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Polish European policy after the 2019 parliamentary elections

An analysis of the specificity of the European policy of the III Republic of Poland requires dealing with definitions first. This policy is multidimensional: it refers both to actions realised by the Polish state in the dimension of foreign policy, as well as in the internal aspect (*inter alia* coordination of economic, social and other policies). For the needs of this analysis, **European policy shall be understood as all actions undertaken in the foreign dimension by competent state authorities within the framework of functioning in the institutional system of the European Union. The core of this process is the striving at common formulation of the assumptions of EU policies.**

The analysis of the specificity of Polish European policy refers in fact to foreign policy of the III Republic of Poland implemented in the European context. **Foreign policy of a state constitutes an instrument of its influence and functioning in the international environment. The process of formulating its goals, assumptions and directions remains in a relationship with the domestic dimension. The factors which precondition the specificity of foreign policy can be divided into objective and subjective.**¹

The objective factors refer to such categories as: geographical location of a state, its economic potential, position in the international system, international situation and linkages with other participants of international relations (*inter alia* international organizations). Those

¹ Cf. T. Łoś-Nowak, *Polityka zagraniczna*, in: A. Antoszewski, R. Herbut (ed.), *Leksykon politologii*, Wrocław 2004, pp. 330-332.

precondition provide both opportunities for the realization of foreign policy of a state, but also frequently may determine its limitations.

In the case of the European policy of the III Republic of Poland an important factor which affects the formulation of its goals is **geographical location**, namely in between the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany. Relations with those two states constitute an important element in the discourse on the goals and priorities of Polish European policy in the following aspects: political (strategies of relations), economic (current economic interests vs historical experience), social (the issue of reconciliation between nations) and cultural (membership in the community of European states). Looking for common European strategies with respect to these issues and the Polish reason of state are frequently linked with numerous political tensions. An example may be the construction of the North European Gas Pipeline of the debate on war reparations for Poland.

Another important objective in the issue of **Poland's membership** in international organisations.² Those organizations provide an opportunity for a more effective realisation of national interests and the possibility of jointly resolving current problems. After 1989, Polish foreign policy was aimed at gaining membership in the Euro-Atlantic international structures. In the political sphere, it was motivated by the need to consolidate the regained sovereignty, to build a position of the state in the international environment and seek guarantees for national security. In the symbolical and cultural area, it was a return to the circle of the European civilisation. At present, the direction of Polish European policy is not aimed at the European dimension only. Efforts are being made to build relations with the states from the immediate neighbourhood within the framework of such initiatives as: the Visegrad Group or the Three Seas Initiative. In this dimension, noteworthy is the recent opening to economic cooperation with the People's Republic of China.

² In 1991, Poland acquire the status of a member of the Council of Europe. The Republic of Poland became a full member of the European Union as of 1 May 2004. In 1999 – together with the Czech Republic and Hungary – she was accepted as member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

The subjective factors which determine foreign policy include: its conceptions, strategies formulated in an intrastate discourse. With respect to the strategies of the Polish foreign policy after 1989 the majority of political forces and public opinion have been in accord as to the correctness of the Euro-Atlantic course. After gaining the status of member of West European integration structures, the main actors of the Polish political scene (parliamentary parties) started to express various views concerning the role of the Polish state as a member of those West European integrational groupings. It concerns such issues as, *inter alia*: how much sovereignty is to be transferred to the supranational level?; what is the vision of the European Union (federal or confederal project)?; which elements of membership serve the Polish reason of state and which constitute a potential challenge or threat? The formulation and implementation of the assumption of the Polish foreign policy in the European context have change since the time of accession to the EU. The initial consensus as to the need and legitimacy of membership with time began to dwindle and diversify with respect to the goals and priorities of the European direction of the Polish foreign policy. **Accession has consolidated the European direction of the Polish foreign policy. It is at the same time connected with the surfacing of differences as regards perception of the importance of that choice for the realisation of the Polish reason of state.**

One of such ways of perceiving the role of the European Union for the possibility of realising the Polish reason of state is the position presented by the United Right (Law and Justice, United Poland and the Agreement) that has been in power since 2015. The result of the political election of 13 October 2019 in the context of foreign and European policy assumptions allow for putting forth a thesis as to the preservation of continuity of its direction of the 2015-2019 term. This direction was specified in the programme documents of Law and Justice (the ruling party), constituting a continuation of the hitherto logic of foreign and European policy. Its additional paradigm is sovereignty and national reason of state, which according to those assumptions are a foundation and goal of all actions of the Polish state in the foreign sphere. The pillars underlying their realisation are: policy of security, Central European policy, energy policy and the policy of remembrance referring to the ideas of sovereignty, freedom, solidarity and truth.³

³ Programme of Law and Justice, POLISH MODEL OF A WELFARE STATE, 2019, p. 171.

The post-electoral challenges faced by the Polish European policy refer to the issue of seeking an answer to the question: how to realise the Polish reason of state (perceived and analysed in the realistic categories of national interest as well as particularisms) under the European conditions?

According to the strategic assumptions of the Polish foreign policy for 2017-2021 those challenges are to be taken up by the activities with respect to:

Security – developing Poland’s own defence capabilities, strengthening country’s position in NATO and the EU and pursuing an active regional policy by:

- enhancing NATO credibility, boosting the EU’s potential, and maintaining close ties with the United States;
- closer cooperation with countries in the region, especially Romania, the Visegrad Group, and the Baltic and Nordic states and a pro-active Eastern policy.
- domestic: significantly bolstering Poland’s own defence capabilities.

Growth – international endeavours to promote economic growth and social development; Promoting Poland’s growth by shaping the economic policy of the European Union is one of the strategic tasks of Polish foreign policy. First and foremost, this refers to negotiations of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027, and to Poland’s needs as regards Cohesion Policy and Common Agricultural Policy.

High standing – shaping a positive image of Poland and bolstering its credibility in Europe and globally. The fundamental premise of Polish foreign policy is political realism. Poland’s *raison d’état* is inseparable from the universal values of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and the Christian values which underpin European integration⁴.

The practice of the Polish European policy shows that the above outlined foreign policy strategy reveals problems and challenges which the government of the United Right will have to face in the new term. With respect to the **objective factors**, these are, *inter alia*: the policy of the Russian Federation, the US-PRC trade conflict, the complaint of the European Commission to the

⁴ *Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021*.

CJEU concerning the new system of disciplinary measures *vis-à-vis* judges in Poland or the issue of the rule of law. The **subjective factors** will include: the need to find justification and *modus operandi* for the foreign policy based on the realistic perception of national interest in the conditions of the European Union, which is a political community based on the paradigm of shared sovereignty and liberal mode of cooperation.