



Poland's post election foreign policy – a turning point?

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Poland's autumn election followed the collapse of the coalition between the majority Law and Justice Party (PiS) and the Samoobrona Party and the League of Polish Families (LPR) two years before the end of the parliament's four year term. The resignation of the government came in the wake of accusations and counter accusations between the coalition partners of corruption and unconstitutional behaviour. The short election campaign saw, in essence, a continuation of little more than the robust polemics between PiS and the Civic Platform (PO), the main opposition party during the government's two years in office. The PiS-led government's foreign policy played a small part in the campaign and what debate there was between the main contenders failed to reflect the electorate's concerns on Poland's continued involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as plans to site a US missile defence base in northern

Poland. The election was fought on the government's record in combating corruption and saw a big mobilisation of voters on both sides of the political spectrum around this issue. High economic growth and declining unemployment during its entire term helped to buoy PiS's support in the election. Ultimately, however, the contest¹ was decided by an unprecedented turnout of young people who voted to reject the government's traditionalist domestic policies and inherent suspicion of the outside world.

The result of the election saw PO win the greatest number of seats in the Sejm and Senate, the two parliamentary chambers. Subsequently it established a governing coalition with the Polish People's Party (PSL). The government brought in a new foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, to replace Anna Fotyga, who is likely to move to the President's office. This presages

¹ The parliamentary election was held on 21 October 2007 with an electorate of 30.3 million people and a turnout of 53.8 per cent. Four parties surmounted the 5 per cent threshold needed to enter parliament. 6.7 million people or 41.5 per cent voted for the pro business Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) giving the party 209 seats in the 460 seat Sejm, the lower chamber. The traditionalist Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) won 166 seats with 5.2 million voters or a 32.1 per cent share of the ballot. The Left and the Democrats, an alliance of post communists and the dissident based Demokraci.pl (Lewica i Demokraci – LiD) came third with 2.1 million voters or a 13.2 per cent share of the turnout gaining 53 seats. The farm based Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL) came last with 1.4 million votes or an 8.9 per cent share of the ballot and 31 seats. The populist Samoobrona failed to surmount the 5 per cent barrier with a 1.5 per cent share of the ballot or 247.3 thousand voters. The right wing, nationalist League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin – LPR), also present, like Samoobrona, in the previous parliament, failed to get into the Sejm with a 1.3 per cent share of the ballot or 209.1 thousand voters.

PO won the election to the 100-seat Senate winning 60 seats with PiS coming second with 39 seats and the one remaining seat going to Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, a former prime minister and foreign minister associated with the post communist left. Elections to the Sejm are held on a proportional basis under the D'Hondt system while the Senate is elected on a first past the post system.

a duality in Polish foreign policy which will make it difficult for the authorities to present a coherent face to the outside world. It will also bring differences on foreign policy issues into the domestic political debate, for while PiS lost the October election, the president, Lech Kaczyński², still has three years of his term to run. There is every indication that his approach to PO will be similar to that of his twin brother Jarosław, the head of PiS, who adopted a combative stance towards the PO in the wake of the election.

The PiS government made a great deal of the fact that its foreign policy differed greatly from that of its predecessors in that it was more assertive towards the EU as well as to both Germany and Russia. However, in some respects there was a greater measure of continuity with previous administrations than initially met the eye. The question facing the current study is to what extent Poland's foreign policy will change with the new government – in the light of public attitudes and the election campaign.

The Opinion Polls

Foreign policy, as such, is not the regular subject of polls in Poland. Individual foreign policy issues, however, are polled systematically by CBOS, a publicly funded research organisation. These include popular attitudes to European Union

membership, to the presence of Polish troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the location of a US missile defence installation in northern Poland and to attitudes to Poland's largest neighbours, Germany and Russia. All of these were the subject of polls in the months before the October election, as was a general study of the government's record³, which included a specific question on foreign policy. This showed a measure of unease about the government's record in this field. Thus Jerzy Buzek, a right of centre premier, saw 68 per cent giving him a good or adequate mark in this field in 2001; Marek Belka, the centre left prime minister, saw 61 per cent backing him in these categories while Jarosław Kaczyński finished at a lower 50 per cent. Respectively, the three leaders saw 17 per cent, 15 per cent and 38 per cent saying that their foreign policy had been 'inadequate'. While this result showed that public opinion as a whole was concerned at PiS's performance in foreign policy, the foreign policy elites⁴ were still more so, finding little to praise in the policies followed by Anna Fotyga after she became foreign minister in May 2006.

