

Józef M. FISZER 

Polish Academy of Science

fiszer@isppan.waw.pl

THE ROLE OF REUNIFIED GERMANY IN POLAND'S ACCESSION TO NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

ABSTRACT

The study is devoted to Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union (EU) and describes Germany's stance on Poland's Euro-Atlantic aspirations after 1989, which, despite various assessments, was not explicit and enthusiastic. However, it evolved gradually and was determined by a difficult internal situation after the reunification of Germany and its new geopolitics and geoeconomics. For Germany that reunified on 3 October 1990, an issue of greater importance than Polish accession to NATO and the EU was the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of the former GDR and normalization of relations with neighbors, particularly with France, Poland, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Both France and the United Kingdom, as well as the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent, the United States initially were afraid of a reunified Germany and opposed Polish membership in Euro-Atlantic structures. At the time, hopes and fears were rife about the future of Europe. A common question was being asked in Paris, London, Moscow, Washington, and Warsaw – would reunified Germany remain a European state, or would Europe become German? Should Germany stay in NATO or leave after the reunification? There were questions also about Moscow's policy towards reunified Germany and its position on Poland's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures. Unfortunately, for a long time, it was negative.

Today, thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, we can see that the black scenarios that were outlined in 1989-1990 did not actually come true. Despite the fears, those events opened the way for Poland to “return to Europe” and to gain membership in Euro-Atlantic structures, i.e., NATO and the European Union (EU). The path was not at all simple

and it was not easy for Poland to make it through. In the study the author analyses subjective and objective difficulties related to Poland's accession to NATO and the EU and describes the evolution and role of Germany in this process.

Keywords: Germany, Poland, accession, NATO, European Union, foreign policy, Europe

INTRODUCTION

In the month of May 2020 Europe marked the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Although thousands of books and various types of scientific dissertations have been written about it, there are still sharp disputes among researchers, publicists, and politicians about its causes and effects, particularly its geopolitical, political, social, and economic consequences for individual countries and nations, Europe as a whole and the world.¹ This problem is particularly difficult and painful for Germany that was divided back then, and for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, for which liberation meant new Soviet occupation that lasted until 1989.² It ended with the outbreak of the Revolutions of 1989, which had far-reaching consequences for Poland, Germany, the Soviet Union, Europe, and the world. It led to the fall of communism, the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Yalta–Potsdam order and the construction of a new, post-communist international order. Thanks to this, the path of “return to Europe” for Poland and its membership in Euro-Atlantic structures, i.e., NATO and the European Union, as well as other international organizations was opened. Poland – a country historically located in a complicated geopolitical space – was forced to take care of its security, which had to be considered in a multi-dimensional manner, i.e., from the military security perspective as well as through the economic and social security paradigm, to energy and ecological security.³

The study is devoted to Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union

¹ W. Radziwinowicz, M. Kokot, “Putin: Polska wspierała Hitlera” (Putin: Poland Was Supporting Hitler) *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 27, 2019, p. 5; B.T. Wieliński, “Atak Kremla na Polskę. Osamotnieni na własne życzenie” (The Kremlin's Attack on Poland. Left Alone at Our Own Request), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 30, 2019, p. 1; S. Dębski, “Falszerstwa Putina” (Putin's Forgery), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 8, 2020, pp. 2-4.

² J.M. Fiszer, “Kto wygrał II wojnę światową, a kto przegrał pokój? Refleksje na kanwie 70. rocznicy zakończenia II wojny światowej” (Who Won World War II and Who Lost Peace? Reflections Upon the 70th Anniversary of the End of World War II), *Rocznik polsko-niemiecki*, no. 24 (2016), pp. 11-12; J. Holzer, *Europa zimnej wojny (Europe of the Cold War)*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 780-817.

³ S. Gardocki, “Geopolityczne uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa Polski w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku” (Geopolitical Determinants of Poland's Security in the Second Decade of the XXI Century) in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej (Integration, Foreign Policy, Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 197-212.

(EU), and describes Germany's stance on Poland's Euro-Atlantic aspirations after 1989, which, despite various assessments, was not explicit and enthusiastic. However, it was evolving slowly. It was determined by difficult internal situation after the reunification of Germany and its new geopolitics and geoeconomics. For Germany that reunified on October 3, 1990, more important issues than Polish accession to NATO and the EU were the presence of Soviet troops on the territory of the former GDR and normalization of relations with neighbors, in particular with France, Poland, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Both France and the United Kingdom, as well as the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent, the United States initially were afraid of reunified Germany and opposed Polish membership in Euro-Atlantic structures. At that time there were a lot of hopes and fears about the future of Europe. At that point, in Paris, London, Moscow, Washington, and Warsaw, a question was asked whether reunified Germany would remain a European state, or would Europe become German? Should Germany stay in NATO or leave it after reunification? There were questions about Moscow's policy towards reunified Germany and its position on Poland's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures. Unfortunately, for a long time it was negative. The leaders of the Soviet Union and Russia – Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were noncommittal and continually changed their stand on this matter.⁴

Today, thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, we can see that the black scenarios that were outlined in 1989-1990 and later did not come true. Despite the fears, those events opened the way for Poland to “return to Europe” and to gain membership in Euro-Atlantic structures, i.e. in NATO and the European Union (EU). The path was not at all simple and easy to make it through. In the study the author analyses subjective and objective difficulties related to Poland's accession to NATO and the EU, and describes the evolution and the role of Germany in this process. The main thesis statement of the study is that in the context of the international situation as it was back then, a determined and consistent attitude on the part of Poland, and its pro-Western foreign policy had a crucial impact on Poland's membership of NATO and the European Union. In addition, the author notes that Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union had a significant impact on contemporary international events in Europe and the position of the West, particularly the United States, the Vatican, and Germany. The author also emphasizes that the position of the

⁴ J.M. Fiszer, “Stosunki polityczne między Polską i Rosją oraz ich determinanty w latach 1989-2014” (Political Relations Between Poland and Russia and Their Determinants in 1989-2014), in R. Żelichowski (ed.), *Polska. Sąsiedztwo bliższe i dalsze. Różne punkty widzenia (Poland. Closer and Wider Neighborhood. Different Points of View)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 177-205; J.M. Fiszer, “Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski do NATO i Unii Europejskiej” (Russia's Stance on Poland's Accession to NATO and the European Union), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 1(60) (2018), pp. 264-289; K. Przybyła, “Rosyjska polityka wobec Zachodu – wybrane zagadnienia” (Selected Issues of Russian Policy Towards the West), *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, no. 26 (2013), pp. 67-89; R. Jakimowicz, *Zarys stosunków polsko-rosyjskich w latach 1992-1999 (Outline of Polish-Russian Relations in 1992-1999)*, Warszawa 2000; A.V. Kozhemiakin, R.E. Kanet, “Russia and Its Western Neighbours in the ‘Near Abroad’”, in A.V. Kozhemiakin, R.E. Kanet (eds.), *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, London 1997, pp. 35-26.

Soviet Union, and then Russia, was not insignificant in terms of Poland's efforts to become a member of NATO and the European Union.

Numerous books and scientific articles have already been written about Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union.⁵ The study somehow constitutes a critical analysis and a summary of them, and at the same time is an attempt to put forward a new, objective perspective on the role of Germany in the process of Poland's accession to Euro-Atlantic structures. In the study, the author does not glorify Germany, or any other country that contributed to Poland's membership of NATO and the European Union. The author also does not demonize the role of the Soviet Union and Russia in this process. Poland's road to NATO was long, and it took a decade to get to the end of it. The road to the EU was even longer because it stretched to almost fifteen years since the fall of communism in 1989, but it was worth it. Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 and then to the EU in 2004 allowed Poland to feel protected from the threats that it had experienced over decades and even centuries.

The history of international relations, of individual European countries, and the world prove that practice often does not go hand in hand with theory. Leaders and politicians in general say one thing referring to lofty values (history, law, ideology, doctrines, religion, friendship, neighborhood), and do quite another. The same situation prevailed then with the leaders of Europe and the Chancellor of reunified Germany Helmut Kohl, who declared himself an advocate of Poland in NATO and the the European Union. In 1989, he already promised Poland easy membership of both organizations. However, it did not materialize as envisaged. It is clear what the state is and what its attributes, tasks, and functions are towards the citizens who establish it (a nation, nations), and its role in international relations. Each country has its own interests and pursues them through proper internal and foreign policy. After the Revolutions of 1989, the fall of communism in Poland, and the reunification of Germany, the interests of Poland and Germany were radically different. Therefore, foreign policy goals of both countries differed as well.

