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# The importance of history

A realist interpretation of Polish foreign policy in the  
European Union

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## **Abstract**

In this study I analyse Polish foreign policy since it became a member of the European Union. This period, 2004-2007, has been characterized by some controversial decisions by the Polish government, creating an image of Poland among the other European member states as an 'awkward partner'. Taking Thomas Pedersen's conception of cooperative hegemony as a point of departure, I aim to deliver a coherent, causal explanation for this "behaviour". Pedersen's framework takes historical experiences as causal in shaping state rational interests. As a result of my analysis I present a picture that history does not only matter, but can even explain why, when, how and what history determines actual political processes.

*Keywords:* Poland, cooperative hegemony, realism, foreign policy, EU

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## Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CESDP	Common European Security and Defence Policy
EAW	European Arrest Warrant
EEC	European Economic Community
ESDP	European security and defence policy
EU	European Union
IGC	intergovernmental conference
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEGP	North European Gas Pipeline
VAT	Value added tax
SEA	Single European Act
TCE	Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe
TEU	Treaty of the European Union

# 1 Introduction

After Poland joined the European Union (EU) in May 2004, the country ascends, supported through a close, confidential, interest based relationship with Germany and embedded in a revitalised Weimar triangle, to a constitutive member of a ‘new centre’ in the enlarged European integration process. As an avant-garde of a European anchored Atlanticism and a faithful caretaker of the new member’s interests, the country emerges as an informal leader in eastern and central Europe. As a specialist in matters of eastern and central Europe it also takes the initiative to act as a fulcrum between the European Union and its eastern neighbours and thus builds up respect among other EU member states (see Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 81)<sup>1</sup>. This would have been the ideal picture of Poland after becoming a member of the EU. But the above-described picture of Poland’s setting in the European Union does not correspond with the actual reality.

It is not only since the change in government, which brought in 2005 the Kaczynski brothers from the nationalist Law and Justice Party *PIS* (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) into power, that its European partners and Brussels ‘wonder’ about Poland. Already in the pre-enlargement negotiations Polish negotiators defended their interests extremely vociferously, indicating they would not just smoothly switch over to the Brussels culture of ‘cultivated compromises’. The Polish negotiating style, tough and uncompromising, before and after enlargement reminded many of the times of Margaret Thatcher or John Major and fears arose of Poland becoming like The UK, a new ‘awkward partner’ in the European Union (Grabbe 2004, p. 1).

The examples for the mentioned awkward partner behaviour are rich, stretching from the rejection of the constitution, extensive use of the veto, the demonstrative loyalty to the United States, to political and economic protectionism (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, pp. 86-88). Similarly extensive are the explanations on why Poland ‘behaves’ that way. The arguments stretching from ‘newcomer pains’ and lack of experience, obsession with the grudges of the past, the sinister or pathetic nature of the actual conservative government which is supported by a right wing nationalist party and a farmers’ party, the assumption of Poland being a protectionist state using the European Union as a free-rider system or a general helplessness and incomprehension with the Polish attitude towards the European Union (Economist 21.01.2007, pp. 75; Economist 17.02.2007, pp. 40; Financial Times Deutschland 27.02.2007, Economist 13.05.2006 p. 6).

In this paper I aim to present a different explanation. As a point of departure I am using Thomas Pedersen’s concept of cooperative hegemony in the European Integration process (Pedersen 1998, 2002). In his analysis he uses realist core assumptions for explaining state strategies in foreign policy. Unlike neorealism, Pedersen focuses in his analyses less on the configuration of the international system for the analysis of foreign policy but rather on political culture, historic experiences and identity as key explanatory concepts in shaping state rational interest. Cooperative hegemony is a grand strategy which explains the European

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<sup>1</sup> All translations in this paper made by the author.

integration process based on an analysis of the dominant roles of Germany and France in that process.

The aim of this paper is not to discuss to what extent this concept of a German and to a slightly lesser extent French dominated European integration process is valid as a whole. I will rather show that the picture drawn of *power relations* in the European Union as expressed in the concept of cooperative hegemony and the category of analysis used by Pedersen match the Polish perception of European politics, thus the picture of Europe as a cooperative hegemonic conception is valid from a Polish perspective. I will show that from that perspective the question on why Poland did not smoothly fit into the EU policy making process, as perceived from other EU member states and the EU can be explained. Consequently the above described ‘troublesome’ last three years of Polish politics are understood as a process in which a new rising power, Poland, attempts to join the over forty years carefully balanced ‘club of hegemons’ in the EU. Thus as there is, according to the reading of Pedersen’s, no space for Poland in this hegemonic conception of Europe, it then tries to challenge this “club of hegemons”.

The reasons why I believe this would be a fruitful analysis are manifold. The overall question asks to what extent does the accession of the eastern European states change the European Union? While some studies, using the top-down approach, analysed so called Europeanization processes (Schimmelfenning et al. 2005), little research has been done on the new member states impact upon the EU and if so, then they focused on institutional aspects such as voting patterns in the European Council (Naurin 2007, Hagemann 2007). I am using a bottom-up approach to show that the perception of the European integration process in the chosen case, Poland, differs from established views<sup>2</sup>. I first will lay down in chapter two the theoretical foundations in regard to the concept of cooperative hegemony as well as on how to assess “history”. The third chapter is the main part of this study which contains an empirical and analytical assessment of Polish European politics, before I in chapter 4 conclude with an application of the cooperative hegemony model.

From a methodological point of view this paper is constructed as a mixture between a disciplined-configurative and a heuristic case study (Eckstein 1975, p. 97-113). On the one hand I am applying an established theoretical (realistic) framework to a case which I want to explain. On the other hand, I will through this case study point out a few variations to this realist framework by which it should be amended, thus aiming to create hypotheses.