The pre election studies showed public opinion deeply at variance with PiS government policy on both the European Union and participation in military expeditions abroad as well as the United States' missile defence plans. A survey conducted in May 2007⁵ on attitudes to the

² Poland's 1997 constitution says that the President is the commander in chief of the armed forces and acts as the representative of the state in foreign policy with responsibility for ratifying international treaties, appointing Polish ambassadors and accrediting foreign ambassadors in Poland. However, it is the government that conducts foreign policy. In 2005-2007, under the PiS government, Jarosław Kaczyński, the President's twin brother, left responsibility for foreign policy, to a great extent, to the president. It was he who generally travelled to EU summits, for example.

³ CBOS, "Szczegółowe oceny działalności rządu", September 2007, BS/145/2007.

⁴ See "Główne Wyzwania Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej, Doświadczenie i Przyszłość" working paper, Warsaw autumn 2007.

⁵ CBOS, "O modelu integracji europejskiej i eurokonstytucji", June 2007, BS/99/2007.

European Union showed 89 per cent of Poles supporting Polish membership of the EU and a mere 5 per cent against. This compares to 70 per cent for EU membership in August 2004 (21 per cent against), just after Polish accession, and 73 per cent in favour (16 per cent against) in September 2005 when PiS won the parliamentary election. This means that support for the EU actually grew in Poland despite the country being governed by the most eurosceptic administration since 1989. This included the nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR), which was openly hostile to the EU and Samoobrona, which demonstrated its diffidence about European integration during successive election campaigns. The growth in support is mainly to be explained by a change in stance by Poland's farmers after they began to receive subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy.

It is also true that even though PiS demonstrated its unhappiness about the EU and engaged in successive confrontations with Brussels – support in the towns for the EU remained extremely strong. At the same time a mere 21 per cent of Poles thought that the PiS government's policies towards the EU actually strengthened their country's position⁶ in the Union. One third thought the opposite while 30 per cent thought that PiS government policy made no difference.

The other mismatch between the opinion polls and actual policy conducted by the PiS government as well as its predecessor, the post-communist Left Democratic Alliance (SLD), was over military

involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Poland currently has detachments of around 1,000 troops to both countries fighting the war against terrorism. Popular support for the deployment in Iraq⁷ reached 36 per cent in July 2003 and peaked at 42 per cent in January 2004 falling to 16 per cent in October 2007. A similar pattern emerges on Afghanistan, a NATO rather than US-led operation, with support peaking at 57 per cent in April of 2002 (when the Polish contingent was planned at a mere 300 personnel) and falling to 19 per cent in October 2007 (opposition reached 77 per cent in this poll). All this time government policy failed to change and neither did criticism of the war by both the LPR and Samoobrona (muted when both were in the government coalition with PiS) make any impact on the government stance.

In a similar vein, public support for the planned US missile defence installation in northern Poland fell as debate on the issue mounted. In December 2005, half of the population supported the plans, but that figure fell to 28 per cent by July 2007, with opposition reaching 56 per cent in the same month⁸. Here, too, opposition to the project from the LPR and Samoobrona failed to affect the government, which continued to speak out in favour of having the installation located in Poland.

The surveys conducted in the months preceding the election showed that Poles feel secure about in their post-1989 status as a sovereign nation. Whilst as many as 44 per cent thought in February 1991 that Poland's independence was threatened,

⁶ CBOS, "Opinie o sytuacji Polski na arenie międzynarodowej i stosunkach z Niemcami", July 2007, BS/117/2007.

