense sector has shown that there is a temptation among some EU member states, as well as the European Commission, to equate consolidation with competitiveness. From their perspective, the best way to boost the economic development of European defense industries is to further consolidate second-tier and third-tier firms (i.e. the small and medium enterprises), rapidly phase out offsets, and limit the importance of Article 346 of the Lisbon Treaty. Unfortunately, these false assumptions could lead to an even more unbalanced development of Europe's defense industries. This approach would primarily benefit European industrial champions – the first-tier companies from just six member states: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. They dominate the market by virtue of their size, technological sophistication, high level of investment in research and development, and the political support they receive. The small and medium enterprises that prevail in other member states – including Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia – will thus have a limited chance of successfully competing in a market driven solely by economic forces. Poland cannot stop the consolidation process on the European level, so its only viable solution is to channel it in a way that best serves both Polish and regional interests. Ideally, Poland should counteract the possibility of an eventual increase of such discrepancies by supporting an equal regional distribution of the funds dedicated to increasing competitiveness in the sector, while securing the necessary political, economic, and technological backing for small and medium enterprises. Poland should also make a virtue of necessity and ultimately seek to change its indigent defense industry landscape.⁷⁰

Moreover, Poland's security modernization program cannot be "art for art's sake". Managing the process in a new strategic context will be far from easy, but doing it effectively is essential. The best way to ensure success is getting the security and defense strategy right. The new-old rationale was laid out by foreign minister Sikorski in his annual address in March 2013: "History teaches us that Poland must look to itself to look after its security

– also in the military sense – and that this security largely depends on our own defense potential. As Jan Nowak-Jeziorański once wrote, 'you must not base your security on your allies alone, even the most formidable ones, if you cannot use your own forces to enable these allies to come to your help. A feeling of security cannot become a myth that leads to mental disarmament and gives rise to laziness of military thought.'⁷¹

If one could name one unique novel element in the Polish strategy, it would be the recurrence of deterrence. Once the backbone of many national security strategies, with time it has almost vanished from the vocabulary of strategic debate. Yet from a Polish perspective this concept has not become obsolete, as it provides a viable solution to the strategic problems laid down by Sikorski in his 2013 address. Indeed, deterrence is a strategy for addressing two competing goals: countering a potential enemy or threat, and avoiding war.

On June 3, 2013, Donald Tusk and Tomasz Siemoniak, the minister of national defense announced the initiation of a project called "Polish Fangs". Its goal is to develop the essential military capabilities necessary to implement a deterrence strategy. In practice, "Polish Fangs" will be comprised of cruise missiles for both the F-16 fleet and for conventional submarines, combat drones, and special operations forces, as well as the Polish Navy Coastal Defense Missile Battalion system. Moreover, it is likely that this project will be supplemented by both defensive and offensive cyber weapons, as cyber capabilities will become a priority in the next strategic planning cycle.

Furthermore for Poland, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is an ambitious, gradually broadening field of activity. Its goal is to provide security for its member states and more stability in their neighborhood. A closer V4 involvement in its development serves both purposes. The V4 strategy for a strong CSDP – referring to the principles of minilateralism – should therefore be based on ten objectives:

- 1) Enhancing the planning capabilities and the functioning of the EU structures as well as crisis management mechanisms (e.g. strengthening the EU Operations Centre)
- 2) Enhancing civil-military cooperation in the CSDP framework (comprehensive approach)
- 3) Strengthening the EU-NATO operational cooperation
- 4) Enhancing cooperation with EU partners within the CSDP framework, especially with the Eastern Partnership countries
- 5) Enhancing flexibility and usability of the battle groups (i.e. increasing burden sharing of their deployment and redeployment; enhancing the concept of the permanent framework nations on the operational stand-by every three years; including civilian components)
- 6) Developing the joint projects identified by the European Defence Agency (remotely piloted aircraft systems, air-to-air refueling, cyber defense)
- 7) Harmonizing EU and NATO actions (“pooling and sharing” as well as “smart defense” initiatives)
- 8) Fostering a balanced and sustainable development of the European defense industries, relying on equal and regional distribution of financial instruments that support competitiveness in defense R&T and foster the dual use
- 9) Supporting the access of small and medium enterprises to the European defense market
- 10) Enhancing regional specialization by the creation of defense centers of excellence

