



## Polish Foreign Policy 2005–2007

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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The formation of a government by the Law and Justice party (PiS) after national elections in Poland in the autumn of 2005<sup>2</sup> brought the prospect of radical changes in Polish politics, both in domestic and foreign policy. A parliamentary election was won by PiS, a right of centre party rooted in the Solidarity movement and headed by Jaroslaw Kaczynski. PiS won the greatest number of seats in parliament and two weeks later a presidential election was won by his twin brother Lech<sup>3</sup>.

The PiS government came in as Poland, now well entrenched both in NATO and the European Union, found itself in a position to shape policy in these two

institutions rather than merely to agree to decisions made elsewhere. This novel situation put an obligation on the country's political, diplomatic, academic and think tank community to develop strategic objectives that reflected its new role as a fully fledged partner of the western community. Polish policy developed both within and outside the government will be judged not only on whether it retains a sense for Poland's national objectives, but also on whether it contributes to the strength, cohesiveness and security of these international institutions or weakens them. This is the challenge which faced the new government and its critics in the autumn of 2005 and will continue to confront the country in coming years.

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<sup>1</sup> This text draws heavily on a report entitled *Polska polityka zagraniczna na rozdrożach: między konsensusem a rywalizacją*, ISP 2007 by Piotr Maciej Kaczynski, to whom the author is grateful. However the narrative, judgements and conclusions are the responsibility of the author alone.

<sup>2</sup> The parliamentary election was held on September 25, 2005 with an electorate of 30.2 mn people and a turnout of 41 per cent. Six parties surmounted the five per cent threshold needed to enter parliament. 3.2 mn people or 27 per cent voted for Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) giving this party 155 seats in the 460 seat Sejm, the lower chamber. The pro business Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) won 133 seats with 2.8 mn voters or 24 per cent support. The populist Self Defence (Samoobrona) movement came third with 56 seats on an 11 per cent share of the ballot amounting to 1.3 mn voters. The former communist Left Democratic Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – SLD) came next with 55 seats and 1.3 mn voters or 11 per cent of the turnout. The right wing, nationalist League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin – LPR) won 34 seats with the support of eight per cent of the vote amounting to 0.9 mn voters. The farm based Polish People's Movement (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL) came last with 25 seats and a seven per cent share of the vote amounting to 0.8 mn supporters.

PiS won the election to the 100 seat Senate winning 49 seats with PO coming second with 34 seats and LPR third with 7 seats. 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 basis.

<sup>3</sup> The presidential election was held in two rounds on October 9 2005 and October 23 2005. With 30.2 mn people entitled to vote, the first round saw a 50 per cent turnout and was won by Donald Tusk, the leader of the PO who gained 5.4 mn votes or 36 per cent of the turnout. Lech Kaczynski, the PiS candidate, won 4.9 mn votes amounting to 33 per cent. The other frontrunners were Andrzej Lepper, the head of the Self Defence movement who got 2.3 mn votes or a 15 per cent share and Marek Borowski, running for the SLD who was supported by 1.5 mn voters or 10 per cent of the ballot. As neither candidate won 50 per cent of the vote in the first round a second round, was held two weeks later. It was contested by Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński. The election was won by the latter with 8.3 mn votes or 54 per cent of the 51 per cent turnout. Donald Tusk won seven million votes or a 46 per cent share.

## The story so far

The 2005 election came after a four years of government by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), first under the premiership of Leszek Miller, whose administration collapsed<sup>4</sup> under a welter of accusations of sleaze. It was followed by a caretaker, 'technocratic' government headed by Marek Belka, who had been deputy premier and finance minister in Miller's cabinet. Miller's administration completed Poland's European Union accession negotiations and he relinquished his post when Poland entered the EU in May 2004. It was Marek Belka who agreed to a compromise on the text of the EU Constitutional Treaty which Poland signed in Rome in October 2004.

Initially PiS and the pro-business Civic Platform party (PO), both off shoots of the Solidarity movement of the 1980s, ran the 2005 campaign against the leftist SLD in tandem. It was expected that the two parties would form a coalition government in the wake of the election. In the course of the campaign, however, the level of polemic between the two putative allies became increasingly strident. When it became clear that voter support for the SLD had collapsed and PiS had captured the presidency, the latter set its sights on governing alone or with the support of the smaller parties in parliament. PiS lost interest in a coalition with PO, and relations between the two parties deteriorated thereafter<sup>5</sup>.