⁷ CBOS, "Stosunek do obecności żołnierzy Polskich w Iraku i Afganistanie", October 2007, BS/162/2007.

⁸ CBOS, "Opinie o instalacji tarczy antyrakietowej w Polsce", August 2007, BS/133/2007.

that figure had fallen to a mere 13 per cent in June 2007⁹. In June 2007, as many as 73 per cent thought there was no threat to their country's independence. Since 1989, Poles have also become increasingly relaxed about their long term relations with Germany. In February 1991, half thought that post-war reconciliation with Germany was impossible, to the 44 per cent who believed the opposite. By June 2007, though, reconciliation was thought possible by as many as 80 per cent, while a mere 14 per cent remained unconvinced. Nevertheless, the two years of PiS rule, which saw an almost constant tussle with Germany over responsibility for the wartime past and its aftermath, resulted in a major drop in the number of Poles thinking that bilateral relations were positive, with a majority blaming the Germans for this deterioration. Ominously for the prospects for an improvement in relations between Warsaw and Berlin within the framework of the EU, as many as 51 per cent of Poles said they were concerned about Germany strengthening its position in the EU.

Ahead of the election, as many as 54 per cent of Poles considered relations with Russia¹⁰ to be bad, reflecting a dispute over a gas pipeline planned under the Baltic in cooperation with German energy companies by Gazprom, the Russian gas producer and an ongoing conflict over Moscow's ban of Polish meat imports. The PiS government enjoyed the support of a majority in its tough stance on the import

embargo, as well as Warsaw's consequent veto on the preparation of an EU negotiating mandate for a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Russia to replace the current one, which expires at the end of this month. Around one third of Poles think that Russia's stance on bilateral relations is dictated by a failure to treat Poland as an equal partner, while another third fears that Russia is unable to come to terms with the loss of its influence over Poland.

The Political Platforms¹¹

Election programmes belong to a grey area in Polish politics. Their contents are rarely, if ever, reported in the media. They are almost never discussed by a political party's rank and file, nor do party political activists contribute to their contents. They are also largely ignored by the party's opponents, for that matter. However, the absence of these documents would immediately be picked up as proof that a given party has no ideas. So they are authored and published before every election campaign. They are useful, though, insofar as they provide a snapshot of the state of mind of a party's political leadership as it faces the voters. The foreign affairs chapter is usually to be found towards the end of the programme, thus reflecting the prominence that politicians are willing to accord this area.

⁹ CBOS, BS/117/2007 op. cit.

¹⁰ CBOS, "Polska-Rosja. Bezpieczeństwo energetyczne i opinie o wzajemnych stosunkach", June 2007, BS/105/2007.

¹¹ This chapter will examine the programmes of the four parties which were elected to parliament. The League of Polish Families (LPR), a radical, anti European group and the populist Samoobrona gained a mere 1.5 per cent of the poll each and thus have disappeared from the political arena. During the election campaign LPR demanded, for example, that the EU reform treaty be put a referendum. The call, like many other LPR initiatives was not taken up by the other parties and the group's ideas have been marginalised.

For the PO, foreign policy came on page 74 of an 84 page document¹².

Pride of place in the PO programme is given to the question of 'how, thanks to EU membership, Poland can catch up with the old EU members' and 'not permit itself to be outpaced by the other new member states'. The vague answer to this question is that economic reforms must continued and the implementation of EU development funds maximised. At the same time, the programme hints that the EU budget should be expanded and pledges that the PO will strive to 'maintain and develop the support mechanisms for poorer regions and member states'. The PO also promises to be active in creating a common EU energy policy 'that will guarantee Polish interests'. The PO pledges to 'deepen integration in the area of common foreign and security policy' and to see a 'strong EU remaining in strategic relations in partnership with the United States'. The programme adds that it is Poland's interest that the Lisbon strategy should be realised and declares that Poles should have access to all labour markets in the EU. The PO promises to play an 'active' role in the forthcoming EU budget review, as well to consult the public over the date of euro-adoption. The future of the Common Agricultural Policy will, according to the PO, be the subject of 'active and effective lobbying' that will aim to modernise the sector. No further details are offered.