It should be emphasized that states are extremely dynamic entities, they continuously evolve and change their roles and stance in international relations. They are under constant pressure from citizens and the international environment, which also changes

⁵ J.M. Fiszer, M. Czasak, *Trójkąt Weimarski. Geneza i działalność na rzecz integracji Europy w latach 1991-2016 (Weimar Triangle. The Origin and Activity for the Integration of Europe in 1991-2016)*, Warszawa 2019; A. Ziółkowski, *NATO w XX wieku. Transatlantyckie zależności (NATO in XX century. Transatlantic Dependencies)*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 193-197; T. Orlowski, *Polska w procesie integracji z NATO i Unią Zachodnioeuropejską 1991-1998 (Poland in the Process of Integration with NATO and the Western European Union)*, Toruń 1998, p. 24; M. Zajac, "Założenia strategiczne funkcjonowania NATO" (Assumptions of NATO Strategic Functioning), *Horyzonty Bezpieczeństwa*, no. 1 (2015), pp. 67-74; K. Skubiszewski, "Polska i Sojusz Północnoatlantycki w latach 1989-1991" (Poland and the North Atlantic Alliance in 1989-1991), *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, no. 1 (1999), pp. 7; P. Wieczorek, P. Kludka, *Droga Polski do NATO – próba bilansu (Poland's Road to NATO – A Profile)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 49-50; J.M. Fiszer, *Unia Europejska a Polska. Dziś i jutro (The European Union and Poland. Today and Tomorrow)*, Toruń 2002; J. Golec, "Polska droga do Unii. Tło polityczne" (Poland's Road to the Union. Political Background), *Dziś*, no. 11 (1998), pp. 79-93.

under the influence of many factors, phenomena, and processes. To put it briefly, the world is changing all the time, and we are dealing with new, often unpredictable international phenomena and processes that determine national interests of individual countries and facilitate or hinder their implementation. The state interests are determined by their authorities (in a “top-down” manner) and depend on *their power, level of control over society, ideology as well as on ambitions and personality of the leaders*.⁶

Realists, or neorealists claim that the international system and power distribution are crucial, though anarchy in the international system does not determine the foreign policy of individuals.⁷ States respond to the stimuli of the international system by shaping their foreign policy. They do so by taking into account internal factors, primarily the resources they have, and the way constantly changing political elites perceive the systemic stimuli. Thus, *domestic variables affect the efficiency with which countries (elements of the system) respond to system stimuli*.⁸ The obvious example of it is the process of Poland’s accession to NATO and the European Union, and the role of Germany and its leaders in this process. They were led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, whose foreign policy towards Poland after 1989 was determined by numerous intra-German, international, geopolitical, historical premises as well as geoeconomics. Therefore, although the focus of this study was on the post-Cold War period, it was assumed that some phenomena and processes cannot be explained without reference to the period before 1989.

As for the methodology, the study refers to various reliable sources, documents, and domestic and foreign materials. The author refers to leading theories in international relations, mainly to the theories of realism, neorealism, liberalism, neoliberalism, constructivism, and the theory of international integration and believes that those theories are the most appropriate for analyzing specific phenomena and processes in international politics. Methods such as explanation of documents, description and analysis of international phenomena and processes, observation, historical and comparative analysis were used. As John Gaddis claims,⁹ good scientists, like good novelists and good historians, make use of all the tools at their disposal to describe the past and anticipate the future, and the determinants.

⁶ J. Czaputowicz, “Mapa współczesnego realizmu: realizm klasyczny, neorealizm, realizm neoklasyczny” (The Map of Contemporary Realism. Classical Realism, Neorealism, and Neoclassical Realism), in E. Haliżak, J. Czaputowicz (eds.), *Teoria realizmu w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze (The Theory of Realism in International Relations)*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 32-33; E. Haliżak (ed.), *Badanie polityki zagranicznej państwa (Research on the State’s Foreign Policy)*, Warszawa 2018.

⁷ J. Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars; Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State”, *Security Studies*, vol. 15 (2006), pp. 465-467; G. Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy”, *World Politics*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1998), pp. 141-147.

⁸ M. Kozub-Karkut, “Realizm neoklasyczny – główne założenia i możliwości” (Neoclassical Realism – Main Assumptions and Possibilities), in E. Haliżak, J. Czaputowicz (eds.), *Mapa współczesnego realizmu. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze (The Map of Modern Realism. Assumptions and Searching Uses)*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 43-44.

⁹ J.L. Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War”, *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1992-1993), pp. 57-58.

1. THE EURO-ATLANTIC SYSTEM, NATO, AND THE EUROPEAN UNION AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR

During the Cold War that lasted until the beginning of the 1990s and consisted of economic, military, political, and ideological competition between the Socialist Bloc headed by the USSR and the Western bloc,¹⁰ NATO's main task was to provide the United States and the countries of Western Europe with protection against the threat of the USSR. The European Communities, on the other hand, were concerned with ensuring economic security and facilitating the integration of Western Europe. After 1991, with the end of the Cold War, the objectives and priorities of both the Alliance and the Communities had to change. In the new, post-communist reality, the countries of NATO and the European Communities managed to adapt to new conditions and challenges. Then onwards, their main task has been to guarantee global security and the integration of Western and Eastern Europe, both in political and economic terms, and fulfilling a function of sustaining stabilization in the Euro-Atlantic area by implementing initiatives aimed at preventing regional conflicts that may transform into international wars.¹¹

The issue of the extension of NATO and the European Communities to the East came up when the Soviet empire collapsed. There persisted an open question of when it would happen and at what price it could be achieved. The situation was complicated as the idea of the enlargement was blocked by Moscow. The objection to a large extent *determined the behavior of many leaders of NATO member states, including some German politicians. For some time, Russia's objection was also an argument that made the US administration reluctant to expand NATO to the East. The idea was rejected in Washington.*¹² The Americans, the French, and the British believed the enlargement of NATO and the European Communities should be postponed until the principles of democracy were properly established in Russia and it would be ready to enter into partnership with the West.

Starting with November 1991, when the Alliance's new Strategic Concept was developed, the organization's perception of recent opponents changed significantly, which after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact found themselves in the "grey area". The Concept stated that it was necessary to establish close relations with the countries

¹⁰ M.M. Narinskij, "Geneza 'zimnej wojny' – ideologia i geopolityka" (The Origin of the Cold War – Ideology and Geopolitics), *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 2 (2000), pp. 79; A. Podraza, "Początki transatlantyckiego partnerstwa bezpieczeństwa: wybuch zimnej wojny i powstanie Sojuszu Atlantyckiego" (The Beginnings of the Transatlantic Security Partnership: The Outbreak of the Cold War and the Emergence of the Atlantic Alliance), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 2(65) (2019), pp. 65-101.

¹¹ *NATO w trakcie transformacji (NATO Under Transformation)*, at https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf.../20120116_nato-trans-pol.pdf, 29 November 2017, p. 2.

¹² J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie? Stany Zjednoczone i Niemcy (1989-2016). Perspektywa polska (Partnership in Leadership? The United States and Germany (1989-2016): A Polish View)*, Poznań 2017, pp. 134-135.

that were signatories to the Warsaw Pact. The Concept also determined future American military presence in Europe. In this way, NATO was gradually trying to expand its reach and include post-communist countries in its political and military system and enhance the level of security in the Euro-Atlantic area.¹³

As early as in 1990, and thus before the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, during the session in Turnberry, the North Atlantic Council offered cooperation based on freedom, justice, and democracy to all members of the Warsaw Pact. This was to be achieved gradually through political dialogue, establishment and intensification of direct relations, as well as development of cooperation in the military sphere.¹⁴ The adoption of an alternative program called the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in January 1994, during the NATO summit in Brussels, was important in connection with NATO's enlargement plans. Its main goal was to clarify the Alliance's cooperation with the countries of Eastern and Southern Europe and to create the basis for intensifying relations with them, and in the future for their membership of NATO. Joint defense planning, training, consultations, joint military exercises and maneuvers as well as participation in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions along with NATO member states were some important elements of the proposed strategic plan. Active cooperation under the PfP was a necessary condition for future NATO membership.¹⁵

Along with strengthening cooperation within the Partnership for Peace on the NATO-Central-Eastern European line (in case of Poland it was demonstrated, among others, by the fact that in 1994 the country was involved in 40 NATO operations, and by 1997 there were already 450 of them¹⁶), there were also talks about the possibility of their accession to the Alliance. However, Poland's path to NATO through the Partnership for Peace, aided by the initial objection of Russia and most Western countries, was very long. It started with the political transformation in 1989 and lasted ten years.¹⁷ The path raised many doubts as to whether at the end of it Poland would gain full membership of the North Atlantic Alliance and if NATO would be the same as during the existence of the Warsaw Pact. Fears of subordinating Poland to another power or organization were intensified by negative experiences during the decades of Soviet domination. For many Poles, the country's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance was a manifestation of such subordination to the interests of the United States of America.