This strategic shift was accompanied by a growing radicalisation of PiS rhetoric as it made clear that its aim in government was not only to make a break with the past but to destroy the political consensus which had governed Polish politics since 1989. This had been based on the assumption that, in the main, both rulers and ruled in pre-1989 communist Poland had both a private and public role to play in the independent republic. Their activities were to be governed only by the rules of the free market, the rule of law, an independent media and parliamentary democracy<sup>6</sup>. This arrangement was legitimised by the fact that the former communists won free and fair elections both in 1993 and 2001. Moreover, Aleksander Kwasniewski, whose political career had begun during the communist period, won two consecutive presidential terms in 1995 and 2000. However, PiS criticised this consensus as an unholy alliance between the former communists and the leaders of the Solidarity opposition. PiS charged that this alliance had allowed both sides to do well in the corruption ridden environment of the 1990s, while depriving the vast majority of the population of the economic benefits of the transformation. This criticism of the power sharing agreement that had underpinned reforms in domestic policy was, in time, to spill over into foreign policy.

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<sup>4</sup> Poland entered the European Union on May 1 2004 and Leszek Miller resigned on May 2 2004. Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz was foreign minister from 2001 – 2004 under Leszek Miller and served in the same capacity under Marek Belka from 2004 to the end of the year. Adam Rotfeld took over from Cimoszewicz and held the post of foreign minister from January 2005 to October 2005.

<sup>5</sup> PiS leaders maintain that it was PO that was responsible for the failure of the coalition negotiations. Thus they argue that PiS was forced into an alliance with the League of Polish Families and Self Defence. The debate about ultimate responsibility is not the subject of this paper, although it can be fairly said that the tenour of the verbal exchanges between the two parties during the elections meant that the establishment of a functioning coalition between the two parties would have been very difficult.

<sup>6</sup> The political shorthand for this is the 'round table': the set of negotiations between the ruling communists and the opposition Solidarity movement in the spring of 1989, which led to a peaceful relinquishing of power by the communists in elections in the summer of that year.

## Foreign policy – the initial period

Foreign policy played little role in the 2005 election. The issue of EU membership had been settled by the accession referendum in June 2003<sup>7</sup> and the low turnout<sup>8</sup> in the June 2004 election to the European Parliament had shown that the issue of 'Europe' had ceased to excite the voters. Even the heated debate on the content of the Constitutional Treaty and Poland's stance in defence of the Nice voting system, which had united the major parties from the SLD through to PiS and PO, also failed to attract the attention of the mass of the population<sup>9</sup>. The results showed that Poles looked to the European Union to satisfy the country's infrastructural needs and security concerns but were not interested in questioning the EU's institutional arrangements or proposed reforms. Support for membership grew from the already high 69 per cent at accession to 86 per cent in April 2007<sup>10</sup> as the farmers, who had once been sceptical of the EU and its potential effect on their commercial interests, changed their minds as they began to receive payments under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

While the appetite for radical policies within PiS remained strong, the party's initial moves were tinged with caution. Its chairman, Jarosław Kaczyński,

pledged to remain in the background and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, a pragmatic politician who had been a convinced supporter of a PiS – PO alliance, was appointed prime minister. Stefan Meller, a career diplomat and former ambassador, first in Paris and then in Moscow, who had joined the service after 1989, became foreign minister. This move was designed to signal a measure of continuity in foreign policy, especially towards Brussels. Meller, however, did move to make a break with the past in personnel policy at the ministry. Soon after he took office, it was announced that changes would be made and it became clear that officials who had joined the ministry before 1989 and had been ardent supporters of the previous regime would be replaced. However, this was not enough for PiS supporters, and Meller was increasingly criticised. In a newspaper interview in the spring of 2006, Lech Kaczyński, the president, spoke of 'the corporation which had taken control of Poland's diplomatic effort'<sup>11</sup>. This was a direct reference to Stefan Meller and those officials who had joined the ministry after 1989, the implication being that the new minister was going too slowly for the PiS leadership and the party's apparatus in purging officials. It was also clear by then that for PiS, foreign ministry officials who had served

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<sup>7</sup> The referendum saw a 59 per cent turnout of the 30 mn people entitled to vote. 77 per cent or 14 mn people voted yes and 23 per cent or 4 mn voted no to Poland's membership in the EU.