The material used in this study consists of secondary literature for background and theoretical information. As the topic is very specific and the research not very extensive I use for the actual analysis mostly think tank publications which I complement by articles in newspaper or political magazines of different origins.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Wiener 2004 and chapter 2.2.

## 2 Theoretical foundations

The theory of cooperative hegemony, which I refer to in this paper, has been developed by Thomas Pedersen (1998). The aim of this theoretical discussion chapter is not to either falsify or verify the development of the hegemonic framework or Pedersen's empirical research. The interesting part in his analysis is the picture he draws of the EU from a hegemonic perspective and the emergence of historical experience as a constitutive element in shaping state rational interests. These elements I will outline in more detail in the following section. I will also briefly discuss the idea of Pedersen's meaning of 'ideational realism' in comparison to other theoretical approaches.

Additionally as I follow the argument of historical experience as the main constitutive element in shaping state interests, I will need to define that term and related sub-terms.

### 2.1 Theory of cooperative hegemony

Pedersen's point of departure is the realist failure of explaining cooperation among sovereign states beyond the pure level of strategic alliances. In particular the European integration process or as Pedersen calls it the 'phenomena of regionalism' seems to be hard to understand in realist terms (Pedersen 2002, p. 677). Departing from core realist assumptions (Morgenthau 1985, p. 31) namely that states want to maximise power and that they are only interested in relative gains, he develops his concept (Pedersen 2002, p. 678).

The cooperative hegemony approach involves the use of soft power instruments through which a framework of regional order is established. Pedersen argues that the "most important aspects of regionalist endeavours are best explained by examining the interests and strategy of the biggest state (or states)" (2002, p. 678). He proposes three pre-conditions that should be acknowledged by the biggest state in the region when it comes up to pursuing a strategy of cooperative hegemony (Pedersen 2002, p. 694).

First, the largest country in the region needs to have *power-sharing* capacity. That is to say, it needs at least to be willing to share the amount of power which is necessary to aggregate power effectively. Secondly, it needs to harness the neighbouring states in supporting its political projects. For this *power-aggregation* it has several mechanisms available. Pedersen names strategies of cooptation, lock-in, side-payments, tactical differentiation or simply 'Einbindungspolitik' vis-à-vis the smaller states (1998, p. 62). The third important pre-condition is the *long-term commitment* among all states to a regionalist strategy. The less obvious the strategy of cooperative hegemony is, the more sustainable is the success. It is therefore necessary that resources are equally distributed among the members. Cooperative hegemony rests on an implicit agreement between the states that the predominant power defends the common interest against third parties, but also that the hegemon is active in stressing common interest and building up regional identification (Pedersen 2002, p. 694).

Pedersen also argues that in particular big states with limited capacity of unilateral action, and also states which are militarily weak opt for strategies of cooperative hegemony to

enhance their power (Pedersen 1998, p. 195). In his reading Germany pursued such a strategy in the European Integration process. Pedersen focuses his empirical analyses on the constitutive negotiation process on the Single European Act (SEA) in 1985 and the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty (TEU) in 1991. However he covers the Franco-German relationship as a whole from Bismarck, over Stresemann until Kohl and the post-Maastricht era and constructs constancy in German politics. Germany did not try to dominate (Western) Europe openly but rather tried over the whole period to pursue its dominant influence through cooperative arrangements and non-coercive strategies of cooperation (Pedersen 1998, p. 81f).

In a simplistic way expressed this means, that Germany tries to integrate with France, marginalise or coopt the United Kingdom (UK), installs the Netherlands as the speaker of the smaller states and compensates everyone else by ‘side payments’, not only in monetary ways, but also for example in terms of power sharing in low-politics areas (Pedersen 1998, p. 195p). An example of this strategy could be seen in the political developments of the 1950s which led later on to the Rome Treaty and the common market concept (1957). The Treaty reflected very much the priorities of France, in terms of support for agriculture and Germany, in terms of market liberalization. However they allowed small states from time to time to provide intellectual leadership, the Belgian politician Paul-Henri Spaak<sup>3</sup> for example played a crucial role in the negotiations leading up to the European Economic Community (EEC) (Pedersen 1998, p. 80; Dinan in Bomberg 2003, p. 26).

Consequently, the key relationship in Pedersen’s hegemonic concept is the role of France and Germany in the European integration process. These two countries compose hegemonic leadership, meaning power, thus it is important to analyse their state interests.

“Far from being a passive instrument in France’s grand strategy, I argue that Germany has consistently pursued a grand strategy of cooperative hegemony in which France and the European unification have played an essential role” (Pedersen 1998, p. 3).

He further argues that:

“France and Germany provided directional leadership by generally managing to set the overall agenda of the IGCs. [...] Italy and the UK both exercised occasional leadership. [...] The analysis of the results of IGC negotiations more unambiguously confirmed our expectations that Germany and France would be able to control the outcome [...] our account modifies the established view according to which France has been leading the process of European unification. German decision-makers have been more initiating in EU constitutive politics than normally assumed“ (Pedersen 1998, p. 195f).

The reason for this slightly stronger position of Germany in terms of power distribution in the EU is according to Pedersen that France often follows the classical *directoire*<sup>4</sup> idea, while

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<sup>3</sup> Paul-Henri Spaak was a Belgian politician (1899-1972), three times Prime Minister as well as several times minister of Foreign Affairs in Belgium.

<sup>4</sup> In the understanding of Thomas Pedersen are *directoire* systems “state systems in which all big powers have special informal prerogatives, though without being able to impose their views in all areas (Pederson 1998, p. 42). An example of this are the collapse of the European Defence Community because de Gaulle pursued a confrontational *dirctoire* strategy (Pedersen 1998, p. 80f).