¹³ R. Kupiecki, *Od Londynu do Waszyngtonu. NATO w latach dziewięćdziesiątych (From London to Washington. NATO in the 90s)*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 151-158; J. Falecki, "Zapewnienie bezpieczeństwa w świetle koncepcji strategicznych NATO" (Ensuring Security in the Light of NATO's Strategic Concept), *Ante Portas – Studia nad Bezpieczeństwem*, no. 1 (2014), p. 14.

¹⁴ E. Bobińska et al. (eds.), *Polska w NATO. (Poland in NATO) Pakiet Edukacyjny*, Warszawa 2002, p. 38.

¹⁵ M. Wągrowaska, *Partnerstwo dla pokoju (The Partnership for Peace)*, Warszawa 1994, p. 9; J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie...*, p. 143; R. Zięba (ed.), *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe po zimnej wojnie (International Security After the Cold War)*, Warszawa 2008.

¹⁶ B. Świetlicki, "Współpraca Polski z NATO" (Poland's Cooperation with NATO), *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej* (1998), p. 64.

¹⁷ J.M. Fiszer, „Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski...”, pp. 264-289; J.M. Fiszer, "The Thirtieth Anniversary of the Sejm and Senate Elections in 1989. Systemic Transformation in Poland and its Consequences for Europe and the World", *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 3(66) (2019), pp. 139-163.

The closer Poland's accession to NATO was, the more frequently concerns of a new form of dependence on a foreign power appeared. On the eve of Poland's accession to NATO, a slightly larger number of people thought that belonging to this organization would be a new form of subordination of the country to a foreign power (42 per cent) than those claiming that it would guarantee independence (41 per cent). Such moods changed radically in the first year of Poland's membership of NATO. In February 2000, a majority of Poles (56 per cent) perceived the membership of the Alliance as a guarantee of Polish independence, and just more than a quarter (29 per cent) believed that this was a new form of dependence on a foreign power.¹⁸

Eventually, on 16 December 1997 in Brussels, NATO foreign ministers signed accession protocols for Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Twelve days later, representatives of these countries participated (as observers) for the first time in a weekly meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the ambassadorial level. By the way, in January 1998 — just over a year before Poland officially joined NATO, and after the first NATO member states ratified the country's accession to the organization — the vast majority of Poles considered joining NATO as an important event. Around 44 per cent believed it was groundbreaking and of historical significance.¹⁹ On 12 March 1999, Poland, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary, joined NATO.²⁰

2. POLAND'S ROAD TO NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The takeover of power by the anti-communist opposition in Poland in autumn 1989 meant the need to redefine Poland's place and role in the European security structure. Erstwhile Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski were aware that the collapse of the communist system was inevitable but afraid that spectacular gestures could only harm the countries of Central Europe that were still stuck in the structures of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) and the Warsaw Pact.²¹ In the first speech delivered in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on 24 April 1990, Minister Skubiszewski did not mention NATO directly while enumerating priorities of Polish foreign policy because of the USSR, the presence of Soviet troops in Poland, as well as a reluctance to reveal far-reaching strategic intentions. Also, President Lech Wałęsa, during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner at the Polish embassy in Brussels in 1991, assured that

¹⁸ *20 lat członkostwa Polski w NATO (20 Years of Poland's Membership in NATO)*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, komunikat z badań, no. 31, 2019, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰ M. Dąbrowska, A. Kos, "Rozwój współpracy wojskowej w stosunku do NATO na przykładzie udziału Wojska Polskiego i Bundeswehry w działaniach militarnych prowadzonych w Afganistanie" (Development of Military Cooperation in Relation to NATO on the Example of the Polish Army and the Bundeswehr's Participation in Military Operations Conducted in Afghanistan), *Obronność. Zeszyty Naukowe*, vol. 1, no. 9 (2014), p. 56.

²¹ K. Skubiszewski, *Polska i Sojusz Północnoatlantycki...*, p. 7.

Poland's foreign policy was not directed against the USSR and that the country had not been thinking about NATO membership yet. He only expressed hope for the creation of a new European security system with Poland participating in it.²²

In the years between 1989-1991, the bonds of dependence that connected Poland with the Soviet Union were broken, and the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance were dissolved. Poland concluded treaties to regulate relations with Germany, Russia, and other neighbors. At that time, it seemed that the organization that would become the basis of international order would be the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). After the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, the main goal of Polish foreign policy between 1992-1999 was to ensure state security by gaining membership of NATO and the European Union. The government believed Poland's road to Europe should be through NATO, because accession to the Alliance would ensure better conditions for membership of the European Union. The process of withdrawing Russian troops from Polish territory was subsequently completed. By becoming a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, Poland obtained guarantees of security. The years between 1998-2004 were a period of negotiations and efforts to adjust the Polish administration to membership of the European Union.

The basic principles of Polish policy in the early 1990s in the field of internal and external security were defined in two documents adopted by the National Defense Committee on 2 November 1992. They were: "Assumptions of the Polish security policy," signed by the President of the Republic of Poland and the document "Security policy and defense strategy of the Republic of Poland" that developed and specified these assumptions. The documents emphasized that the Republic of Poland perceives its borders as inviolable and does not make any territorial claims against its neighbors. They also stated that Poland respects the sovereignty of other states and rejects the use of power, including the threat of using force in relation with other states. The main goal of Polish security policy – as outlined by the documents – was to become a member of NATO, provide the country with conditions for peaceful development based on the aforementioned premises, in accordance with international law, in particular the provisions of the United Nations Charter and other inter-state documents, both bilateral and multilateral.²³ It was further emphasized that in the current situation in Europe, Poland's security can be ensured and achieved by:

- joining European security structures, in particular NATO and the Western European Union (WEU);
- activity on the forum of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE);
- mutually beneficial, equal, bilateral, and multilateral regional cooperation, including military cooperation;

²² S. Koziej, *Polska doktryna obronna i jej modyfikacja w obliczu integracji z NATO (Polish Defense Doctrine and Its Modification in the Face of Integration with NATO)*, Warszawa–Toruń 1996, pp. 8-9.

²³ R. Zięba, *Nowa instytucjonalizacja bezpieczeństwa europejskiego (New Institutionalization of European Security)*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 58-59.

- good relations with neighboring countries;
- further reduction of arms in Europe and in the world, and effective control over the restrictions;
- Poland's active participation in UN, OSCE, NATO, and WEU peace operations;
- integration with political and economic structures of Western Europe, primarily with the EU;
- improving its own defense system.²⁴

Therefore, the goals of Poland's integration and security policy after 1989 were clearly defined. They were to be implemented as part of a non-confrontational process that did not infringe upon the interests of other countries.²⁵

As the author has already mentioned, however, the first signals from Poland and other Central European countries about the desire to join the North Atlantic Alliance and the EU were strongly rejected by leaders and experts of NATO and the European Communities. The West was restrained because of the presence of Soviet troops in the region and the reluctance to further deteriorate relations with the collapsing and thus unpredictable USSR. At the time, NATO had big problems with defining its new role and tasks in the changing world. The organization was afraid of losing efficiency because of expansion into the East and interference in the conflicting interests of small countries, so it did not want to take on any new obligations. Admittedly, art. 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949) that established NATO, in a formal and legal sense, opened the way to the states that wanted to join to the Alliance if they expressed readiness and respected democratic system and values. However, in practice, additionally, the entire catalog of political and purely military conditions was presented. The organization managed to survive its tough beginnings in the 1990s due to reforms carried out in line with the real needs of member states. It also survived the evolutionary death of the Soviet Union that significantly contributed to changing the negative opinion of the West on Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union that was founded in February 1992.²⁶

When Poland became a member state of NATO and the European Union, it undeniably obtained much greater military, political, and economic security than if it were to ensure it for itself. Even if Poland was a part of a military alliance, and strengthened economic cooperation with the Visegrad Group, which was unlikely, such an alliance could not guarantee external security. The guarantee of peaceful coexistence and cooperation in Europe provided by NATO and the EU is a value that could not be overestimated, especially in contemporary times of not adhering to international legal principles and order, developed over the years by the aggressive policy of the current authorities of the Russian Federation.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

²⁵ W. Malendowski, W. Waszczykowski, "Międzynarodowe uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa Polski" (International Determinants of Poland's Security), in W. Malendowski, C. Mojsiewicz (eds.), *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne (International Political Relations)*, Poznań 1996, p. 65.