Finally, the development of the security and defense policy of the EU depends on clear and up-to-date strategic guidance. The currently binding

strategy suffers political sclerosis and no longer reflects the security environment. It is therefore high time to revitalize l’esprit communautaire and to adjust the EU to the “new normal” by initiating a review process and amendment of the 2003 European Security Strategy. Its backbone must be based not only on common values but also on common interests. A new strategic EU document should focus on identifying detailed tasks to be carried out by EU institutions and define prerogatives that should be developed by means of political process. Moreover, more concrete mechanisms for its implementation, which will institutionalize the EU strategic debate in the future, should be established. A provision for a regular update of subsequent EU security strategies is another key element that should be ensured. In this review process, it is deemed advisable to use positive experiences from the work on developing the latest NATO Strategic Concept, e.g. by calling into being a Wise Men Group.

2.5 Economic and Political Partnerships

According to the report released in December 2013 by the Centre for Economics and Business Research, Poland – currently the 23rd economy in the world – will break into the top 20 world economies by 2023.⁷² This will not materialize, however, without three factors contributing to economic development: the competitiveness of the economy, trade partnerships, and foreign direct investment (FDI).

Poland currently finds itself in a group of countries transitioning from the efficiency-driven state of development into the innovation-driven stage.⁷³ This grouping includes countries like Brazil, Estonia, Hungary, Mexico, Slovakia, and Turkey.⁷⁴ In practice, the innovation-driven stage means that companies must be ready to compete by producing new and different goods using the most sophisticated production processes – and by innovating new ones.

Table 2: The Global Competitiveness Index, EU Member States in 2013–14

Country	Rank	Score
Austria	16	5.15
Belgium	17	5.13
Bulgaria	57	4.31
Croatia	75	4.13
Cyprus	58	4.3
Czech Republic	46	4.43
Denmark	15	5.18
Estonia	32	4.65
Finland	3	5.54
France	23	5.05
Germany	4	5.51
Greece	91	3.93
Hungary	63	4.25
Ireland	28	4.92
Italy	49	4.41
Latvia	52	4.4
Lithuania	48	4.41
Luxembourg	22	5.09
Malta	41	4.5
The Netherlands	8	5.42
Poland	42	4.46
Portugal	51	4.4
Romania	76	4.13
Slovakia	78	4.1
Slovenia	62	4.25
Spain	35	4.57
Sweden	6	5.48
United Kingdom	10	5.37

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report 2013–2014 (World Economic Forum, Geneva, 2013)

Despite being in the efficiency-driven stage, in 2013 Poland became the most competitive economy within the V4. As noted by the World Economic Forum, Poland's strengths include: its large market size, high educational standards (in particular its enrollment rates), and a well-developed financial sector.⁷⁵ However, as underlined in the report, "as Poland transitions to the innovation-driven stage of development, it will have to focus more strongly on developing capacities in R&D and business sophistication. Stronger R&D orientation of companies,

Table 3: The Foreign Trade Turnover of Poland with other EU Member States in 2012 (in percent)

Country	Imports	Exports
Austria	3.0	2.5
Belgium	3.9	2.7
Bulgaria	0.4	0.5
Cyprus	0.2	0.2
Czech Republic	6.4	8.3
Denmark	2.0	2.2
Estonia	0.1	0.8
Finland	1.5	1.0
France	6.8	7.7
Germany	37.1	33.1
Greece	0.3	0.5
Hungary	2.8	3.2
Ireland	1.0	0.4
Italy	9.1	6.4
Latvia	0.3	0.9
Lithuania	1.0	2.1
Luxembourg	0.3	0.2
Malta	0.0	0.0
The Netherlands	6.8	5.9
Portugal	0.5	0.4
Romania	1.1	2.0
Slovakia	3.6	3.4
Slovenia	0.6	0.4
Spain	3.6	2.6
Sweden	3.3	3.5
United Kingdom	4.2	8.9

Source: Yearbook of foreign trade. Statistics of Poland (Central Statistical Office, Warsaw, 2013)

easier access to venture capital, and intensified collaboration between universities and the private sector would help the country to move toward a more future-oriented development path."⁷⁶

Owing to a more competitive economy, Poland was able to strengthen two other pillars of economic development: its foreign trade and the inflow of FDI.