Germany is more successful because it can combine *directoire* solutions with more federal elements (Pedersen 1998, p. 191).

## 2.2 Ideational realism

Pedersen proposes a “new realist interpretation of European politics” (Pedersen 1998, p. 3) based on the importance of historical evolution and ideas in finding “persuasive answers to the puzzle of European politics” (Pedersen 1998, p. 2). Ideational realism is described by Pedersen as a third realist position, which “differs somewhat from classical realism in that it focuses on coherent sets of ideas shaped by historical learning and constrained by systematic factors” (Pedersen 1998, p. 16). But is this something new or just an odd tautology?

Closest to cooperative hegemony and ideational realism is classical hegemonic stability theory. In comparison to the cooperative hegemonic concept classical hegemonic stability theory does not need institutions at all because the hegemon is extremely powerful and can impose its will mostly against the declared intentions of the majority (Pedersen 2002, p. 681). In a neorealist understanding, as of Waltz<sup>5</sup>, Pedersen’s approach also does not fit in. He argues that state preferences in the international system are shaped by historical evolution and not as neorealists argue through the structure of the international system. Structure might constrain state behaviour, but it definitely does not determine it (Pedersen 1998, p. 17). States pursue what they perceive as rational foreign policy, bounded by rational interests (Prizel 1998, p. 1). The question is only which parameter constitute these rational interests? While Waltz argues that system and structure and Morgenthau that power interests (*animus dominandi*) are constitutive (in Krell 2000, p. 119), Pedersen proposes the idea that state interests are determined by history. “Ideational realism thus rediscovers history; escorting it back to the discipline of international relations [...] Ideas seem to have important effects on foreign policy (Pedersen 1998, p. 205).

However categories such as ideas, identity or historical experience are predominantly subjects of constructivist<sup>6</sup> studies (cf Risse in Wiener et al. p. 168ff) and might not have much to do with classical realism. I argue in two ways that this is not the case. Firstly, the use of normative conceptions, like ideas, identities and the importance of history are not only limited to constructivist researchers. Morgenthau himself wrote that “Political realism contains not only theoretical but also normative elements” (1985, p. 10). His book ‘Politics among nations’, the classical foundation of realist theory in the study of international relations is subtitled “The struggle for Power and *Peace* [my italics A.M.]”. ‘Peace’ is a normative conception, but Morgenthau generally is not considered to be a constructivist.

Second, I argue that Pedersen’s ideational realism differs from a constructivist analysis generally in two major points. From a constructivist perspective state interests are not fixed, they are constructed by humans. If they are constructed by humans, as the constructivist reading goes, they can also be de-constructed by humans, thus even though they might be quite sticky, constructed identities can be changed (Krell 2000, p. 247f). I argue by

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<sup>5</sup> See Krell 2000, pp. 111-115.

<sup>6</sup> Constructivist in this study exclusively refers to social constructivism.

comparison that this is not the case in an “ideational realistic” perspective. State interests are shaped through historical evolution, they are not constructed consequently they are fixed and cannot be just de-constructed. A second argument underlying this, is the question on how, in a constructivist reading, state interests get changed? Thomas Risse argues that through persuasive argumentation, based on the ‘logic of appropriateness’ interests or identities can change (Risse 2000). I argue again, that in accordance to Morgenthau state interests are fixed, states want to maximise power, even considering that they are made up out of *soft* categories such as ‘national identity’ or ‘collective memory’, which I will define in the next chapter. Ideational realism therefore is qualified as different from the abovementioned approaches.

Besides I would like to address a few comments to the discussed concept of Pedersen’s ideational realism. Pedersen’s argumentation (Pedersen 1998) is sometimes not clear enough. Despite all the theoretical categories he draws at the beginning, he does not consequently refer to them throughout the analysis and thus makes it hard to grab good and illustrative examples for his cooperative hegemony. Also the term ideational realism needs more in-depth comparison, in particular considering Pedersen’s own demand that it is a “grand strategy” (Pedersen 2002, p. 683). Is it really a third form of realism as Pedersen argues or just a sophisticated differentiation of a reading of Morgenthau?

However, as stated in the introduction I do not try to test Pedersen’s theory, I am rather interested in the hegemonic conception of European politics he draws. Current literature on European Integration Studies concentrates rather on pluralist approaches, neglecting the important geopolitical and security factors<sup>7</sup>, as I will show in my analysis. Therefore Pedersen’s theory is very helpful, when studying European Politics from a realist point of view with security and power distribution as main analytical categories, where history is incorporated as an explanatory factor. In particular in regard to Poland, where, as Walicki points out “everything has a historical dimension” (Walicki 1988, p. 1) this seems a useful approach for the following analysis.

### **2.3 Definitional problems of historical orientated categorizations**

As mentioned above history is incorporated in Pedersen’s conception as an explanatory factor for state interests, thus states’ behaviour. As I will process-trace this argumentation in regard to Polish foreign politics, it is necessary to break the general term of “history” down. What exactly is history, historical development, historical evolution or similar? In connection with that I will use terms such as national identity, historical experience or even collective memory and myth. I am fully aware of the fact that every single term is quite controversial and disputed. However, I will not take up these discussions because it is beyond the scope of this paper and also I intend to present an empirical and not a normative argument. Therefore I will only present minimalist definitions of *some* of the abovementioned terms, only to clarify the way I use them in this study and enhance comprehensibility. I am convinced that this is a legitimate way to deal with the problem because the key analytical categories, as outlined in

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<sup>7</sup> Fro an example see Wiener, (2004) or Rosamond (2000).

the previous chapter, are taken from the cooperative hegemony concept. History is only used to display certain causalities in this study, not as an analytical foundation.