²⁶ A. Ziółkowski, *NATO w XX wieku...*, pp. 193-197; T. Otlowski, *Polska w procesie integracji z NATO...*, pp. 24; M. Zajac, „Założenia strategiczne funkcjonowania...”, pp. 66-67.

²⁷ B. Mazurkiewicz, "Zmiany w postrzeganiu przestrzeni geopolityka we współczesnej Rosji" (Changes

3. THE STANCE OF REUNIFIED GERMANY ON POLAND'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The fall of communism and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact at the beginning of July 1991, as well as the dissolution of the Comecon, made it possible for Poland to join NATO and the European Union. Although in Warsaw it was clear from the beginning that the road to membership of both organizations starts in Washington and Brussels, hopes were high that thanks to the normalization of relations and cooperation with reunified Germany, the process could be quickened.²⁸ It was in the interest of reunified Germany to build cordial relations with its neighbors, particularly Poland, because Germany sought to retreat from being a frontline state. Some of the threats to Germany's security disappeared due to Poland's membership of the Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, Germany accepted the role of the United States in the process of NATO enlargement. In practice, however, Germany, like other Western countries, was restrained when it came to the idea of new states joining the Euro-Atlantic structures. After the reunification, it maintained that the new security architecture in Europe should be built on the foundation of the CSCE. In an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* in March 1991, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher stated that "efforts should be made to create a pan-European security structure in which there will be a place for Central and Eastern European countries and where they will feel safe."²⁹ At that time, the USSR had a similar opinion, and the German political elite were wondering how to reconcile the active Western policy towards Central and Eastern Europe with maintaining proper relations with Moscow. Starting from the reunification of Germany, its cooperation with Russia gradually developed, which in turn raised concerns in Poland and led to pressures on Polish-German cooperation.³⁰

In fact, Germany supported the American policy of expanding cooperation between NATO and the interested Central and Eastern European countries, while avoiding clear commitments regarding their membership of the Alliance. This was demonstrated by, among others, a joint proposal presented by American Secretary of State

in the Perception of Space and Geopolitics in Contemporary Russia), *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, no. 2 (2017), pp. 117-127; K.A. Kowalczyk, "Geopolityczne dążenia współczesnej Rosji" (Geopolitical Aspirations of Modern Russia), *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, no. 27 (2019), pp. 78-92.

²⁸ P. Wiczorek, P. Kludka, *Droga Polski do NATO...*, pp. 49-50.

²⁹ J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie...*, p. 137.

³⁰ E. Cziomer, "Początki partnerstwa strategicznego Niemcy-Rosja w XXI wieku" (The Beginnings of the Strategic Partnership Between Germany and Russia in XXI Century), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Witoldowi Maciejowi Góralskiemu (Integration, Foreign Policy, the Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland. The Jubilee Book dedicated to Professor Witold Maciej Góralski)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 109-129; J. Sułek, "O pojednaniu polsko-niemieckim po II wojnie światowej po 30 latach trudnych doświadczeń (1989-2019)" (On Polish-German Reconciliation after World War II after 30 Years of Difficult Experience (1989-2019)), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna...*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 647-679.

James Baker and Minister H.-D. Genscher in May 1991. They proposed organizing cyclical meetings between representatives of NATO countries and their counterparts from the former Soviet bloc. The initiative resulted in the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) at the NATO Summit in November 1991. Since then, the NATO concept of cooperation at various levels, while avoiding explicit commitments on membership, has become a way for formal consultations for the countries of Central Europe with NATO, and – as NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner said at the time – *to a high extent met the security needs of the region*.³¹ This concept was accepted by Poland with maturity, but also without much enthusiasm, because it delayed the country's membership of the NATO. German politicians, following the leading American politicians at the time, were of the opinion that: *the West – and especially Western Europe – must move quickly to integrate Eastern Europe into the European Community and other Atlantic institutions, except for NATO*.³²

In the year 1992, there was a series of visits by politicians from Central and Eastern European countries to Brussels and visits of NATO representatives to Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest. Despite the positive atmosphere of talks, M. Wörner's public statements clearly pointed out that the issue of membership of Central and Eastern European countries to NATO is currently out of question due to Moscow's stance. In this situation, President Lech Wałęsa, who was on an official visit to Germany (29 March – 2 April), presented to the Bundestag Committee on Foreign Affairs a poorly thought-out NATO-bis project as a temporary structure that would ensure security in Central Europe. It was not clear why L. Wałęsa's presented the concept that emerged in the National Security Bureau. It has not been explained to this day. This project caused consternation among Poland's allies. To allay the fears of the North Atlantic Alliance against reactions from Russia, in a Polish-Russian declaration signed by President Boris Yeltsin in Warsaw on 24 August 1993, Poland was assured that its membership of NATO did not violate the interests of the Russian Federation.³³

Nevertheless, during the conference of NATO Ministers of Defense in Travemünde in October 1993, the West's position on postponing the decision on opening NATO to the East was upheld. However, the US Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced the idea of "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) to console Poland and the other Warsaw Pact countries.³⁴ It was a proposal for NATO to conclude a defense cooperation agreement with post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The official document containing the terms and conditions of participation in this initiative was adopted dur-

³¹ P. Wiczorek, P. Kludka, *Droga Polski do NATO...*, p. 51; J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie...*, p. 138.

³² H. Kissinger, "No Illusion about the USSR", *The Washington Post*, January 22, 1991, p. 3.

³³ J.M. Fiszer, *Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski...*, pp. 264-289; T. Orlowski, *Polska w procesie integracji z NATO...*, pp. 25; A. Curanović, S. Kardaś, R. Alf, *Polityka zagraniczna Rosji w okresie prezydentury Władimira Putina. Próba bilansu (Russia's Foreign Policy During the Presidency of Vladimir Putin: A Profile)*, Warszawa 2008.

³⁴ K. Feldmeyer, "Partnerschaft für den Frieden. Die Mehrheit in der NATO zögert mit der Erweiterung nach Osten", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 27, 1993, p. 3.

ing the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 January 1994. An invitation to participate in the "Partnership for Peace" was sent to all European countries that were interested in cooperation with NATO at the time. By mid-1995, 25 European countries had already become part of this program.³⁵ The author agrees with the thesis of Jadwiga Kiwerska, who writes about PfP that (...) *Clinton's team did not have a clearly defined vision of transatlantic relations and European security at the time. The enlargement of the Alliance was seen more in the context of the aspirations of Central and Eastern European countries that irritate Russia, rather than as a part of the new order on the European continent.*³⁶

In July 1994, President Bill Clinton visited Prague and Warsaw. It was a positive turn of events in international politics for Poland. After the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in June 1994 in Istanbul and the growing favor of the Americans towards the idea of "enlargement," Germany more boldly supported the postulates of the Visegrad Group countries. On 30 September 1994, in Seville, German Defense Minister Volker Rühle announced a proposal to initiate a debate on the expansion of NATO to the East. In his opinion, after the success of PfP, negotiations with the Visegrad Group could enter a new phase, and Russia and Ukraine could be offered close cooperation as their membership in the Alliance was impossible. Unfortunately, the Minister V. Rühle's proposals were rejected by the US Secretary of Defense William Perry, who deemed it too early to enumerate specific countries and thought it was better to focus on deepening cooperation within the PfP. During the next meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on 1 December 1994, the Alliance confirmed its will to expand to the East as a part of its "evolutionary process" taking into account Russia's interests, and advised to prepare a special Study on NATO Enlargement.³⁷

Although the results of the Brussels deliberations did not go beyond the already known formulas on the "evolutionary process," Russia objected to it. Moscow withdrew from the individual PfP program and the agreement on political dialogue with NATO adopted on 22 June 1994 by the State Duma. As a result, NATO-Russia relations "stiffened". On 22 March 1995, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev declared that a condition for Moscow's return to dialogue with Brussels would be to fulfill several conditions. He demanded the development of a security program for Europe in which NATO would be one of the parts, instead of building a new security architecture around the Alliance. He argued for broad military cooperation, while warning that since Russia is denied a veto over NATO's resolutions, the Alliance should not have such powers over Moscow.³⁸

During the next NATO summit in Madrid between 8-9 July 1996 – despite opposition from France, Spain, Greece, and Italy that demanded the joining of Slovenia

³⁵ P. Wiczorek, P. Kłudka, *Droga Polski do NATO...*, p. 54.