After a growth in Polish exports of 12.1 percent recorded in 2011, in 2012 exports slowed down to 4.6 percent (value: 146.6 billion euros).⁷⁷ As for imports, they increased by 12.2 percent in 2011,

Table 4: Foreign Direct Investment in Poland from the EU Member States in 2012 (in million euros)

Country	Total FDI inflows
Austria	648
Belgium	319.9
Bulgaria	-32.7
Cyprus	514.3
Czech Republic	41.8
Denmark	83.8
Estonia	18.3
Finland	134
France	3132.3
Germany	3494.1
Greece	-354.5
Hungary	183.4
Ireland	192.2
Italy	299.6
Latvia	7.1
Lithuania	9.6
Luxembourg	-3222.4
Malta	-136.1
The Netherlands	-1708
Portugal	128.9
Romania	1.4
Slovakia	69.2
Slovenia	-25
Spain	344.3
Sweden	-902.3
United Kingdom	843.4

Source: Authors' research based on the National Bank of Poland data.

while by only 1.1 percent (value: 151.9 billion euros) in 2012. The Polish trade deficit in 2012 amounted to 5.3 billion euros and, compared to the level noted in 2011, was reduced by over 4.7 billion euros.⁷⁸

In 2012, the share of European countries in Polish exports decreased to 88.8 percent (compared to 89.6 percent in 2011 and 91.1 percent in 2008).⁷⁹ Although the decline has not been significant, the trend has continued, constituting proof that Polish exporters are searching for new non-European outlets and are able to adjust in a flexible manner to the current situations in their trade partners' markets.

Moreover, Polish exports to V4 countries in 2012 brought mixed results. The Czech Republic and Slovakia found that Polish exports grew faster than in general (Slovakia – 11 percent, to 3.7 billion euros; Czech Republic – 6.2 percent, to 9.1 billion euros), while Hungary found itself with a decline in Polish exports (of 0.9 percent, to 3.5 billion euros).⁸⁰

As shown in Tables 3 and 4 – apart from the Visegrad Group – Germany and France have played an important role in the Polish economy. This importance extends to foreign policy as well. Together with Poland, these two countries form the Weimar Triangle. The format was initiated by the then ministers of foreign affairs of Poland (Krzysztof Skubiszewski), France (Roland Dumas), and Germany (Hans-Dietrich Genscher) in Weimar on August 28, 1991. The initially informal meetings have with time turned into regular tripartite consultations. In the initial stage, they were aimed at tightening collaboration among the three countries and overcoming the division of Europe, as well as introducing the young democracies of Central Europe, in particular Poland, to the community of European states. Once Poland joined NATO and the EU, the goal was achieved, and the objectives of the Weimar collaboration had to be redefined. Currently, the Weimar Triangle serves as a forum for consultations and developing common positions on key European policy issues. In fact, the Weimar Triangle has the potential to become one of the most influential political groupings within the EU. In addition to involving three key countries, it encompasses two essential European bilateralisms: Franco-German and Polish-German relations.⁸¹

For Poland, France, and Germany it was natural that at a time of serious budgetary restrictions and painful austerity measures, Europe had to reassess its political ambitions and ratchet up its efforts to reverse negative trends in its global influence. With this in mind, Poland has increasingly sought to revitalize close coordination within the Weimar format. That initiative took on greater urgency in 2010, when Poland was preparing to take over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union in July 2011. Since then, the Weimar

Triangle has been perceived as a vanguard in many fields but particularly in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The road map for progress has been established in the so-called “Weimar letter” sent to the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, in December 2010. Indeed, the Weimar Triangle’s ministers of defense and foreign affairs states expressed impatience with the EU’s perceived dithering. The letter called for bold decisions in order to make CSDP more cost-effective and efficient, and it made clear that in the years to come, CSDP will remain the flagship of the trilateral cooperation. The road map included a necessary reform of the battle group concept, more efficient civil-military crisis management, a strengthening of cooperation between the EU and NATO – especially between the European Defence Agency and NATO’s Allied Command Transformation – as well as the pooling and sharing of European defense capabilities.