<sup>8</sup> A mere 21 per cent or six million of the 30 mn Poles entitled to vote, bothered to turn out. The election was won by the PO with 15 of Poland's 54 seats with a ballot share of 24 per cent or 1.4 mn voters. LPR came second with a 15 per cent share or one million voters and 10 seats. PiS came third with 0.8 million voters or 13 per cent of the vote and 7 seats. Samoobrona won seven seats with an 11 per cent share amounting to 0.7 mn supporters. The two former Communist parties captured 8 seats on a combined vote of 0.9 people representing a 14 per cent share. The PSL won 4 seats and the Freedom Union (Unia Wolności – UW) won the remaining 4 seats.

<sup>9</sup> See an account of the controversy in Krzysztof Bobiński, *The Constitutional Treaty and Poland – A New Laggard in the EU?* in *Leadership in the big bangs of European Integration*, ed: Derek Beach and Colette Mazzucelli, London 2007.

<sup>10</sup> According to survey data published by CBOS, a public opinion polling organisation 69 per cent of Poles supported EU membership in June 2004, 73 per cent in September 2005 and 86 per cent in April 2007 (CBOS, Warsaw, 2007 BS/70/2007).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, *Polska polityka na rozdrożach: między konsensusem a rywalizacją*, ISP 2007 p. 11.

under previous administrations were all equally suspect, irrespective of whether they had joined before or after 1989.

At the same time, the foreign ministry's control over Poland's policy towards the EU was being undermined by the chiefs of the line ministries, who were increasingly taking initiatives in Brussels without consulting Meller. The situation was complicated by an ongoing turf war between the Foreign Ministry and the EU integration ministry, which had led the accession negotiations, but had been slated by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, the former foreign minister, to be annexed to the foreign ministry. Differences between the two institutions, which were supposed to coordinate sectoral policies towards Brussels, helped to create a space for the line ministers to shape their own agendas. Given the eurosceptic mood in PiS, these were more often than not aimed at challenging the consensus in Brussels<sup>12</sup>. It was during this period that one minister, upon arriving in Brussels for a Council meeting, famously exclaimed to a startled senior Polish diplomat 'what the f... do we actually need the EU for'?

The mounting pressure to make far-reaching personnel changes and the de facto loss of control over European policy meant that Meller's days were numbered. When PiS negotiated the entry of the populist Self Defence party and the radically nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR) into the government, the minister resigned. He was replaced in May 2006 by Anna Fotyga, a PiS member of the European Parliament and a confidante of Lech Kaczyński's. Fotyga never made a secret of her eurosceptic attitude. She had felt very much at home in the Europe of

Nations faction along with the rest of the PiS MEPs in the parliament.

Two months later, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz was forced to resign. He had brought the negotiations for the EU's current seven-year budget to a successful conclusion in December 2005. These had foreseen the transfer of around 67 billion euros of aid to Poland between 2007 and 2013. However, he was seen as showing too little enthusiasm for the radical policy and personnel changes that PiS had promised. He was replaced by Jarosław Kaczyński, and the stage was set for a radical change in Poland's foreign policy.

## **PiS and Europe**

PiS policy towards Europe was governed on the one hand by its general view of the outside world, and, on the other, by its assessment of Polish foreign policy after 1989. PiS leaders were often heard to say that they – in contrast to their predecessors – would not be conducting foreign policy 'on their knees' with respect to their partners abroad. They declared that their policy would be formulated 'assertively', putting Poland's 'national interests' first, and that there would be no shrinking from abrasive conflicts if that national interest was perceived to be in danger. In its criticism of previous policy, PiS failed to acknowledge the limitations which had been placed on Poland's freedom of manoeuvre after 1989 by the twin aims of foreign policy following the fall of communism – joining NATO and the European Union. That policy involved the adoption of a given 'western' model of free market economics and democratic politics, as well as peaceful coexistence with Poland's neighbours, amongst whom

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<sup>12</sup> Poland has been involved in a series of rows with Brussels that have arisen from attempts to resist the demands of EU legislation or commitments made by previous governments. These include resistance to the merger of major banks, state aid to the Gdansk shipyard, the dispute over a planned road through a nature conservation area on the Rospuda river, limits on sugar and meat production and limits on cod fishing in the Baltic. Cf. Kaczyński op.cit. p. 31

Germany was seen as a special ally who would help to smooth the country's entry into the EU.