I will start with political culture which I define as “the way in which a social group behaves politically and the nature of the political beliefs and values of its members” (see Walt et al. 1987, p. 33). Political culture differs from political ideology, where it is possible to disagree on what for example a government should do, while political culture a concept is on what all members of the society can consciously or unconsciously relate to. However I am aware that one nation might have two cultures, for example in Germany after 1989<sup>8</sup>. Still I refer to political culture as a minimalist concept, to which people relate over time. The universal use might also be legitimised in the case of Poland, because it is *today* a very homogenous country<sup>9</sup>.

The concept of national identity is also very important. A national identity is, as Prizel argues, shaped through interdependence with other nations. “Hence, the conduct of foreign policy – namely, the relations a state has with foreign states – has a strong dialectical relationship with national identity” (Prizel 1998, p. 8, Marcussen et al. 2001, p. 102). Prizel further argues that “[a] polity’s national identity is very much a result of how it interprets its history – beliefs and perceptions that accumulate over time and constitute a society’s ‘collective memory’” (Prizel 1998, p. 14). In this study I use national identity as an ethnic concept. As pointed out, Poland is ethnically today one of the most homogenous countries in the World, where 96% of the population claims to be “Polish”<sup>10</sup>.

Interconnected with the concept of national identity is historical experience, which in the case of Poland often intervenes with presence of myths. I use the term myth in a sense that includes “conceptions (convictions, visions, beliefs) which have come into being in the consciousness of a given community in reply to a strong emotional need, and which refer to layers of consciousness beyond rationality” (Törnquist-Plewa 1992, p. 13). According to this definition a myth has a strong emotional basis, which implies that it can never be totally expressed in analytical language. Further a myth is characterised by transhistoricity, underlining its timeless function, often accompanied by the idea that supernatural powers like God or fate are the originators of the event leading to a myth, thus detaching historical events from the concrete historical context (Törnquist-Plewa 1992, p. 14-16). Myths have three main functions according to Törnquist-Plewa, they are *consolatory*, helping to overcome bad times, *integrating* through creating a sense of belonging to a group and *mobilizing* because they activate collective memory (1992, p. 16).

## **2.4 National identity, historical experience and myths in the Polish context**

Polish national identity is complicated by its history and geography. In terms of history Andrzej Walicki argues that national identity is problematic because of centuries of foreign

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<sup>8</sup> See Encyclopaedia Brockhaus online.

<sup>9</sup> In a survey of 2005 considered 96% of the population to be “polish”, whereby Polishness assembled of speaking the Polish language and being catholic (<http://www.brockhaus-encyklopaedie.de>).

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 8.

rulers and alienation from Europe (Walicki in Prizel 1998, p. 39). “Thus, the issue of national identity has had far greater emotional impact in Poland than in many Western countries” (Prizel 1998, p. 39). In terms of geography Poland has been always situated at the crossroads of the Orthodox, the Catholic and the Lutheran church. Poland between the 13th and 15th century was one of the most heterogeneous states in Europe. Already by 1264 in the Charter of Kalisz, a general liberty for Jewish people was established, leading to increased immigration into Poland from today’s Germany, but also ‘east Slavs’ devoted to the orthodox faith settled throughout the centuries in Poland<sup>11</sup> (Davies 1989, p. 79, 115). This religious and ethnic diversity was combined, apart from battles against the encroachment of Islam in the east and south, by the experience of three partitions in the 18th century, when Poland finally disappeared from the map from 1795 until 1918<sup>12</sup>. An additional experience of the dominance of foreign rulers is marked in the times under Soviet influence. In this context Prizel points out that “[o]nly two institutions consistently preserved national identity throughout Poland’s tortured history of partition – the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish elite, with its distinctive collective memory of the past” (Prizel 1998, p. 41).

The importance of the Roman Catholic Church in Polish history is expressed in various events. One important notion is connected to the ‘miracle’ myth and its mythical origins (Törnquist-Plewa 1992, p. 31-37). As the author points out, there are two constitutive elements, the cult of the Virgin Mary and the concept of Poland as a ‘chosen nation’ by God with a special mission to fulfil. In particular the second notion is important for this analysis because it introduces the concept of Poland as a bulwark of Christianity, *antemurale Christianitatis*. This belief grounded in a number of battles and wars against enemies of other creeds, identified as barbarians, for example the Turks (Moslems), Swedes (Protestants) or Russians (Orthodox). The idea that the Polish people fought for the Christian Latin civilization was reinforced in the battle of Vienna in 1683, where the Polish troops prevented the Turks from taking the city. Jan Sobieski III, king of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth thereby earned the title of the ‘Saviour of Europe’ (Walicki 1994, p. 9). Later on in the Polish-Russian war in 1920 the unexpected victory of the Poles at the battle of Warsaw not only saved the young Polish state again, “but also prevented the Bolshevik Revolution from spreading to Germany. This event was interpreted by the Polish elites as a confirmation of the renewed role of Poland as the *bulwark of Europe* [my italics A.M.]” (Törnquist-Plewa in Malmberg et al. 2002, p. 230)

A different notion connected to the miracle myth is Polish *messianism*, which is embedded in Polish romanticism (approx.1816-1863). As stated earlier, myths have consolatory, integrative and mobilizing functions. “In their struggle for survival as a nation, for their identity and sovereignty, they were in particular need of myths” (Törnquist-Plewa 1992, p. 40). This messianism was grounded in Polish literature and philosophy in the 19th century implicating, that the Polish Nation had to suffer and be crucified, similar to the way Jesus Christ suffered.

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<sup>11</sup> Note that the size of historic Poland differs from the size of contemporary Poland; a map is attached in the appendix.