³⁶ J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie...*, p. 141.

³⁷ R. Kuźniar, "Polityka bezpieczeństwa w polskiej polityce zagranicznej" (Security Policy in Poland's Foreign Policy), in R. Kuźniar (ed.), *Polska polityka bezpieczeństwa: 1989-2000 (Polish Security Policy)*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 98-99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

and Romania – the enlargement of NATO was decided by a joint US-British-German front. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to the negotiations on the impending membership. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who was present at the summit, forced the request that the relevant accession documents should be signed by the end of 1997. The final point of negotiations between the Visegrad countries and NATO was the signing of the “accession protocol” on 16 December 1997 in Brussels with the participation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The ceremony of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joining NATO took place on 12 March 1999, i.e., on the 50th anniversary of the Alliance.³⁹

In the 1990s, Poland also started making efforts to become a member of the European Union. It became a strategic goal of Polish foreign policy after the fall of communism in 1989. In the following years, this goal was accepted by the main political groups of the country and the majority of the Polish society. The first international legal act of Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government sworn in on 12 September 1989 was the signing (one week after this date) of an agreement on trade and economic cooperation between Poland and the European Economic Community. The agreement negotiated by the last Polish communist government, despite being the first agreement between Poland and the EEC in history, in practice constituted the closing of the previous stage of mutual relations than the opening of a new stage. It was a non-preferential agreement, providing for very limited liberalization of mutual trade and not adapted to new political realities.⁴⁰

The first stage of Polish efforts to become a member of the EU was the period from the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on December 1989 and the decision to establish the PHARE program until 16 December 1991, i.e., until Poland concluded the Association Agreement (Europe Agreement) with the EEC. In Strasbourg, it was decided to expand the trade and co-operation agreements concluded so far with Poland on 19 September 1989; Hungary on 26 September 1988, and Czechoslovakia on 19 December 1988. The concept of association agreements was adopted at the Dublin summit in April 1990. At the same time, the Federal Republic of Germany sought the creation of the PHARE program and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Until 1992, Poland and Hungary received significant financial support from this program.⁴¹

The years between 1992-1993 were marked by decreasing support of Western European countries for Poland’s membership of the Euro-Atlantic structures. The Polish political scene, characterized by strong tensions and the lack of significant progress in transformation, especially economic, was carefully observed. Despite the active efforts of the Visegrad Triangle countries in Western capitals and the proposals to strengthen

³⁹ T. Otłowski, *Polska w procesie integracji z NATO...*, p. 86.

⁴⁰ B. Koszeł, “Droga państw tzw. Grupy Wyszehradzkiej do Unii Europejskiej (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Polski)” in M. Kosman (ed.), *Przeszłość przyszłości (The Past of the Future)*, Poznań 2001, p. 233.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

mutual connections, develop political dialogue, and cooperate with the Western European Union (WEU), the Community was restrained. In a difficult period of stagnation in Poland's negotiations with the European Union, only Germany made efforts to convince the partners from the European Community that it is necessary to meet the candidate countries halfway and, by setting a good example, invited the Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka to visit Germany. On 5 November 1992, she participated in an extraordinary meeting of the Bundestag's Committee on Foreign Affairs attended by representatives of the foreign affairs committees of the Polish and French parliaments. At this meeting, in a dramatic tone, Prime Minister Suchocka appealed: *It is forbidden to create new divisions, build new walls, even if they were walls of customs regulations. It is forbidden to keep the Polish, the Czechoslovakian, and the Hungarian Community that have done the most to erase previous differences, outside just in the name of ad hoc, selfish impulses, with various excuses, because today they are the closest to European standards among all post-communist countries.*⁴²

At the beginning of March 1993, Poland and the other countries of the Visegrad Group submitted a memorandum on their membership of the EU and NATO in Brussels. A positive answer came only from Bonn. On 21 May 1993, Defense Minister Volker Rühle in a speech at the North Atlantic Assembly in Berlin expressed his hope for the rapid ratification of the association agreements, praised the reform achievements of the Central European countries, and spoke positively about their future membership of the European Community and NATO.⁴³

Undoubtedly, the most important stage in Poland's path to membership of the European structures began on 1 July 1994, when Germany took over the leadership of the Council of the European Union for six months. In the document "The Goals and the Focus of German Presidency", just following the problems related to combating unemployment, economic recession, and maintaining social privileges, there was a provision about Germany's aspiration to include Central European countries in the European Union. The ambitious tasks set by the German government were contradictory and fraught with many obstacles. The postulate of Poland's accession to the European Union came up simultaneously with the beginning of the next stage of the Community enlargement (Austria, Sweden, and Finland acceded on 1 January 1995), and with the growing pressure of Paris to deepen European integration. However, in Bonn it was realized that including the French pressure for "deepening" would create additional, higher quality thresholds and bureaucratic barriers that would hinder the accession of new members to the EU. On the other hand, abandoning internal reforms and the process of "deepening" the EU could lead to a weakening of its internal cohesion.⁴⁴

During the accession negotiations between Poland and the European Union that lasted from 31 March 1998 to 13 December 2002, the greatest discrepancies between

⁴² A. Domagała, *Integracja Polski z Unią Europejską (Poland's integration with the European Union)*, Warszawa 2008, p. 93.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁴ B. Koszel, *Druga państw...*, p. 237.

the demands of the Polish side and the expectations of the European Union countries occurred in areas such as agriculture, free movement of capital and workers, regional policy, budget and finances, and competition policy. In most of those areas, the dispute mainly concerned Poland's position on a given issue in opposition to Germany's position from the EU side. Such as scenario developed even though EU accession negotiations with Poland and the other countries were conducted by the representatives of the European Commission with a negotiating mandate from the European Council, the following presidencies, and the Council of the European Union. In practice, the "old" EU Member States played a key role in these negotiations, especially Germany, which is the largest net contributor to the EU budget and the strongest – in every respect – member of the Union.⁴⁵

Furthermore, during the negotiations between Poland and the EU, one of the most difficult issues that was brought to the foreground was the issue of granting Polish citizens the right to work in EU countries from the moment Poland became a member state. Some EU Member States (including the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark) accepted full freedom of employment. However, Germany and Austria opposed this. Ultimately, the EU countries adopted a common position reflected in the accession treaty signed by Poland and its member states on 16 April 2003. As a result, a seven-year transition period was introduced for Poland, based on the 2+3+2 principle. This way, the possibility of employing citizens of new Member States in the so-called "old" EU countries was limited. Despite this, each of the new Member States had an individual right to decide on this matter. In the following years, after Poland's accession to the EU, Germany and Austria were most insistent on maintaining a seven-year transitional period of free movement of workers from the new Member States.⁴⁶

In the area of Polish-EU accession negotiations, however, regarding "free movement of capital", the problem of buying real estate in Poland by EU citizens was a particularly difficult issue. Poland requested a transition period of 18 years for the acquisition of agricultural and forestry real estate by EU citizens and a period of five years for the purchase of real estate for investment purposes and second homes. The position of the Polish government was the result of, among others, huge differences – to the detriment of Poland – in land prices between the new Union member and other EU countries. There was a fear of the rise of real estate prices in the country, the danger of buying out a large acreage of land by EU citizens, especially the Germans, and the possibility of speculative real estate trade. Eventually, Poland obtained a five-year transition period for second homes, which meant maintaining the requirement to obtain permission from the interior minister and the administration to purchase real estate. Recreational properties purchased for business purposes were excluded from this category. It also did not apply to persons residing in Poland for four years prior to the acquisition of real estate. At the same time, Poland obtained a 12-year transition period

⁴⁵ A. Domagała, *Integracja Polski...*, p. 157.