The PO goes on to hint that it will adopt a more robust approach to the United States, while remaining its 'close ally'. PO also wants a 'US presence in Europe as well as a Polish-American strategic partnership. But this will involve a 'sober

approach and attention to an assessment of the real benefits' for Poland. The programme places great stress on NATO as the 'main guarantor of Poland's security' and sees NATO as 'a platform of the unity of the West'. The programme does not devote any specific attention to the issue of the US missile defence system, merely remarking that the system should be in accord with 'NATO theories of an allied defence against short and medium range' missiles. Nonetheless, the EU's Security and Defence Policy should be 'deepened and strengthened', becoming, in time, a 'second pillar of Poland's defences, equal to NATO'. The PO programme sees NATO in both a defensive role and as an active participant in 'peace operations and the fight against terrorist threats'. At the same time the PO sounds a note of caution on military operations abroad, and suggests that the Polish presence in Iraq should not be 'extended for another year'. Regarding Afghanistan, PO wants to see the Polish involvement in the NATO operation to evolve towards a civilian, nation-building operation. The party also pledges greater parliamentary control over budgets for military operations abroad and thus greater parliamentary control over military operations abroad present and future.

In its policy towards Poland's neighbours, the PO promises a return to an active role in the Weimar Triangle in which Polish, French and German leaders meet to exchange views on policy. The party also says it will aim to improve bilateral relations with Germany, the Czechs, the Slovaks and Lithuania. The PO will strive to conclude the disputes in Poland's relations with Germany that derive from the 'tragic past'. The PO foresees a 'long

¹² Program PO, "Polska zasługuje na cud gospodarczy", Warsaw 2007.

march' and 'a patient dialogue' in relations with Russia, declaring that 'good neighbourly relations' can be re-established. Ukraine is described as a 'great and important' partner of Poland's. The PO said it would remain committed to supporting democratic changes in the country and an 'ally in Ukraine's drive to come closer to NATO and the EU'. The PO cautions, however, that this process 'will take longer than initially thought'. Belarus is not mentioned.

The PO programme is, predictably, critical of PiS' record in foreign policy. Equally predictably, the PiS programme¹³ praises its own foreign policy record. The programme declares that 'Poland's position in the EU has unquestionably been strengthened; we are an increasingly important partner in the EU'. It also claims that 'we have initiated de-communisation, the professionalization and a generational change in the Polish diplomatic service'. The PiS policy pledges carry no more than academic value in that the party lost the election and thus the power to implement policy. But the fact that the PiS leader's twin brother has another three years of his presidential term to run means that the election promises are worth noting, as the party's philosophy is likely to underlie the foreign policy promoted by the presidential palace.

Like PO, the PiS programme sees NATO as an important element of Poland's security. PiS, though, leaves no doubt that military operations abroad are a key foreign policy element that help to bolster Poland's 'international status and security'. The programme declares that Poland should work to 'strengthen NATO as well as build a common European defence

policy'. PiS pays more attention than PO to the missile defence programme, which it sees as an 'element of Poland's security and strategic partnership with the US'. Nevertheless, PiS promises 'hard negotiations' with the US over the installation of a missile defence base in the country, echoing the PO pledge that it 'will adopt a sober approach and assessment of the real benefits' of relations with the US. PiS declares that it will undertake efforts to ensure the country's energy security within the NATO framework and, more enigmatically, through the EU's treaty process. The other threat to Poland's security remains unnamed in the programme but can be identified by the careful reader as Germany. On this point, the programme says that 'attempts are being made to falsify the truth and moral responsibility for the tragic consequences of the Second World War'. PiS declares that the 'the scale of the revisionist threat means that we should reconsider the sense of conducting policies of reconciliation'. It also touches on attempts by some former inhabitants of German territories located in present-day Poland to obtain compensation for their loss of property. 'We are taking steps to ensure that citizens who are threatened by this will be legally protected'. While Germany is not discussed by name in the programme, Russia is mentioned in passing, when PiS says that 'the EU finally declared its solidarity with Poland in the dispute with Russia over its baseless and politically motivated trade embargo'.