<sup>12</sup> The first partition of Poland happened in 1772 between Russia, Prussia and Austria. The second partition of Poland took place in 1793 between Russia and Prussia and the final partition in 1795 between Russia, Prussia and Austria again. A map is attached in the appendix.

### **3 Analysis of Polish foreign policy in the European Union**

In this section I will apply Pedersen's concept to the analysis of Polish foreign policy. After first an empirical assessment, I will secondly analyse several decisions and controversies around Polish foreign policy from a cooperative hegemonic perspective. This means to identify the same governing patterns, such as the hegemonic conception of Europe or the importance of security issues as outlined in Pedersen's concept, in the analysis of the Polish perspective on European Politics, in particular in terms of power distribution.

#### **3.1 Empirical assessment of Polish foreign policy**

The empirical part of this paper will analyse the most important decisions and disputes about Polish foreign policy, in particular in relation to the European Union, in the last three years, but I also additionally go beyond this time frame. In order to avoid biases of the type of decision included in the analysis, I focus on decisions which have been characterised by a high degree of cooperation. Thus they have been received positively and constructively from an EU perspective because they did not intervene in the smooth functioning of the Brussels decision making process. But I also include events which in that sense have been perceived as negative because they slowed down or even blocked the policy process in the European Union, for example through a threat or use of the veto instrument.

Against the popular image, created for example through the veto use against a new mandate for the EU to negotiate on the behalf of all members a new partnership agreement with Russia, Poland has not been a completely uncooperative opponent<sup>13</sup> or saboteur (*Sydsvenskan* 24.11.06, p. A26), in EU matters lights and shades follow each other.

##### **3.1.1 Highlights**

One of the highlights of Polish foreign policy has been the handling of the Orange Revolution<sup>14</sup> in Ukraine by the Polish government on behalf of the European Union in 2004. Aleksander Kwaśniewski, president of Poland between 1995-2005, who led Poland into NATO and EU, over years had lobbied among his EU-colleagues for a more active European policy towards Ukraine (interview Aleksander Kwaśniewski 2005 in *DIALOG*, p. 44f). He also had built up over the years an extensive network of contacts with the Ukrainian government, President Leonid Kuchma saw in him a trusted contact (Vetter in *DIALOG*, 2005, p. 37). But also the Ukrainian opposition around Victor Yushchenko considered him neutral and trustful enough to mediate and help solve the crisis. He managed to solve the situation in a non-violent way, but at the same time pushed democratic development in

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<sup>13</sup> "The polish twins are saying "No" to everything", Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, former Danish Prime minister, now Member of the European Parliament, in a discussion with visitors at the European Parliament on February, 27th 2007 in Brussels, see also interview with Rasmussen, 28.4.2007.

<sup>14</sup> The Orange Revolution describes a series of protest and acts of disobedience that took place in Ukraine between November 2004 and January 2005. The activator for the protests was the Ukrainian presidential election which was compromised by electoral fraud. The Orange Revolution succeeded when the results of the vote were annulled and in new 'free and fair' elections the candidate of the opposition Viktor Yushchenko got into power.

Ukraine forward and towards the European Union. Throughout the conflict he was the main contact for other European leaders, who wanted to get a picture of the situation (Vetter in *DIALOG*, 2005, p. 37). Kwaśniewski and thus Poland gained through the skilfully conducted negotiations, a credibility and respect among the European partners, who subsequently allowed Poland a certain room for agenda setting in the European Union's policy towards Ukraine (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 83).

A second event which displayed Poland in a positive light were the negotiations towards a financial framework 2007-2013 in 2005. The dominating question up for discussions at the summit in December 2005 had been the renegotiation of the 'British rebate' and reorganisation of the common agricultural policy (CAP). Poland has been one of the strongest opponents against it, trying in cooperation with France to break the British veto and demolish the old Thatcherian rebate. However the newly appointed Polish prime minister Marcinkiewicz managed through his strategy of "flexible resoluteness"<sup>15</sup> (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 84) to ensure Poland a wide range of benefits, but "probably more important than the monetary advantage was for Poland, that the considered 'euro-sceptical' government of [premier] Marcinkiewicz did not isolate Poland, but rather acted as an active and flexible partner" (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 84).

Other 'highlights' are the constructive participation of Poland in policy fields dealing with internal and external security, for example in connection to the implementation of the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) for which Poland needs to change the constitution and the first-time attendance of the country's minister of the interior at a meeting of the now G6<sup>16</sup> in March 2005 (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 84p).

### 3.1.2 Medium successful initiatives

Other initiatives of the Polish government have not been as successful, even if they have been considered 'constructive' in its initial thought from an EU perspective, meaning touching issues other states and respectively Brussels are also concerned about.

The proposal of an 'energy-NATO' was such an initiative. Energy security is an important issue on the agenda of the European Union. The German government announced it for its Presidency in the first half of 2007 as one of the most important topics next to the constitution (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21.12.2006). However the idea was poorly diplomatically launched and did not manage to get in that form on the agenda. Additionally the initiative indirectly got connected to the Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis in December 2005/ January 2006. The Polish idea of an 'energy-NATO' was designed in a way that "each member country would guarantee the energy supply of the others in an emergency" (*Economist*, 13. May 2006, p. 6) This idea of a pact of mutual assistance in the style of the North Atlantic Pact was clearly pointed against Moscow, the main supplier of gas and to some lesser extend of oil to the European Union (Westphal in *Osteuropa* 2004, pp.42-45), because Poland wanted to include guarantees in the way of article 5 of the NATO charter<sup>17</sup>. Other EU members, in particular

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<sup>15</sup> All translations in this paper made by the author.