⁴⁶ B. Koszel, *Droga państwo...*, p. 238.

for the acquisition of agricultural and forestry real estate, which meant maintaining the requirement to obtain the permit of the Minister of Interior and Administration to purchase the property.⁴⁷

Eventually, on 12 March 1999, Poland became a member of NATO, and on 1 May 2004, a member of the European Union. Poland's accession to the EU was a crucial event from the perspective of change in previous relations between Poland and the European Union. Until then, the main goal of Poland's policy towards Europe was to negotiate favorable conditions for membership of the Union. As of the day of accession to the EU, there was a change in the objectives of Poland's policy towards Europe and the need to use other instruments than those used in previous relations with Member States and institutions of the European Union. In the *formal and legal sense, Poland has become an equal participant in the decision-making process of the European Union, and thus it has been enabled to pursue its own interests and goals related to membership in this political organization.*⁴⁸

Poland joined the EU and NATO having relatively good relations with Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and despite its difficult relations with Russia and Belarus, and thus contributed to the "eastern" foreign and security policy pursued under the Euro-Atlantic system. Modern Europe and the world at large are, however, subject to constant political, social, economic, and cultural changes that determine the activities of NATO and the European Union. In the European Union, integration and disintegration processes are intertwined, and they modify its shape and policy, as well as change the goals of individual European countries. In addition, the European Union is presently at a stage when it is necessary to answer the questions about what priorities will be crucial for its internal development and what role it will play in a multipolar and increasingly globalized world. After seventy years of activity, we need to ask the questions about the role and future of NATO.⁴⁹ In the context of the above, the question of Poland's role and commitment to the development of NATO and the EU and strengthening of their position in the Euro-Atlantic system remains open.

CONCLUSION

Poland as a peripheral state torn between the East and the West with a position outside the core of the international community, in the present situation in Europe and in the world should pursue a realistic policy, i.e., not indulge in illusions and keep its feet on the ground. The country cannot withdraw from the EU or NATO. The Union is the guarantor of Poland's economic security, whilst NATO is the foundation of military

⁴⁷ A. Domagała, *Integracja Polski...*, pp. 159-160.

⁴⁸ Z. Czachór, A. Jaskulski (eds.), *Polska polityka europejska. Wyzwania krajowe i międzynarodowe (Poland's Policy Towards Europe. National and International Challenges)*, Poznań 2019, p. 74.

⁴⁹ A. Podraza, *Początki transatlantyckiego partnerstwa...*, pp. 65-101; J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie...*

security. Being a weak country still, it is just beginning to prosper but is wracked by internal quarrels and divisions. In addition, Poland is surrounded either by hostile countries or those that do not wish it the best. The former are Belarus, Russia, and Germany, the latter Ukraine and Lithuania. The Russian Federation is a superpower, and Germany has a chance to gain the position of a hegemon (not only in the European region) by 2050. In the opinion of this author, Germany is already a regional power, i.e., a leader (hegemon) in Europe, capable of pursuing foreign policy on a global scale. This country has economic, military, scientific and technical, and demographic potential, which exceeds Poland's capabilities in every respect. Many experts predict that around the year 2050, Germany will have the chance to become a global power. However, Russia is already the biggest country in the world in terms of area. It stretches from the West to the East for about 10,000 km, through 11 time zones. It also has the longest land border and the longest shoreline. It borders as many as 14 countries. In addition, it has enormous natural resources, including gold, oil, gas, and uranium. In terms of military potential, including the number of nuclear warheads and missiles, it parallels the United States. Under the rule of Vladimir Putin, Russia has been successively seeking to rebuild the position of a global superpower, which is impossible without having specific alliances and without relying directly on other countries, including Germany. The Eurasian Economic Union was also established to serve this purpose, and as an alternative to the European Union. As Putin announced only in 2018, Russia spent about 47.7 billion dollars on its armed forces, and in 2018-2027 will spend as much as 20 trillion rubles (about 500 billion dollars).⁵⁰

Poland, however, is, unfortunately, a medium-sized state, and in the hierarchical international community of the European continent is far behind Germany and Russia and is slated to be able to catch up with them only around 2050. Today, with a GDP of 3.1 trillion euros, Germany is the strongest economy in the European Union, generating over a fifth (21.1 per cent) of EU GDP. Poland, with a GDP of EUR 424.6 billion, ranks 8th in the EU (2.9 per cent of EU GDP). On the other hand, GDP per capita (calculated according to purchasing power parity) with a value of EUR 11200.00, which constitutes 69 per cent of the EU's average GDP per capita, classifies Poland at a distant 24th position among EU member states. In this respect (standard of living), in 2016, only four EU countries were poorer than Poland—Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, and Romania. Additionally, in relation to Germany, the structure of Polish GDP looks unfavorable, which is characterized by a very high share of consumption and a low share of investments and exports.

A very important factor in this competition will also be active foreign policy of Germany and Russia related to the authority of both countries and their prestige in the international arena, in contrast to Poland, whose anti-Russian and anti-German course raises concerns among Central and Eastern European countries. Today, Poland is particularly threatened by Vladimir Putin's international policy, who wants to force

⁵⁰ W. Radziwinowicz, "Rosja mniej zbrojna" (Less Armed Russia), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 29, 2017, p. 8; K.A. Kowalczyk, *Geopolityczne dążenia współczesnej Rosji...*, pp. 78-92.

“the new Yalta”. Russia, under the rule of Vladimir Putin, does not resemble Russia under the rule of Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, when everything was falling apart. Today, the country is relatively stable. Russia refers to the Slavic tradition, fascination with the Russian soul, and the popularity of Russian culture in the West. Russia recognizes itself as a preserver of the Orthodox heritage and the leader of the world of Eastern Christianity. In practice, if necessary, Russia is ready to use hard power to resolve conflicts and defend its own national interests. Moreover, its leader still enjoys over 80 per cent public support, and the anti-Putin opposition is weak, divided, and repeatedly pacified. Putin’s goal is the Chinese model, i.e., a strong dictatorship, a strong, developing economy, as well as strengthening of Russia’s position in the international arena. Nowadays, the Western media every now and then announces distressing news that Russia is preparing for a new war, that it is ready to start, and is just waiting for a convenient moment to unleash it.⁵¹

To sum up, Poland – according to the theory of geopolitics – as a peripheral state today and in the near future. In contrast to the growing power of Germany and Russia, and because of the structure of the international environment in which it operates, and the aforementioned hierarchical nature of the international community, the country has limited possibilities of pursuing its own interests, including a key promotion for the position of a hegemon in the European region. Without the support of the European Union and NATO its national interests and international security will be seriously threatened. It would be politically and strategically imprudent to count on real support from the Visegrad Group countries in the event of a direct threat. The Slovaks, the Czechs, and the Hungarians tolerate the Poles, but it is doubtful whether they love them very much. They will definitely not die for us. They are closer to Germany and Russia than to Poland. Both Germany and Russia can find a common strategic language and develop cooperation behind Poland’s back or at its expense. The Russians have long ago linked their interests with Germany’s, especially in the economic sphere. Key examples are the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines and the number of direct foreign investments that Germany allocates in Russia despite EU economic sanctions imposed on Russia because of the annexation of Crimea. In this way, Germany de facto supports the aggressor, and Poland openly supports Ukraine and exposes itself to retaliation.⁵²

⁵¹ “Pod tronem cara kipi młoda Rosja”. Z Adamem Michnikiem rozmawia Stanisław Skarżyński („Young Russia is Seething Under the Throne.” Adam Michnik’s Interview with Stanisław Skarżyński), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30.12.2017-1.01.2018, pp. 8-9; R. Łoś, “Soft power Rosji” (Russia’s Soft Power), *Przegląd Strategiczny*, no. 10 (2017), p. 576; A. Czajkowski, “Federacja Rosyjska: przywracanie utraconej wielkości” (The Russian Federation: Restoring the Power), in T. Łoś-Nowak (ed.), *Polityka zagraniczna. Aktorzy, potencjały, strategie (Foreign Policy. Actors, Potential, Strategies)*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 81-103.