Germany is again not mentioned by name but does appear in the paragraphs dealing with the EU, which declare that 'we are afraid that the Union will be dominated by the strongest, most highly populated and

¹³ "IV Rzeczpospolita – Sprawiedliwość dla wszystkich", Warsaw 2007.

economically powerful countries'. PiS promises to fight this dominance inside the EU. The programme pledges to ensure that the new Common Agricultural Policy will strengthen Polish farming; the forthcoming EU budget review fails to even merit a mention. Neighbourhood policy does, however, appear. PiS declares that the EU's neighbourhood policy should be more involved in eastern Europe and the countries of the Caucasus. The programme says that 'we are in favour of ensuring speedy and sure perspectives of membership in the Euro-Atlantic structures, particularly for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as well as for other partners in the region, such as Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus in the future'. Interestingly, neither the PO nor PiS programmes make any mention of policy towards Turkish accession or that of the Balkan countries.

If there are gaps in the PiS programme, then the PSL election manifesto¹⁴ is positively laconic, being composed entirely of bullet points. This is a pity, because PSL is set to become the junior partner in the new governing coalition, and its programme gives little indication of the party's views on foreign policy. The manifesto does, however, declare that the PSL favours the withdrawal of Polish military units from both Iraq and Afghanistan 'without delay' as their actions 'do not strengthen Poland's security'. On EU issues, the PSL, which is in the European People's Party (EPP) in the European Parliament, declares that it will 'support the construction of a Europe of nations to protect the sovereignty and the identity of the nations and states of

Europe'. The PSL goes no further on its policy towards Russia and Germany than to say 'we will repair good relations with Poland's closest neighbours'. The PSL also states that Poland's 'strong position' in the EU will strengthen the country's role in relations with the United States. Poland's security will be ensured by having the country 'play a role in NATO, in the UN, EU, OSCE and through policies which aim at strengthening peace in the world and solidarity in the development of all countries and nations'.

The staggering banality of the PSL's election programme contrasts with the maturity of the Lewica i Demokraci (LiD) manifesto¹⁵. However, LiD, which brings together the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) (the post communists), the Social Democrats (an SLD breakaway group), and the Democrats.pl (a party with its roots in the dissident movement of the 1970's¹⁶), won third place in the election and looks likely to be isolated in the current parliament. The PO is unlikely to reach out for its support because of the latter's communist roots, and for this reason PiS is even less likely to make common cause with LiD in opposition. The LiD programme shows, though, that it is the most unreservedly pro-western grouping in the new parliament. It openly describes itself as a 'pro-European political force' and argues that Polish foreign policy should concentrate on reversing the damage wrought by the outgoing PiS-led administration with its European policy. LiD promises to place Poland at 'the centre of gravity of the European political project'. LiD favours rapid euro-adoption

¹⁴ "Razem twórzmy lepszą przyszłość", Warsaw 2007.

¹⁵ "Nowa Polityka, Nowa Nadzieja", Warsaw 2007.

¹⁶ The SLD and the Social Democrats are in the Socialist group In the European Parliament while the Democrats belong to the liberal (ALDE) group.