Each of the EU's successive accession candidates has experienced the shock of having to adapt its legislation to the EU legal system. All have found the lack of negotiating room in accession talks irksome, if not downright demeaning. In addition, the accession of each country has to be approved by the existing member states, which often have differing policy agendas on a whole range of EU issues. Thus accession countries are ill advised to specify their own policy preferences too volubly before entry and thus risk making enemies who could block or delay their accession. The suppliant position is rarely a very dignified one. However, the reward was entry into NATO and the EU which gave Poland a measure of security in the defence, economic and political spheres. This is the prize that PiS has failed to acknowledge in its political rhetoric since taking power in the autumn of 2005. This negative attitude was enhanced by a sense among PiS supporters that European integration was somehow inimical to Polish values and interests; the instinctive suspicion of the EU was strengthened when PiS formed a coalition with LPR, which is openly hostile to Brussels, and the populist Self Defence, which liked to

adopt defiant postures on EU issues. PiS, it has to be said however, had been more circumspect in its 2005 election programme<sup>13</sup>.

The PiS party manifesto, written for the 2005 election, only barely reflects the changes in foreign policy that were to come later. It even speaks of the fact that Poland had 'built a strong position for itself in transatlantic relations and won high prestige in Europe' over the past 15 years. The programme however, did say that 'our aim is to build a strong Republic which will occupy a position worthy of a big European nation in the international arena'. This self confidence echoed the stance of Poland's pre-second world war government in the 1930s, which had 'assumed that Poland was the smallest of the large powers when it should have recognised that it was the largest of the small countries'<sup>14</sup>. The programme also criticised the EU's Constitutional Treaty, 'which moves too many competences to the EU institutions', the replacement of the Nice decision-making mechanism, which 'weakens Poland's political position in the EU', and the failure to recognise Christianity as the basic source of inspiration for Europe's societies and culture<sup>15</sup>. The programme stressed that the nation states working together with each other are the basic drivers of European cooperation<sup>16</sup>. It

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<sup>13</sup> IV Rzeczpospolita, Sprawiedliwość dla Wszystkich, Warszawa 2005 pp. 38-49.

<sup>14</sup> The remark was made of the policies conducted by Jozef Beck, the foreign minister from 1932 to 1939, by Stanislaw Stroński, the information minister in General Wladyslaw Sikorski's government in exile, in London in February 1941 during a conversation with Paul Henri Spaak, the then foreign minister of the Belgian Government in exile. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, PRM 1941/53 Belgium).

<sup>15</sup> Since the PiS manifesto was written, the Constitutional Treaty has become the Reform Treaty, and after a nerve racking set of negotiations with the Polish government before and during the Brussels summer summit, the PiS government accepted an extension of the Nice voting formula to 2014 and the application of the Ioannina blocking formula after that. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the prime minister, has defended the agreement in the October 2007 election campaign.

<sup>16</sup> The PiS election manifesto states that 'The Union should become a strong union of nation states working in solidarity with each other. The main source and driver of these values are, and shall remain, the member states. All the competences of the EU shall flow from the decisions of sovereign states. Only a strong centralised state will enable us to realise our interests and infuset future generations with the values which are vital for the existence of the nation and its development. The nation state marks the basic condition for the functioning of democracy. This is why we are against the replacement of the nation state by the structures of a European superstate'.

also promises to 'challenge the hegemonic ambitions of the EU's most powerful countries, which are seeking to build their prosperity at the cost of the remaining member states'. The programme fails to specify which countries these are, but it can be assumed the authors of the manifesto have Germany, above all, in mind. The phrase foreshadows the later deterioration in Polish-German relations and the view that came to dominate European policy under Anna Fotyga, according to which the EU had become an instrument of German domination in Europe<sup>17</sup>.

Even so, the programme is very positive about the need to maintain not only the EU's regional policies but also the Common Agricultural Policy, which 'must remain a significant element of European integration for many years'. It also stresses the need to build an 'Eastern dimension' for the EU and to continue enlargement policy towards eastern Europe. Herein lay the basic contradiction of PiS's policy towards the EU. It was assumed that a primary goal of Polish policy was to maintain the primacy of intergovernmental relations between EU members at the expense of the communautarian institutions (especially the European Commission). At the same time PiS stressed the need for 'solidarity' among the member states (code for a continuation of redistributive regional policies and CAP) and further enlargement – all of which implies acceptance of the Constitutional Treaty with a streamlining of decision making procedures and the acceptance of limitations on national sovereignty which that involves.