In fact, what helped the Weimar Triangle to attract the attention of the other member states – especially Italy and Spain (the so-called Weimar Triangle Plus format) – to its cooperation, were the group’s effectiveness and visibility as well as its ability to cooperate with other regional formats (e.g. the V4).⁸² The Weimar Triangle therefore proved to be ready to operate according to the principles of minilateralism. Under these circumstances, the Weimar Triangle could play three vital roles in the EU. Kai-Olaf Lang and Daniela Schwarzer rightly suggested the following functions: serving as a clearinghouse (contributing to developing compromises), providing impetus (specifically placing issues on the EU’s political agenda), and providing political guidance (developing long term strategies).⁸³

However, owing to its rising potential, Poland has also sought to operate beyond the EU both politically and economically. In 2012, North America represented 2.5 percent in Polish exports and 2.8 percent in imports. The exports from Poland reached the level of 3.5 billion euros – 8.9 percent higher than in 2011. Moreover, imports showed a growth of 18.3 percent (value: 4.4 billion euros). As a result, the deficit in trade with North America deepened by 0.4 billion euros, to over 0.8 billion euros.⁸⁴

In fact, it comes as no surprise that the United States has always occupied a special place in Polish foreign policy, especially regarding its security aspects. From a Polish perspective, Europe needs first and foremost to better understand its current role in US foreign and security policy. Long before the economic crisis of 2008, U.S. policymakers had begun to view Europe in general, and Central Europe in particular, as a “checked box.” As Wess Mitchell emphasizes, “under the Obama Administration, the de facto retrenchment of US power from Europe has accelerated. This is partly due to the combined effect of austerity, strategic challenges in Asia, and the steady hollowing-out of NATO as a military alliance.”⁸⁵ European countries should therefore rebuild their current relationships with the US by taking into consideration the new role of the U.S. on the old continent. For Poland, this new approach means a policy of pursuing both common values (democracy promotion, mutual defense clause) as well as common interests (interoperability of the respective armed forces, missile defense, shale gas exploration). In fact, two fields of collaboration in the security realm seem to be the most promising.

The first field is military cooperation. In December 2010, Presidents Barack Obama and Bronisław Komorowski agreed to pursue closer military-to-military cooperation between the US and Poland by creating a platform for joint work by the two air forces. Two years later, the first US Air Force detachment at the Łask air base in Poland became operational. In fact, the aviation detachment offers an opportunity to modify the security narrative in Central Europe. It has been a small permanent presence on the ground with more substantial rotational presence (uniformed personnel and civilian contractors flying F-16s and C-130s). Beginning in 2013, the enhanced US presence has accelerated the training process and has increased interoperability between the two air forces.

The second field is, Poland’s role in the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) missile defense architecture. EPAA phase one gained its first operational elements in 2011 with the start of the sustained deployment of an Aegis BMD-capable multi-role ship to the Mediterranean and

the deployment of an AN/TPY-2 radar in Turkey. Moreover, in 2011, Spain agreed to host four US Aegis-capable ships at the existing naval facility at Rota. For the second phase, the US reached an agreement with Romania that was ratified in December 2011 to host a US land-based SM-3 interceptor site beginning in the 2015 timeframe. The third phase is centered on the first of the three host nations to ratify the hosting agreement: Poland. This agreement places a land-based interceptor site in Redzikowo and includes the SM-3 Block IIA interceptors. As underlined by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Frank A. Rose during his speech at the National Defense University in Warsaw on April 18, 2013, “this EPAA phase three site is on schedule and on budget for deployment in the 2018 timeframe. The interceptor site here in Poland will be key to the EPAA. Not only will it protect Poland itself, but when combined with the rest of the EPAA assets, phase three will be able to protect all of NATO Europe against ballistic missile threats from the Middle East.”⁸⁶

Finally, Asia has become a crucial market for Polish goods with a share of 6.2 percent in Polish exports in 2012. Indeed, Polish exports to Asia increased 2.5 times faster than in general, i.e. by 12.2 percent (value: 8.9 billion euros). Despite the dynamic growth in exports, however, Poland still encountered a considerable deficit in trade with Asia (value: 19 billion euros).⁸⁷

Poland, together with other V4 countries, tried to establish closer relations with two major Asian countries: China and Japan.