and the completion of the single market regarding the flow of services, people, goods and capital. While market mechanisms should be introduced into future Common Agricultural Policy, LiD comes out strongly against any renationalisation of the CAP. It also argues for a continuation of cohesion policies that would favour developing member states. LiD declares that it will work for an improvement in Poland's relations with Germany. But it warns that this could become more difficult if the structures of the EU and NATO were to be eroded. LiD supports the 'perspective of EU and NATO membership for some states in the east'. However, the programme, in contrast to the PiS document, fails to say which states these would be. As far as Russia is concerned, LiD proposes 'a model of relations which is based on promoting democracy and human rights' and a return to a strategic dialogue with Russia. Relations with the United States remain a 'traditional priority', but this has to be bolstered by the EU's Defence and Security policy as well as the Common Foreign and Security policy. LiD calls for the opening of talks with 'our allies' on a withdrawal of 'Polish troops from Iraq by the end of 2007'. There is no mention of Afghanistan. On energy security policy, LiD argues for more emphasis on energy saving measures. "It would be erroneous to concentrate exclusively on security of supply", the programme says.

The Campaign

Foreign policy did not play a key role in the election campaign itself. PO launched its billboard campaign with posters

suggesting that Poles were 'ashamed' of their country's image abroad as a result of their opponents' policies. However, the party then shifted its focus to the Poles living abroad who, it suggested, had emigrated because of the PiS-led government's policies. Indeed, PO television spots predicted that Poles would start coming home if the party were to form the next government.

The three hour-long television debates¹⁷ that punctuated the short campaign did, however, give some exposure to foreign policy issues as they were a mandatory section in the discussions. The main debate was between the front runners, Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS) and Donald Tusk (PO). This saw the two party leaders clash on the issue of Polish-German relations as well as on a withdrawal timetable for the Polish troops in Iraq, energy security policy, and the rejection by Poland of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Kaczyński accused Tusk of being too 'soft' over disputes concerning the property rights of Germans who had been residents of territories which now belong to Poland. Tusk dodged the issue of how he would seek to improve relations with Germany and Russia, which he claimed had deteriorated under PiS. The PiS leader was keen to move swiftly onto the issue of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, which his government said could lead to a legalisation of homosexual marriages in Poland. Tusk chose to fight on the issue of Iraq, charging Kaczyński with a lack of coherent policy and was keeping Polish troops there unnecessarily long. Kaczyński argued that the presence of the troops means that

¹⁷ Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS) debated with Aleksander Kwaśniewski (LiD) on October 2, and with Donald Tusk (PO) on October 12 while Aleksander Kwaśniewski finished up the series with Donald Tusk (PO) on October 16, five days before the election on October 21.

Poland was now 'noticed' in the world, while Tusk said that Poland had gained little in terms of material advantage in return for its efforts in Iraq.

Earlier, Kaczynski had debated with Aleksander Kwasniewski, president in 1995-2005, who was not running for office but fronted the LiD campaign. In their discussion of foreign affairs, the two men concentrated mostly on the past. The PiS leader charged that Poland's foreign policy had been too conciliatory to the country's partners abroad. This is the famed 'Poland had been negotiating on its knees' argument that PiS had often used when in office to criticise its predecessors and justify purges in the foreign ministry. Kwasniewski, predictably, denied the charge, arguing that the country had joined key western institutions, such as the EU and NATO, during this period. The debate failed to touch on the issue of Iraq or indeed any concrete matters relating to future policy in the EU. Indeed, the future remained largely absent from the exchange.

The last debate between Aleksander Kwasniewski and Donald Tusk lacked the dramatic tension of the exchange between Kaczynski and Tusk, as polling figures showed that LiD had little chance of winning a large enough share of the ballot to have any influence on future policy. The exchange did, however, reflect popular concerns in the foreign policy field such as Iraq and the continued presence of Polish troops there, with both protagonists suggesting that Polish involvement there should end.

While the debates touched on the issue of Iraq, the question of withdrawal never became a key topic in the campaign. This was despite the fact that the Polish

ambassador in Bagdad, General Edward Pietrzyk, had survived a serious bomb attack at the hands of Iraqi terrorists during the campaign, and that attacks on Polish military personnel were stepped up in an attempt to get the issue of troop recall onto the political agenda in Poland. This strategy failed, underscoring once more the mismatch between popular opposition to Poland's military involvement abroad and an inability to have these attitudes translated into concrete political action at home.