Nowhere is this contradiction in PiS's European policy clearer than in

its attitude towards Poland's largest neighbours, Russia and Germany, as well as towards its goals of encouraging further EU enlargement to the east and ensuring Poland's energy security. The subjects are, of course, linked. It has been a basic tenet of Polish foreign policy that the successor states to the Soviet Union retain their independence from Moscow and adopt western style economic and political reforms which would open the way to eventual membership of NATO and the EU. Thus support for eastern enlargement, especially of the EU, must involve maintaining Brussels' capacity to use its 'soft power' as a means of preparing for such membership and fending off a possible re-emergence of a bloc of countries to the east dominated by Russia. At the same time, Russia is a prime supplier of energy, not only to Poland but also to western Europe. Recent events have shown that Moscow is ready to use its advantage in this field as a means of exercising political influence towards its partners. It would therefore seem that the establishment of a common European energy policy would be a key goal for Warsaw as it sought to ensure the security of its energy supplies. Indeed, the planned gas pipeline across the Baltic from Russia to Germany which avoids an alternative (and less financially and environmentally costly) transit route across Belarus and Poland rang warning bells in Warsaw, raising the spectre of cooperation between Berlin and Moscow at Poland's expense<sup>18</sup>.

Energy security was, in fact, one of the first topics to be tackled by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's government. A plan, written not in the foreign ministry but in the prime minister's office, proposed the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Krzysztof Bobinski in OpenDemocracy [http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy\\_power/future\\_europe/poland\\_confusion](http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy_power/future_europe/poland_confusion).

<sup>18</sup> Recent opinion surveys show Poles coming to terms with their western neighbours as reconciliation processes continue while fears are concentrated on a newly self confident Russia. The surveys shows however that fears of both partners grow appreciably when the two countries are seen to be cooperating with each other.

establishment of an 'energy NATO' to which states buying their energy supplies from Russia would subscribe, declaring their mutual support if Russia were to decide to cut off deliveries. 'One for all and all for one', the slogan coined by Alexandre Dumas for his musketeers, became the catchword of the plan, whose main flaws were that it totally ignored both a call by Tony Blair, the then British prime minister, for a common European energy policy, as well as work on the same subject being carried out at the time by the European Commission. Moreover, the plan raised hackles in Moscow, where NATO was remembered as a hostile military grouping which had by threat of force challenged Soviet aspirations to hegemony in Europe. Were the Poles now suggesting that an energy NATO would force the Russians to bend to Europe's will, just as Moscow was celebrating a new found confidence in its foreign policy? The plan was greeted with ill disguised derision in western European capitals and quietly dropped. However, it carried all the trademarks of PiS foreign policy. By avoiding the framework of the EU, it signalled distrust of Poland's European partners. At the same time, the presentation of the plan ignored Russian sensibilities, which are crucial to the success of any workable arrangement on energy supplies. The plan also showed a fierce mistrust of German intentions in Europe. This was part of a general deterioration of relations with Berlin and made it all the more difficult to resolve the dispute over the German – Russian Baltic gas pipeline to which Poland continues to be opposed.

If enlargement of the EU is the key to Poland's efforts to ensure its security to

the east, then the content and style of Polish policy towards the EU is vital to the country's interests. There are many reasons why the EU's enlargement policy has stalled at present. One of the reasons for this is 'enlargement fatigue' in the old member states. This derives from the fear that constant enlargement will not only complicate decision making by bringing in new states with little or no feeling for the politics of consensus but which, on the contrary, carry illiberal attitudes that could change the nature of the Union<sup>19</sup>. These are fears which should not be ignored by Polish decision makers. Unfortunately for its enlargement policy, though, the PiS-led government has done much to make them real. The government has disputed EU legislation in a number of areas<sup>20</sup>. Most recently it has refused to agree to an EU-wide campaign against the death penalty, thereby signalling a challenge to the liberal consensus on which the EU is based. Polish right-wing MEPs, allied to the PiS-led government, have consistently opposed a liberal approach to issues such as abortion. Some have stressed a predilection for the European leaders like Franco and Salazar, thereby creating the impression that Poland is ready to stand at the head of a counter revolution in manners and morals in Europe.

Enlargement has generally gone ahead in the EU when Germany has been in favour of new states joining. It would therefore seem that the road to a continuation of enlargement policy would run through Berlin. However, the PiS administration's poor relations with Germany mean that it is difficult to build common policies towards Ukraine and other countries, reducing the chances of

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<sup>19</sup> Ivan Krastev of the Centre for Liberal Studies in Sofia summed this up when he noted that the veto is a conventional weapon for new EU member states whereas it is treated as a nuclear weapon by the old members. Also it is reliably said that an element in the no vote in the Dutch and French referenda on the EU treaty was the fear that people were losing control of the lives and that from now on 'countries like Romania would be dictating how they are to behave'.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote nr 12.

coming to an agreement with the EU over further enlargement.