⁵² J.M. Fiszer, “Pragmatyczna polityka Niemiec wobec Rosji i jej skutki dla bezpieczeństwa Europy w XXI wieku” (Pragmatic German Policy Towards Russia and Its Effects on European Security in the XXI Century) *Studia Politica Germanica*, no. 2(5) (2016), pp. 11-34; A. Sakson, “Współczesna niemiecka geopolityka – ciągłość i zmiana” (Germany’s Modern Geopolitics – Continuity and Change), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 4(55) (2016), pp. 356-365; P. Buras, *Między europeizacją a Gazpromem: Niemcy, Rosja i bezpieczeństwo energetyczne (Between Europeanization and Gazprom: Germany,*

In view of the aforementioned reality, the question arises as to what would happen to Poland and its security if it did not belong to NATO and the European Union, which guarantee the security of Poland, Europe, and the world. The Poles are aware of this and that is why the level of social support for Poland's membership in the EU and NATO is still very high. In a survey conducted in February 2020 by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), as many as 89 per cent of the respondents approved Poland's presence in the EU, and only 7 per cent of the respondents were against it.⁵³ Contrarily, in a survey conducted by CBOS in February 2019, as many as 72 per cent of the respondents approved Poland's presence in NATO, and only 3 per cent were opposed to it.⁵⁴ Despite such high public support, the European Union and NATO should undertake several reforms and intensify cooperation within the transatlantic system and internationally to strengthen their effectiveness. Poland, on its part, should actively support the transatlantic system and strengthen its position within the NATO and the European Union.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bobińska E. et al. (eds.), *Polska w NATO (Poland in NATO). Pakiet edukacyjny*, Warszawa 2002.
- Buras P., "Między europeizacją a Gazpromem: Niemcy, Rosja i bezpieczeństwo energetyczne" (*Between Europeanization and Gazprom: Germany, Russia and Energy Security*), *Raporty i analizy*, no. 7 (2008).
- Czachór Z., Jaskulski A. (eds.), *Polska Polityka Europejska. Wyzwania krajowe i międzynarodowe (Poland's Policy Towards Europe. National and International Challenges)*, Poznań 2019.
- Czaputowicz J., "Mapa współczesnego realizmu: realizm klasyczny, neorealizm, realizm neoklasyczny" (The Map of Contemporary Realism. Classical Realism, Neorealism, and Neoclassical Realism), in E. Haliżak, J. Czaputowicz (eds.), *Teoria realizmu w nauce o stosunkach międzynarodowych. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze (The Theory of Realism in International Relations. Assumptions and Searching Uses)*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 25-41.
- Cziomer E., "Początki partnerstwa strategicznego Niemcy-Rosja w XXI wieku" (The Beginnings of the Strategic Partnership Between Germany and Russia in XXI Century), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Witoldowi Maciejowi Góralskiemu (Integration, Foreign Policy, the Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland. The Jubilee Book dedicated to Professor Witold Maciej Góralski)*, Warszawa 2019.

Russia and Energy Security), *Raporty i analizy*, no. 7 (2008); M. Stolarczyk, "Główne kwestie sporne i dylematy w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku" (Main Moot Points and Dilemmas in Polish-German Relations in the Second Decade of the 21st Century), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna*, pp. 559-583.

⁵³ *Postrzeganie Unii Europejskiej i jej instytucji (Perception of the European Union and Its Institutions)*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, komunikat z badań, no. 32 (2020), pp. 1.

⁵⁴ *20 lat członkostwa Polski w NATO...*, p. 7.

- Curanović A., Kardaś S., Alf R., *Polityka zagraniczna Rosji w okresie prezydentury Władimira Putina. Próba bilansu (Russia's Foreign Policy During the Presidency of Vladimir Putin. A Profile)*, Warszawa 2008.
- Czajkowski A., "Federacja Rosyjska: przywracanie utraconej wielkości" (The Russian Federation: Restoring the Power), in T. Łoś-Nowak (ed.), *Polityka zagraniczna. Aktorzy, potencjały, strategie (Foreign policy. Actors, Potential, Strategies)*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 85-89.
- Dąbrowska M., Kos A., "Rozwój współpracy wojskowej w stosunku do NATO na przykładzie udziału Wojska Polskiego i Bundeswehry w działaniach militarnych prowadzonych w Afganistanie" (Development of Military Cooperation in Relation to NATO on the Example of the Polish Army and the Bundeswehr's Participation in Military Operations Conducted in Afghanistan), *Obronność. Zeszyty Naukowe*, vol. 1, no. 9 (2014), pp. 53-64.
- Dębski S., "Falszerstwa Putina" (Putin's Forgery), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 8, 2020.
- Domagała A. *Integracja Polski z Unią Europejską (Poland's Integration with the European Union)*, Warszawa 2008.
- 20 lat członkostwa Polski w NATO (20 Years of Poland's Membership in NATO)*, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, komunikat z badań, no. 31, 2019.
- Falecki J., "Zapewnienie bezpieczeństwa w świetle koncepcji strategicznych NATO" (Ensuring Security in the Light of NATO's Strategic Concept), *Ante Portas – Studia nad Bezpieczeństwem*, no. 1 (2014), pp. 11-25.
- Fiszer J.M., "Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski do NATO i Unii Europejskiej" (Russia's Stance on Poland's Accession to NATO and the European Union), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 1(60) (2018), pp. 264-289, [https://doi.org/10.26399/meip.1\(60\).2018.10/j.m.fiszer](https://doi.org/10.26399/meip.1(60).2018.10/j.m.fiszer).
- Fiszer J.M., "Pragmatyczna polityka Niemiec wobec Rosji i jej skutki dla bezpieczeństwa Europy w XXI wieku" (Pragmatic German Policy Towards Russia and Its Effects on European Security in the XXI Century), *Studia Politica Germanica*, no. 2(5) (2016), pp. 11-35.
- Fiszer J.M., "Stosunki polityczne między Polską i Rosją oraz ich determinanty w latach 1989-2014" (Political Relations Between Poland and Russia and Their Determinants in 1989-2014), in R. Żelichowski (ed.), *Polska. Sąsiedztwo bliższe i dalsze. Różne punkty widzenia (Poland. Closer and Wider Neighborhood. Different Points of View)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 177-205.
- Fiszer J.M., "The Thirtieth Anniversary of the Sejm and Senate Elections in 1989. Systemic Transformation in Poland and its Consequences for Europe and the World", *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 3(66) (2019), pp. 139-163.
- Fiszer J.M., "Kto wygrał II wojnę światową, a kto przegrał pokój? Refleksje na kanwie 70. rocznicy zakończenia II wojny światowej" (Who Won World War II and Who Lost Peace? Reflections Upon the 70th Anniversary of the End of World War II), *Rocznik polsko-niemiecki*, no. 24 (2016), pp. 11-34, <https://doi.org/10.35757/RPN.2016.24.02>.
- Fiszer J.M., *Unia Europejska a Polska. Dziś i jutro (The European Union and Poland. Today and Tomorrow)*, Toruń 2002.
- Fiszer J.M., Czasak M., *Trójkąt Weimarski. Geneza i działalność na rzecz integracji Europy w latach 1991-2016 („Weimar Triangle. The Origin and Activity for the Integration of Europe in 1991-2016”)*, Warszawa 2019.