In 2012, Sikorski delivered a speech during a roundtable of V4 and Chinese think tanks in which he emphasized the political and economic attractiveness of the grouping. “It may not be widely known, but the total value of the Visegrad Group GDP is approximately 1 trillion US dollars. In terms of purchasing power parity, the V4 as a single entity, is fifteenth in the world, ahead of the economies of Indonesia, Turkey, and Australia.”⁸⁸

In 2013, the prime ministers of the V4 countries and Japan adopted a joint statement, “Partnership based on common values for the twenty-first century,” which set the benchmarks for the strategic cooperation in the areas of the Eastern Partnership, official development assistance, security policy (the United Nations, the EU, NATO, the OSCE), economy, science, technology, and innovation, as well as culture and education.⁸⁹

Conclusions

In his 1985 statement before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State George P. Shultz rightly emphasized that “soon after the dawn of the nuclear age, Albert Einstein observed that everything had changed except our ways of thinking. Even so dramatic a development as the nuclear revolution took a long time to be fully understood; how much longer has it usually taken to understand the implications of more subtle, intangible historical changes taking place around us. [...] Change is constant. [...] Power continues to be dispersed and the structure of political relations more complex, even as the interdependence of states increases. Einstein’s observation takes on new relevance: our ways of thinking must adapt to new realities; we must grasp the new trends and understand their implications.”⁹⁰

An effective state needs an intelligent foreign policy that is based on lessons learned and clear strategic principles. Table 5 represents a foreign policy strategy for Poland until 2020. Based on the following ten principles, Polish decision makers can strengthen the position of Poland on both the European and global levels.

Poland should engage in a further rise of effective unilateralism – especially within the V4, the Weimar Triangle, and the Baltic Rim – which could be based on four rules of thumb.

1. **Visibility:** This goal could be reached by announcing common positions on the eve of major events in international politics (e.g. NATO summits, European Council summits, international crises).

2. **Specialization:** An accurate formulation of areas in which the minilateral formats can consciously participate could generate an added value, facilitating the harmonization of the activities of the groupings. It seems that security policy, for example, could become a specialty of the V4, the Weimar Triangle, and the Baltic Rim in the future.
3. **Openness to the world:** The minilateral formats with Polish participation should sustain the pace of ongoing dialogue with allies and partners as it manages to promote the Polish vision in foreign affairs and regional sensitivity to such delicate issues as economic integration, energy policy, and security policy. Openness to the world also means an active and timely engagement – best encapsulated by the slogan: “propose, act, propose, act.”⁹¹
4. **A solid attachment to the principles of functionalism:**⁹² The minilateral formats should act to the benefit of wider interest, especially in the development of institutions and practices that contribute to international peace. Such an activity should not in fact be perceived as illegitimate altruism but as an expression of awareness of the medium-sized countries and the fact that their main interest lies in an arranged and predictable international environment.

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Table 5: Foreign Policy Strategy for Poland until 2020

1. Realism	The position of Poland on the international scene should be based on actual links and connections with allies and other strategic partners. International status and formal aspects play a secondary role.
2. Military Potential	Formal security guarantees (e.g. treaties) cannot be treated as an ultimate way of assuring independence. Consequently, there is a necessity to invest in one's own military potential, including new domains (e.g. cyberspace).
3. Consolidation	An ongoing erosion of European and transatlantic institutional structures could weaken the Polish position in the world. Therefore, Poland should aim at consolidating both the EU and NATO.
4. Neighborhood	Relations with neighbors have always defined the foreign policy potential of Poland. As a result, there is a need to look for a new perspective in bilateral relations with the two most influential ones: Germany and Russia.
5. Values and Interest	Relations with allies and partners should be based on both values (which are constant) and interests (which are variable). Only by obtaining the right balance between these aspects can Poland become a full-fledged foreign policy actor.
6. Net-centricity	In a globalized world, a capability to operate in a dense network of bilateral and multilateral connections is a must. Poland should reject any idea of being closely linked with only one international actor. In fact, multiple international anchors are necessary (with the EU as the most important one).
7. Internal Reforms	A distinction between foreign and domestic policy has over the last two decades become blurred. Currently, foreign policy is a direct extension of internal integrity.
8. Regionalization	The ongoing process of regionalization in Europe offers both opportunities and challenges. Poland's role is to take advantage of the former. This aim could be primarily obtained within the formats of the Visegrad Group (and the Visegrad Plus), the Weimar Triangle (and the Weimar Triangle Plus), and the Baltic Rim.
9. Modesty	In international politics, each should punch according to his weight. Modest foreign policy, however, should not be passive or lack ambition.
10. Openmindedness	Poland cannot concentrate its activities only on itself. Polish foreign policy should therefore be based on the formula <i>do ut des</i> ("I give that you might give").

Source: Authors' research based on P. Grudziński, Państwo inteligentne. Polska w poszukiwaniu międzynarodowej roli (Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń, 2008) pp. 152–155.

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