Deteriorating relations with Germany have also made it more difficult for Poland to engage in constructive policies towards Russia. From the very beginning, the PiS government faced the challenge of a Russian import ban on meat products from Poland that neither Warsaw nor Brussels has been able to resolve. In turn, the PiS-led government decided to veto work on the preparation of a common EU position for a new EU – Russia partnership agreement. The veto was designed to bring the EU's attention to the meat import ban and force it to recognise that Poland needed the support of its European partners in dealings with Moscow.

Traditionally, Moscow has never been enamoured of plans for a federal Europe. During the Second World War, Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, resisted Polish plans for a central European federation, first with Czechoslovakia and then with other states in the region, out of fear that a 'cordon sanitaire' was being built around the Soviet Union. He also realised that federations in Europe would greatly reduce his freedom of action towards the states of Europe. Post-war Soviet dominance in eastern Europe made the issue of federations in the area an academic one. After the war, it was the Americans who pushed hard for the establishment of a federation in western Europe as an added safeguard to NATO against the Soviets. The Soviet Union never dropped its hostility towards the EEC after it was finally founded in 1957, and traces of that stance on Europe remain in Russian policy. Even if Moscow has come to terms with the fact that former Warsaw Pact countries like Poland and Hungary and even former Soviet republics like Estonia and Lithuania are in the EU, efforts continue to be made to show the western European member states that these countries will be a constant

source of tension between Moscow and Brussels. The pursuance of a bilateral dialogue by Moscow with Berlin or Rome, especially on energy issues, shows that Russia continues to treat the EU as a collection of separate nation states hoping to undermine the cohesion of the organisation. It should be evident to the PiS government that if Russia is unhappy about the fact that the EU is well integrated, then Poland should be making every effort to strengthen that cohesion and not the opposite, as it so often does by stressing the rights of the member states at the expense of the community.

Since coming to power, PiS has made a great deal of the historical aspect of its foreign policy, meaning a determination not to allow the memory of past wrongs to be swept aside by the need for present good relations with countries like Germany. The PiS narrative charges that former Polish governments chose to play down historical wrongs and in doing so have paid too great a price for present day advantages. Thus PiS leaders have not shrunk from reminding German leaders of the losses suffered as a result of the Second World War. They relentlessly play up any sign that Germany might be seeking to minimise its responsibility for starting the war and the attendant war crimes by dwelling on the tragic fate of their own war time and post-war refugees and expellees. This stress on remembrance ignores the passing of time and the reconciliation process that has taken place, not only in western Europe since 1945, but also in Polish-German relations since the 1960s. The stance gives the PiS government the appearance of being stuck in a time warp that dates back to the early post-war years, when the issue of German responsibility for the war was still very much alive and the idea of European integration still very new.

This 'historical' approach also ignores one major event: the creation of

what is now the European Union in 1957. PiS's ambivalent approach to the existence of the European Union and the effect the EU has had on the situation in Europe may be the single biggest misconception governing its European policy and also that towards Poland's neighbours. The PiS leadership, as well as many of its activists, feel an instinctive distrust towards the EU as an organisation. To their minds, 'Brussels' threatens Poland's sovereignty and way of life. PiS tends to treat the EU as an unpleasant necessity that has to be endured. This attempt to marginalise and downplay the EU was best seen in Poland's energy security proposals. What this approach misses is that up till now the EU has actually gone a long way to resolving the problems which the PiS government continues to struggle with. In the west, Poland's 'German problem' has been resolved by the existence of the EU, which to a great extent was established precisely to provide a framework that would never allow Germany to go to war to dominate Europe again. Thus if Poland really fears a resurgence of German might, then Warsaw should, first and foremost, work to strengthen and not weaken the EU. It is also abundantly clear that the cause of European integration was given a crucial and decisive boost at the height of the Cold War when the US came to the conclusion that only a united Europe would be able to resist the challenge the Soviet Union presented to freedom on the continent. Then, as now, Moscow knew that its freedom of manoeuvre would be inhibited by just such a united Europe. Thus PiS seems to have missed the fact

that when Poland joined the EU in 2004, it was joining an organisation which had been designed to neutralise the dangers faced by generations of Poles – the danger of domination by the country's neighbours<sup>21</sup>. If only for that reason the EU deserves Polish support.