The other issue which could have but didn't emerge as a major debating point in the campaign was the EU's Reform Treaty, which President Lech Kaczynski was due to accept in Lisbon at a summit two days before the election. Right up till the last minute, there were fears in the other member states that PiS would demand extra concessions from their partners in the EU and refuse to accept the draft version agreed in Brussels in the summer. This would have been a good opportunity for PiS to demonstrate a 'hard' stance on the EU to their own voters and maybe mobilise waverers from other camps. However, Poland confirmed its support for the draft in Lisbon, which PiS had celebrated as a success of its own EU policy. Indeed, PiS largely kept its euro-sceptic stance off the menu of election issues. EU policy was a subject of dispute between the parties during the campaign only on the issue of how to best handle negotiations within the EU itself, but EU membership was not questioned by the main contenders. Also absent was any discussion on the positions Poland will take in the looming debate inside the EU in the nearest future – on the budget, the common agricultural policy and future cohesion policy.

The aftermath

Poland's new government was sworn on 16 November 2007, almost a month after the election. PO leader Tusk became prime minister of a coalition between PO and the PSL, headed by Waldemar Pawlak, as junior partner. Tusk invited Radosław Sikorski, who resigned earlier this year as defence minister in the PiS government, to become foreign minister. Sikorski joined the ranks of the PO shortly before the election campaign, a move that the PiS leadership found difficult to forgive. Even as the new administration was being mooted, the president signalled¹⁸ that he was totally opposed to Sikorski's appointment to the foreign ministry (MFA). As a result, there will be an additional tension between the PO-led government and the president's office right from the start. Relations between the two institutions would have been difficult in any case given the differences which divide the two parties in their vision of Poland's foreign policy. However, the additional conflict over Sikorski will only exacerbate those differences.

The result of the Polish election was greeted with relief in many EU capitals – including Berlin – all of which look forward to more positive bilateral and EU policies emanating from Warsaw. Senior foreign policy officials in Kiev also hailed the PO victory warmly, as they had been concerned that the Polish government's euro-sceptic stance had largely cancelled out the effect of the support that Poland had given to their drive for closer relations with the EU. Even Moscow seemed prepared for a fresh start in its relations

with Poland, signalling that the Russian ban on Polish meat imports would be reconsidered now that a new administration was due to take power in Warsaw. Such optimism was sometimes tempered in eastern Europe by concerns that Poland would drop its tough stance towards Moscow. This had been admired by those who fear renewed Russian assertiveness. The PiS government's defiant attitude towards Brussels had also won plaudits in eastern Europe, where some saw it as a sign that the new member states did not necessarily have to agree with each and every decision which came from the EU or the older members. 'Now Poland will become like all the other consensual EU member states and the EU will lose that defiant tone which might reinvigorate it', noted a Ukrainian businessman who has worked in Brussels.

It does seem likely that Polish policy in the EU will now become less confrontational. But it has to be remembered that, in the past, PO had supported the independent tone which Poland adopted both in the negotiations on the draft Constitutional Treaty as well as in the most recent round on the Reform Treaty. Both Lech Kaczynski, the president, and Donald Tusk, the prime minister, will travel together to Lisbon to the signing of the Reform Treaty which Kaczynski negotiated on Poland's behalf. The present administration does not have the two thirds majority in parliament (even with the support of LiD) needed to ratify the treaty and presidential officials have said that PiS would oppose ratification if the terms of the agreement which Lech Kaczynski approved were to be changed by PO. This would cover the

¹⁸ PiS conducted a sustained and public campaign against Sikorski's candidature implying that there were security reasons for him not to be trusted with high rank in the government. However the president had no choice but to approve the nomination once Donald Tusk had made it clear that he would not abandon Sikorski.

Polish opt outs from the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which PiS maintains could open the door to German restitutional claims on Polish property and changes in Poland's abortion and marriage laws.