<sup>16</sup> The G6 of the six leading nations in the EU include Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Spain and Poland.

<sup>17</sup> Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty includes the mutual assistance clause that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" (North Atlantic Treaty, article 5).

France, were against such an idea of mutual defence because they are long-term partners of *Gazprom*, which is the main Russia gas company which supplies Western Europe with energy, and therefore preferred cooperative means of energy security, based on a dialogue *including* Russia (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 86, Samoletova in Kozlova et al. 2006, p. 74).

Other initiatives like the attempt to prime the EU for example for a more active policy towards Belarus and offer them as well as Ukraine a clear membership perspective or low visa fees were not successful. Polish initiatives in that field therefore remained selective and not sustainable (Sahm in Osteuropa 2006, p. 111).

### 3.1.3 Shades

As mentioned above, the Polish attempt of formulating an eastern perspective for the European Union has been accepted in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution. However Polish ideas of giving Ukraine and also Belarus a membership perspective have been blocked by other EU member states. This has also to be seen in the context of the worsening relationship between Warsaw and Moscow in which the EU got more and more involved. Differences in the historical retrospective on the Second World War, the handling of the massacre of Katyn<sup>18</sup> or present events like the North European Gas Pipeline (NEGP), did not only poison the Polish-Russian relationship, but also increasingly blurred EU-Russian relations (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 83). Consequently Poland managed to export its tense relationship with Russia to the EU-level. This could also be seen in the use of the veto against a mandate for Brussels to renegotiate the EU-Russia partnership agreement at the summit in Helsinki in December 2006, on which occasion the Polish weekly magazine *Polityka* titled “Our war with Russia in the European sauce” (25.11.2006 “*Nasze wojny z Rosją w sosie europejskim*”).

A different interference from a Brussels perspective constituted the strong Polish rejection of the proposal for a European constitution. Poland in particular fights for an explicit anchorage of Christianity in the text, as well as for the status quo of the distribution of votes as laid down in the Nice Treaty. “Nice or death” is a popular slogan in the Polish political debate in both opposition and government (Kostarczyk in *Gazeta Wyborcza* 3.11.2004, p. 16).

Generally the new member states of the 2004 enlargement have been careful to use the veto and only seldom did so. Two exceptions on this are Cyprus, on all matters regarding Turkey, and Poland (Tallberg 2007, p. 22). Poland did not only use the veto extensively on matters of institutional reforms, but also on other occasions, sometimes in a very short sighted manner. The sugar market reform<sup>19</sup> deal in February 2006 was after preceding long negotiations finally sealed and only formally needed to be proofed, when the Polish minister

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<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of 1940 a mass execution of Polish officers, intelligentsia and civilians took place in Katyn, in the south west of Poland. The massacre until today is a heavy burden in the Polish-Russian relationship. The Soviet Union denied responsibility until 1990, when it acknowledged that NKDW secret service units had committed the massacre and the cover up. 4,000 officers died in that operation, including three other camps in the area approximately 25,000 people lost their lives in that operation (Encyclopaedia Brockhaus online).

<sup>19</sup> The EU decided to lower the guaranteed price for sugar by 36% until 2010, introduced principles of ecological agriculture and partly decoupled subsidies from pure quantities. Sugar is produced in nearly all member states. Germany, France and Poland are the biggest producers (approx. 50%). However most effected by the lowering of the prices are south European countries (Deutsche Welle, 24.11.2005).

for agriculture announced his intention to intervene with a veto (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 87). A similar non-negotiate behavioural standpoint was displayed by the Polish government in the negotiations about reduced VAT rates (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 87). Also the political intervention in the takeover of the Polish bank 'BPH' by the Italian 'Unicredit', several calls of president Kaczyński about a referendum on the Euro issue or the admonition by the European parliament for more tolerance shed light on Poland as a new 'awkward partner' in the European Union (*Financial Times* 25.10.2006, p. 6; EP motion from the 12.06.2006, pp. 2, 4, 5; Grabbe 2004, p. 1).

## **3.2 Analytical assessment of Polish foreign policy**

As I demonstrated in the previous passages, the European policy of Poland does not form a coherent picture of either permanent EU scepticism or ongoing constructive cooperation. It therefore seems self-evident that other factors constrain Warsaw's European engagement. In this chapter I will process-trace these 'constraints'. My approach will be that I do not examine every single event of Polish foreign policy in the European Union as listed in the previous chapter but rather present sets of arguments as regards content, which I connect to the empirical results. These set of arguments are historically bounded, thus I will show in connection to Pedersen's ideational realism, how 'history' constitutes and determines Polish rational state interests and consequently action in foreign politics.

For the sake of clarity I grouped those arguments under what I refer to the 'fear of marginalisation', an 'instinctive Americanism' (cf Zaborowski 2004), the 'image of the self' and an 'unconscious inferiority complex' (cf Törnquist-Plewa in Malmberg 2002).

### **3.2.1 Fear of marginalisation**

The fear of marginalisation is expressed in the fear of being stepped over or pushed to the side by someone external. This fear rests deep in the historical experience of the three partitions in the 18th century and the resulting non-existence of the Polish state for 123 years, but also in the 'trauma of Munich' or what Jerzy Holzer calls the Rapallo-complex (Holzer 2000) and the outcomes of Yalta which put and left Poland in the Soviet sphere of influence.

The Munich Agreement lead to the invasion and break up of Czechoslovakia, however the famous battle call of "nic o nas bez nas" (*nothing about us, without us*) also found its place in Polish collective memory (Garton Ash 1995, p. 8). The trauma of Munich was also insofar important as it led to the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact, also known as the Hitler-Stalin or German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact. Similar to what Holzer expresses with the term Rapallo-complex, it manifests the Polish fear of the fragmentation of Central Europe, namely Poland in Russian and German spheres of influence. This is also one reason for the Polish engagement for democracy in Ukraine and Belarus because those countries could build a 'buffer' zone between Russia and Poland.