## **PiS and the United States**

There was one area of foreign policy in which the PiS-led administration followed the policy of its predecessors. This was in relations with the United States. Since 2003, when Poland's post-communist government accompanied the Bush administration into Iraq, successive governments have been uniformly loyal and attentive to major US foreign policy concerns. Part of this is explained by the fact that there has been a fascination in Poland with American economic and technological prowess, which is seen as a more dynamic model than that of the European Union<sup>22</sup>. Secondly, there are traditional ties to the US which go back to the mass emigration to America at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thirdly, the military might of the US compared to an underdeveloped EU common defence policy is seen as the ultimate guarantor of Polish territorial integrity. This is the 'we defend Bialystok in Bagdad' argument. It suggests that the only element of consensus and continuation in Polish foreign policy during the rule of the PiS government with that of its predecessors is that the US is the only power in the world which can effectively defend Poland in case of need. Therefore this is an

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<sup>21</sup> The irony of PiS's 'historical' approach to foreign relations is that it totally ignores the fact that the exiled government of General Wladyslaw Sikorski, which was formed in Paris at the end of September 1939 after Poland's collapse, immediately took federalism as a main branch of its policy. Sikorski and his cabinet, as well as Polish political exiles, were not afraid to speak of sharing sovereignty and did so until well into the 1950s. They saw federalism as the only way of avoiding future wars in Europe and guarding against a resurgence of German and limiting Soviet power in Europe. The final chord of this generation was the call by Edward Raczynski, the president in exile, to Poles living in the United Kingdom to vote for the country to stay in the EU in the British referendum of 1975.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Leszek Miller, the then premier in 2003.

alliance which should be pursued in every way possible.

Thus the former SLD administration took the decision to purchase US F-16 fighters for Poland's air force, spurning the 'European' options including the Gripen Swedish-made fighter and the French offer of Mirage aircraft. Representatives of both of the SLD administration and of the PiS government have staunchly denied charges that Poland was ever involved in helping the US with the imprisonment on its territory of detainees deemed to be involved in terrorist activities. Indeed there is little record of PiS politicians charging that Polish policy towards the US was ever conducted on 'its knees' by its predecessors, although some critics have charged that Polish policy towards the US has been far too pliant and relied too much on bilateral relations as opposed to relations conducted within the NATO and the EU framework<sup>23</sup>.

Poland's continuing military commitment in Iraq is a manifest sign of the country's loyalty to the US. It has even given grounds for talk within the government of a 'special' or 'strategic' relationship between Poland and the US<sup>24</sup> akin to that said to exist between the United Kingdom and the US. There is, of course, an element of political hyperbole in this description of Warsaw's relationship with Washington, but it has raised hopes of concessions from the US on issues such as visa wavers for Poles. These hopes have invariably been dashed.

The involvement in Iraq has been followed by the deployment of a Polish military contingent to Afghanistan, although, this time, within a NATO framework. The move is seen by public opinion with little enthusiasm. Interestingly, the government's foreign policy in the case of both the US and the EU fails to be affected by public opinion. The polls show that the EU enjoys the support of over 85 per cent of the population and yet the government maintains its eurosceptic stance. In the case of the military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the opposition of around 60 per cent of the population appears to have no effect on policy. Indeed, PiS's former coalition partners, Self Defence and LPR, were in favour of withdrawal from these countries, but the policy towards the military operations there still remained unchanged. Neither does PiS have a popular majority for the establishment of an anti-missile base in northern Poland as part of the US missile defence system, in which the Czech Republic is also to be an active participant.

The US administration's request to site an anti-missile base in Poland prompted a debate on the scheme's potential to enhance Poland's external security or, do quite the opposite. For the government, which supports the scheme, it is clear that it is in the national interest for the missile base to be in Poland as a visible sign of the bilateral alliance laid down in the PiS 2005 election manifesto. There are others, however, who point out that the base is designed to defend not Poland but the

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<sup>23</sup> Roman Kuzniar, an academic at Warsaw University and former diplomat, is critical of Polish policy towards the US which he describes as unnecessarily supine. Formerly the head of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, a publicly funded foreign affairs think tank, Kuzniar was sacked by Anna Fotyga, the foreign minister, when he wrote a private paper for the government criticising the US missile defence plan. The move came amidst widespread demotions and resignations within the Foreign Ministry itself, which has seen many fall victim to PiS's drive – spearheaded by Anna Fotyga – to prise the ministry from the control of the 'corporation'. The purge also affected diplomatic representatives abroad and as of August 7 2007, as many as 30 ambassadorial posts were vacant. (cf Kaczyński op.cit p. 12)