- Feldmeyer K., "Partnerschaft für den Frieden. Die Mehrheit in der NATO zögert mit der Erweiterung nach Osten", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 27, 1993.
- Gaddis J.L., "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War", *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1992-1993), pp. 5-58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539129>.
- Gardocki S., "Geopolityczne uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa Polski w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku" (Geopolitical Determinants of Poland's Security in the Second Decade of the XXI Century), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej (Integration, Foreign Policy, Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland)*, Warszawa 2019.
- Golec J., "Polska droga do Unii. Tło polityczne" (Poland's Road to the Union. Political Background), *Dziś*, no. 11 (1998), pp. 79-84.
- Halizak E. (ed.), *Badanie polityki zagranicznej państwa (Research on the State's Foreign Policy)*, Warszawa 2018.
- Holzer J., *Europa zimnej wojny (Europe of the Cold War)*, Warszawa 2012.
- Jakimowicz R., *Zarys stosunków polsko-rosyjskich w latach 1992-1999 (Outline of Polish-Russian Relations in 1992-1999)*, Warszawa 2000.
- Kiwerska J., *Partnerstwo w przywództwie? Stany Zjednoczone i Niemcy (1989-2016). Perspektywa polska (Partnership in Leadership? The United States and Germany (1989-2016): A Polish View)*, Poznań 2017.
- Kissinger H., "No Illusion about the USSR", *The Washington Post*, January 22, 1991.
- Koszel B., "Droga państw tzw. Grupy Wyszehradzkiej do Unii Europejskiej (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Polski)", in M. Kosman (ed.), *Przeszłość przyszłości (The Past of the Future)*, Poznań 2001, pp. 136-153.
- Kowalczyk K.A., "Geopolityczne dążenia współczesnej Rosji" (Geopolitical Aspirations of Modern Russia), *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, no. 27 (2019), pp. 78-92.
- Koziej S., *Polska doktryna obronna i jej modyfikacja w obliczu integracji z NATO (Polish Defense Doctrine and Its Modification in The Face of Integration with NATO)*, Warszawa-Toruń 1996.
- Kozub-Karkut M., "Realizm neoklasycyzy – główne założenia i możliwości" (Neoclassical Realism – Main Assumptions and Possibilities), in E. Halizak, J. Czaputowicz (eds.), *Mapa współczesnego realizmu. Założenia i zastosowania badawcze (The Map of Modern Realism. Assumptions and Searching Uses)*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 43-54.
- Kozhemiakin A.V., Kanet R.E., "Russia and Its Western Neighbours in the 'Near Abroad'", in A.V. Kozhemiakin, R.E. Kanet (eds.), *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, London 1997, pp. 35-26.
- Kupiecki R., *Od Londynu do Waszyngtonu. NATO w latach dziewięćdziesiątych (From London to Washington. NATO in the 90s)*, Warszawa 2007.
- Kuźniar R., "Polityka bezpieczeństwa w polskiej polityce zagranicznej" (Security Policy in Poland's Foreign Policy), in R. Kuźniar (ed.), *Polska polityka bezpieczeństwa: 1989-2000 (Polish Security Policy: 1989-2000)*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 82-84.
- Łoś R., "Soft power Rosji" (Russia's Soft Power), *Przegląd Strategiczny*, no. 10 (2017), pp. 565-579, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ps.2017.1.30>.
- Madera A.J., "Stosunki polityczne między USA a Federacją Rosyjską w latach 1991-2001" (Political Relations Between the USA and the Russian Federation in 1991-2001),

- Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, vol. 1 (2003), pp. 113-133, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssp.2003.1.06>.
- Malendowski W., Waszczykowski W., "Międzynarodowe uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa Polski" (International Determinants of Poland's Security), in W. Malendowski, C. Mojsiewicz (eds.), *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne (International Political Relations)*, Poznań 1996.
- Mazurkiewicz B., "Zmiany w postrzeganiu przestrzeni a geopolityka we współczesnej Rosji" (Changes in the Perception of Space and Geopolitics in Contemporary Russia), *Przegląd Geopolityczny*, no. 2 (2017), pp. 117-127.
- NATO w trakcie transformacji (NATO Under Transformation)*, at https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf.../20120116_nato-trans-pol.pdf.
- Narinskij M.M., "Geneza 'zimnej wojny' – ideologia i geopolityka" (The Origin of the Cold War – Ideology and Geopolitics), *Dzieje Najnowsze*, no. 2 (2000), pp. 79-98.
- Otlowski T., *Polska w procesie integracji z NATO i Unią Zachodnioeuropejską 1991-1998 (Poland in the Process of Integration with NATO and the Western European Union)*, Toruń 1998.
- Podraza A., "Początki transatlantyckiego partnerstwa bezpieczeństwa: wybuch zimnej wojny i powstanie Sojuszu Atlantyckiego" (The Beginnings of the Transatlantic Security Partnership: The Outbreak of the Cold War and the Emergence of the Atlantic Alliance), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 2(65) (2019), pp. 65-101, [http://dx.doi.org/10.26399/meip.2\(65\).2019.16/a.podraza](http://dx.doi.org/10.26399/meip.2(65).2019.16/a.podraza).
- "Pod tronem cara kipi młoda Rosja", Z Adamem Michnikiem rozmawia Stanisław Skarżyński ("Young Russia is Seething Under the Throne, Adam Michnik's Interview with Stanisław Skarżyński"), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30.12.2017-1.01.2018, pp. 8-9.
- Postrzeganie Unii Europejskiej i jej instytucji (Perception of the European Union and Its Institutions)*, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, komunikat z badań, no. 32 (2020).
- Przybyła K., "Rosyjska polityka wobec Zachodu – wybrane zagadnienia" (Selected Issues of Russian Policy Towards the West), *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, no. 26 (2013), pp. 67-89.
- Radziwinowicz W., Kokot M., "Putin: Polska wspierała Hitlera" (Putin: Poland Was Supporting Hitler), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 27, 2019.
- Radziwinowicz W., "Rosja mniej zbrojna" (Less Armed Russia), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 29, 2017.
- Rose G., "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1998), pp. 144-172, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100007814>.
- Sakson A., "Współczesna niemiecka geopolityka – ciągłość i zmiana" (Germany's Modern Geopolitics – Continuity and Change), *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 4(55) (2016), pp. 356-365.
- Skubiszewski K., "Polska i Sojusz Północnoatlantycki w latach 1989-1991" (Poland and the North Atlantic Alliance in 1989-1991), *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, no. 1 (1999), pp. 9-15.
- Stolarczyk M., "Główne kwestie sporne i dylematy w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku" (Main Moot Points and Dilemmas in Polish-German Relations in the Second Decade of the 21st Century), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej (Integration, Foreign Policy, the Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 559-583.

- Sulek J., "O pojednaniu polsko-niemieckim po II wojnie światowej po 30 latach trudnych doświadczeń (1989-2019)" (On Polish-German Reconciliation after World War II after 30 years of difficult experience (1989-2019)), in E. Mreńca (ed.), *Integracja, polityka zagraniczna, praworządność, wyzwania dla Polski współczesnej (Integration, Foreign Policy, the Rule of Law, Challenges for Modern Poland...)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 647-679.
- Taliaferro J., "State Building for Future Wars; Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", *Security Studies*, vol. 15 (2006), pp. 464-495, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410601028370>.
- Świetlicki B., "Współpraca Polski z NATO" (Poland's Cooperation with NATO), *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej* 1998, pp. 64-82.
- Wągwrowska M., *Partnerstwo dla pokoju (The Partnership for Peace)*, Warszawa 1994.
- Wieczorek P., Kludka P., *Droga Polski do NATO – próba bilansu (Poland's Road to NATO – A Profile)*, Warszawa 1997.
- Wielński B.T., "Atak Kremla na Polskę. Osamotnieni na własne życzenie" (The Kremlin's Attack on Poland. Left Alone at Our Own Request), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 30, 2019.
- M. Zając, "Założenia strategiczne funkcjonowania NATO" (Assumptions of NATO Strategic Functioning), *Horyzonty Bezpieczeństwa*, no. 1 (2015), pp. 67-77.
- Zięba R., *Nowa instytucjonalizacja bezpieczeństwa europejskiego (New Institutionalization of European Security)*, Warszawa 1998.
- Zięba R. (ed.), *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe po zimnej wojnie (International Security After the Cold War)*, Warszawa 2008.
- Ziółkowski A., *NATO w XX wieku. Transatlantyckie zależności (NATO in XX Century. Transatlantic Dependencies)*, Warszawa 2002.

Józef M. FISZER – prof. dr hab., political scientist, historian, the head of the Department of European Studies of Institute of Political Studies of Polish Academy of Science, and the head of the Faculty of International Political Relations of Lazarski University. His speciality is modern history of Poland, Germany, and Russia; additionally, he conducts research on European integration and European security. He is a member, vice-president of the Political Science Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a member of the Council of the President of the Republic of Poland for International Policy.