This fear of marginalisation can most prominently be seen firstly in the project of the NEGP, which from 2010 is supposed to transport gas from Siberia to Northern Germany along the bottom of the Baltic Sea, thus bypassing Polish territory and so weakening its status as a transit country. Gazprom's energy policy is seen as an element of the Kremlin's foreign



policy, which aims to preserve the dominant position of Russia in the former satellite states. “[W]e are very vigilant when it comes to the German-Russian relationship. The reasons for this bilateral pipeline through the Baltic Sea were purely political” according to Polish president Kaczyński (*Der Spiegel* 6.03.2006). In regard to the importance of energy policy in Poland Samoletova points out referring to the big daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* that Poland wants to avoid a situation like in Belarus or Ukraine, whose destiny it is to be “powerless confronted with Gazprom [...] the liquidation of the gas monopoly of the Russian energy company has the same meaning for Warsaw as withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the territory of Poland at the beginning of the 1990s” (Samoletova in Kozlova et al. 2006, p. 71).

In this reading falls also the Polish veto in Helsinki in December 2006 considering energy policy as a vital interest of Polish foreign policy. The government tried to press Russia to ratify the Energy Charter and sign the Transit Protocol, through refusing to give the EU a mandate to negotiate a new partnership agreement with Russia. If Poland would uphold that demand as a precondition for the Brussels mandate and if Russia would ratify and sign those documents, it could demolish the dominant position of Gazprom and thus remove an instrument of Russian foreign policy. Hence it would decrease the Polish fear of marginalisation in regard to Russian energy issues.

But scepticism exists not only against the Russian side, also Germany is critically observed in the project of the NEGP. The Polish minister of defence Sikorski compared the NEGP in April 2004 with the Hitler-Stalin-Pact of 1939 (Rupnik et al. in Osteuropa 2006, p. 47). Even considering this as a verbal blackout, it sets an example about how deep the mistrust against the partner and also member in NATO and EU, Germany is. Also the close personal friendship between Gerhard Schröder and Vladimir Putin, who called the latter a “flawless democrat”<sup>20</sup> and his quick move after the end of his term in office into the board of directors of the NEGP consortium provoked a lot of dispute, criticism and mistrust in Poland (*Economist* 06.05.2006; *Der Spiegel* 23.10.2006). It confirmed the traditional reading of the NEGP as a German-Russian project over the heads of Poland, a way hegemony just act.

A second example of the fear of marginalisation can be seen in the tough stance of Polish politicians for the perpetuation of the Nice Treaty. Consequently Poland is against the ‘double majority’ as proposed in the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE). While the future of the Constitution is not clear yet, the German Presidency lately indicated that for getting the project back on track some refinements are necessary. Poland’s criticism of the TCE however are so fundamental that it probably would be necessary to open up the complete negotiated packet of the TCE again (*Financial Times Deutschland* 27.02.2006). It should be noted that the slogan “Nice or death” was created by the pro-European liberal citizens platform party *PO* (Platforma Obywatelska) indicating that more or less all political parties support this ‘no compromise’ attitude towards the Nice Treaty (Lang 2003a, p. 2).

The fear of marginalisation in Europe is very dominant in the discussions about the TCE, which is reduced to the catchphrase ‘double majority’. Poland assesses the attempt of Germany to reverse the distribution of votes as agreed in Nice, as an attempt to re-establish its

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<sup>20</sup> The German original quote is “ein lupenreiner Demokrat“ which would literally translate to “a flawless democrat“ as used in the international version of *Der Spiegel* (18.06.2006) while the *Economist* used the wording “a democrat through and through” (18.11.2006).

supremacy in the EU at the expense of Poland as well as a “centralistic and egoistic project” (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 89; Lang 2003a, p.2). Poland does want to be closer to the European ‘big powers’ and the system in Nice granted Poland nearly as much votes as for example Germany and France, leaving Poland on equal footing with them. A revision of the Nice Treaty is thus also seen as the attempt of re-establishing the Franco-German bastion of power again because the voting system of the TEC from a Polish perspective favours populous member states and also relegate the others, like Poland, to petitioners of the system (in Lang 2003a, p. 2).

Related to this discussion about the TCE are two concepts, namely the idea of a ‘core Europe’ and the problem of periphery in the Polish context. The peripheral status of Poland I will discuss later in connection with Ukrainian policies.

A Franco-German ‘core Europe’ bears the fears of a Europe of two speeds. These discussions are not new and exist already since the beginning of the 1990s. France for example was not as positive as Germany about eastern enlargement. In particular after the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 tensions grew between the two countries and:

“France increasingly uneasy about the idea and its impact upon the balance of power in the EU, was supportive of the principle of ‘differentiated integration’ with an inner circle being built around France and Germany, and hoping that this would enable Paris to retain its privileged position in the EU” (Zaborowski 2004b, p. 111f).

However Poland usually has not been included in such conceptions as second runner. Nevertheless the fear arose that in certain projects regarding the ‘two-speed Europe’ Poland would not be able to follow. Przemysław vel Grajewski Żurawski points out in a publication of the Natolin European Centre in Warsaw that Poland has to pursue a strategy in which it avoids a “Franco-German dominance in connection with Russia” and refers to an important principle of the Polish constitution of 1505 “*nihil novi sine communi consensu*“ (*nothing new without the approval of all*) (Vel Grajewski Żurawski 2007, p. 105).