<sup>24</sup> PiS's 2005 election manifesto says that the Polish involvement in Iraq is 'proof of the privileged, bilateral allied ties which link our country with the US. We will work towards giving these relations a formal and deeper nature along the lines of the bilateral alliance treaties which other countries have with the US'.

territory of the United States. They argue that the very fact of its location on Polish territory lowers the country's overall security as the base itself could become a target of terrorist attack. In its public declarations, the government has given little sign of the assertive stance 'in defence of national interests' it has so often demonstrated inside the European Union. It was left to Radek Sikorski, who resigned as defence minister early in 2007, to make the case for negotiating the terms of the missile defence deal rather than taking the agreement as it was presented by the United States<sup>25</sup>. Sikorski argued that Poland should agree to locate the missile base on its territory only if the US provided additional military equipment that would match increased threats to Poland from Russia and elsewhere. Needless to say, the Russians have protested against the establishment of the base in Poland, saying it would threaten their own national security.

## Conclusions

At the time of writing the outcome of Poland's parliamentary election on 21 October 2007 is unclear. The result will show whether the two years of PiS government will become a closed chapter or whether that government will be given an opportunity by the voters to continue with its policies for another four years.

In foreign policy, the PiS administration made a radical departure in Poland's stance on Europe, while maintaining a remarkable measure of continuity in policy towards the US. In a nutshell, Europe has been treated with mistrust as an organisation which threatens the sovereignty of the Polish

state, while the US has been trusted as the only real power that can guarantee the country's statehood in the face of a possible, future threat to Poland from Russia or elsewhere. The PiS stance on Europe bears an uncanny resemblance to the attitude displayed by Poland's government in the 1930s, which saw its policies disintegrate in September 1939 under the armed might of Hitler's Germany<sup>26</sup>. The final death blow was dealt by Stalin's Soviet Union, acting under the terms of the Ribbentrop – Molotov Pact that had been signed a month earlier. Like the PiS government, Poland's pre-war government saw itself as playing an independent role in Europe as the 'smallest of the large European states'. Likewise, just as the PiS government has denigrated the EU's institutions the then Polish government played down the role of collective security in Europe, confident in its ability to survive as an independent entity. That self-confidence manifested itself in the short sighted decision to participate in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1939, leaving Poland's moral case impaired when the country itself became the victim of aggression several months later. In a sense, the PiS government's reliance on the US as the 'ally of last resort' bears a remarkable resemblance to the relief with which Warsaw greeted the last minute guarantees extended to Poland and Romania by Great Britain and France in 1939. However, these guarantees failed to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of either state. Great powers have their own interests which do not necessarily encompass the interests of smaller allies, however faithful. There are examples of this in the present relationship between Poland and the US. Indeed, there

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<sup>25</sup> In a speech in Washington DC made after his resignation, Radek Sikorski said that the original US offer had come with a letter of acceptance already drafted by the US side for the Poles to sign and return.

<sup>26</sup> The author is grateful for several conversations with Jeremi Sadowski, the author of *Polscy Ojcowie Europy*, Warsaw 2006 which helped him to formulate these remarks. Responsibility for the conclusions lies with the author alone.

are indications that the continuing US – Russian dialogue on the missile defence system will settle the debate on future sites in tune with Russian sensibilities, without necessarily taking Polish or Czech considerations into account.

There is, however, another tradition in modern Polish diplomacy, which is demonstrated by the post-1939 Sikorski government and by the activities of Polish exiles in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as by the post-1989 drive for the country's accession to NATO and the EU. This tradition draws lessons from Poland's pre-war experience and concludes that a country with two large and at times hostile neighbours can only develop in peace if it is part of a larger, firmly integrated European organisation. The exiled Poles formulated a now largely forgotten federalist agenda during the war, which finally came to fruition when Poland joined the European Union in 2004. This is the tradition which the PiS government, with its abrasive approach to its partners in the EU, appears to have abandoned. Its stress on national sovereignty and its trumpeting of a narrowly defined national interest marks an anachronistic approach to Europe. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the prime minister, defends his European policy by saying that Poland's partners now listen attentively when Poland speaks, in contrast to the past when the country was ignored as 'a polite member state'. Brussels insiders confirm that in some senses this is indeed the case. The Polish government is listened to carefully and a great deal of effort has been expended in bringing Poland on board on

issues such as the draft reform treaty. However, it is doubtful whether what Poland has been saying for the past two years enhances the strength, cohesion and security of the European Union and of Poland as a member state. And in the long term, this is the measure by which the PiS government's foreign policy will be judged.

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