Poland will adopt a less strident tone in policy towards Germany although the issue of the German-Russian gas pipeline under the Baltic to which Warsaw is opposed will continue to bedevil relations with Berlin. The fate of policy towards Russia remains to an extent in Moscow's hands. The simplest way to achieve an improvement would be for Russia to lift its ban on Polish meat imports. If this does not happen then any attempt to warm relations could see harsh criticism from PiS and the president. Both these issues – the gas pipeline and relations with Russia – are connected, and the new government will seek to resolve them within the framework of the EU and not outside it, as PiS initially tried to do.

European neighbourhood policy and EU enlargement will be another topic where Poland will continue to make its views felt in the EU. A European perspective for Ukraine will remain a priority for Poland and Warsaw will continue to speak for an active EU policy in eastern Europe. It remains to be seen how the new government will seek to press its case in the light of widespread 'enlargement fatigue' in the old member states. Poland's style will probably change but the level of commitment will not. It is more than likely that Warsaw will seek to harness the Weimar mechanism as well as the Visegrad forum (periodic meetings between leaders of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland) to promote its view of eastern policy inside the EU.

At the same time these concerns will be overshadowed by the debate inside the EU on its future budget, cohesion and agricultural policy. Here Poland has well defined interests to defend, namely the maintenance of a common and not national EU farm support policy and continuing EU aid for developing regions. The official Polish stance is as yet in an embryonic stage, and there is still room for the construction of a position which could seek to address the concerns of both the member states which want to keep the budget down and those that want to see a continuation of traditional, re-distributional policies. However, domestic political considerations and a simple lack of imagination may push the PO and its PSL coalition partner, into a confrontational stance on budget issues that would overshadow anything seen under the outgoing PiS administration. Especially as PiS, in opposition, will be relentless in criticising anything it sees as a failure to defend Polish interests.

Relations with the United States might also see a greater measure of continuity than expected. Pre-election opinion polls and statements by PO during the campaign clearly point to the need for an exit from Iraq. However the question remains as to how and when this is to be done. There is also the vexed issue of the installation of US missile defence facilities in northern Poland, where popular opposition and a cross party consensus in support of the plans remains in place. To judge by statements during the election campaign and their party manifestos, politicians of all parties consider that the US should be persuaded to pay a price for the right to install its equipment on Polish territory. The position of Radosław Sikorski, the new foreign minister, will be crucial in this respect. In the past, Sikorski

acquired the reputation of being pro American. During his term as defence minister, he argued increasingly for a greater involvement – be it financial or in terms of equipment – by the US in Poland’s defence capability, in return for Poland’s military presence in Iraq and support for the missile defence system. In this he failed to see eye to eye with key decision makers in the Bush administration. Ironically PiS, which has made assertiveness in foreign policy a hall mark of its term in office, has criticised Sikorski for being too assertive in relations with the US. It seems unlikely that much will change in Sikorski’s attitude towards the US as foreign minister.

Poland’s outgoing government made much of the fact that its foreign policy marked a clean break with that of its predecessors, whom it accused of failing to defend Polish national interests. However the SLD government which ruled Poland till 2005 stood up to the other EU member states in its stance on the Constitutional Treaty as much as did PiS in its position on the EU’s Reform Treaty. Moreover the SLD took Poland into Iraq and raised no public objections to the US missile defence installation plans. These policies were continued by PiS. The SLD also saw a big deterioration in relations with France and Germany over its positive policies towards Washington, while PiS’s relations with Germany were notoriously bad. There was little difference between the two governments in neighbourhood policy and support for a democratic and

independent Ukraine. Nor were relations with Russia markedly better during the SLD’s term in office.

Poland’s new PO-PSL government has the opportunity to ditch its predecessor’s policies and has underlined that it will seek to repair relations with the EU, as well as with Russia and Germany. In contrast to PiS and SLD, the PO has hinted that it will put the Polish relationship with the US on more of an equal footing. However the main foreign policy challenges facing Poland remain the same and the new administration may well find itself adopting assertive positions in many of these areas. This will provide a greater measure of continuity in foreign policy, in both content and style, than first meets the eye.

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