The above-analysed samples exemplify the picture of the Polish fear of marginalisation in the international system. This obviously also has security related elements. This indicates that states are perceived as “self-interested and potentially belligerent actors. It is not international institutions but an effective balance of power that is seen as capable of ensuring security and stability” (Zaborowski 2004b, p. 87). I will present a clearer picture of this security dimension in the next chapter.

### **3.2.2 Instinctive Americanism**

In October 2004 the Polish magazine *Wprost* published an article by Zdzisław Krasnodębski headlined “Amerykoholicy“ according to which Poland is the most American of all European Nations (10.10.2004, p. 28). He explains this sympathy by referring among other factors to similarity in US and Polish conservative cultures.

Polish foreign policy is dominated by the overall primacy of security policies which in turn is highly connected with the issue of territorial defence (Zaborowski, 2003, p. 1013). “America became the security guarantor that the Poles had craved since the late eighteenth

century” and simultaneously Poland became ‘America’s protégé in the east’ (Zaborowski 2003, p. 1009, Zaborowski 2004a). Poland applied as early as 1992 for NATO membership. NATO membership and close cooperation with America in security and defence issues displays the Polish *raison d’être*. The need to keep the Americans permanent in Europe emerges from traditional risk rating and the aversion against Franco-German and/ or Russian cooperation. An example of this defence mechanism was the proposal of an ‘energy NATO’. Similar in that reading is the ‘Yes’ to America in the question about Iraq, also a ‘No’ to resist the pacifist coalition of Germany and France (Lang in Osteuropa 2004, p. 446-450). Thus, Poland shares the American security thinking in which preemptive engagement has a positive connotation. “This derives from an enduring facet of Polish identity – having been a victim of West European pacifism in the form of the Anglo-French appeasement policy towards Hitler and the subsequent failure of France and Britain to actively defend Poland in September 1939” (Zaborowski 2004a, p. 9).

Poland like America lacks faith in multilateral security institutions and prefers unilateral actions. The League of Nations could not prevent the outbreak of the Second World War and the United Nations did not prevent the Cold War. In the case of Iraq it was from a Polish perspective only the Americans, who instinctively understood the threats of international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. There was an inherent understanding beyond doubt in Polish society, for the need to “liberate the enslaved Iraq folk from a tyrant and thus Poland supported Washington actively” (Urban in Geo 2003, p. 101). One of the lessons of 20th century history for Poland seems to be that “always then, when democracies tried to act with ‘tolerance and concessions’ vis-à-vis dictators and tyrants, ‘chaos and bloodshed’ followed. The long lasting peace in Europe has only been possible through wars against those tyrants” (Lang in Osteuropa 2004, p. 455).

America is perceived as the ‘lender of the last resort’, the only power which could re-balance Russian ‘aggression’ effectively, thus the only one which could execute Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (Lang in Osteuropa 2004, p. 453). Connected to this view is a rather sceptical view on European security and defence plans, because like the American attitude ‘peace’ is considered to be an *outcome* and not a *process*<sup>21</sup>. That includes the need to use hard power instruments and not to rely on soft-power strategies (see FN 21).

Recently, this could have been observed in the ongoing discussions about the missile defence system, which Poland from its beginning welcomed as a means of enhancing its security (*Financial Times Deutschland* 29.03.2007). Discussing Polish security was not a matter of European affairs, instead Poland consulted in a Triangle Warsaw-Prague-Washington (*Polskaweb News*, 21.02.2007). A similar manifestation was the announcement of the Polish government to buy US F-16 fighter aircrafts, rather than relying on European defence systems like the Czechs and Hungarians did. This was seen by their European partners as a manifestation of Americanism because the decision was made public just two weeks after the Copenhagen summit, which set the conditions for EU membership for the former communist countries (Lang 2003a, p. 2).

Besides this, America enjoys an overall stable and positive perception in Polish society (Zaborowski 2004a, p. 7f). America stands for freedom, democracy and prosperity, thus symbolised realities, principles and values for which Poles have been striving over many

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<sup>21</sup> See European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 and the American National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2003. See also Heise 2006.

decades. Additionally Polish personal and cultural ties to America are manifold, a huge group of Americans claim to have Polish origins and as Krasnodębski pointed out in his article, both states share similar social and political commitment in regard to tradition, religion and patriotism (*Wprost* 10.10.2004, p. 28f).

Summarising, pro-Americanism is an inherent element of Polish national identity which has its roots in the historical experience as a country between two great hegemonic powers.

Additional pro-Americanism indicates the direction of the Polish understandings of *security* and *sovereignty*. Those two categories are essential in the analysis of European relations from a Polish perspective.

Indicating the Polish direction of the conception of European security is the proposal of creating a 100,000 strong army in the European Union, which should, according to the Polish Prime minister, be closely attached to NATO and operate around the world in international crisis or ‘defend Europe’ (*European Voice*, 21.08.2006). Considering the immense importance of security in Polish politics, it is not surprising that Poland is very cooperative in all internal and external matters regarding security, such as for example external border management. Also the quick start of the implementation process for EAW for which, as pointed out, the Polish Constitution needs to be changed, can be interpreted in that way (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 84f).

The conception of sovereignty touches the classical idea of defending state sovereignty which can prominently be observed in the discussion about the Euro, whose introduction the Polish government recently questioned (*Financial Times Deutschland*, 05.11.2006). Additionally related to the discussion about security is the call for the “protection of our national interests” (Polish president Lech Kaczyński in *Welt am Sonntag* 12.03.2006) which are perceived to be threatened by the EU as well as the right of Poland to fight for its national identity. In terms of foreign policy this is expressed in the interference in the bank merger. Poland tried to prevent this and future events by the creation of a list of strategic companies which for the sake of national interest have to be politically protected. The European Commission questions this list in regard to the EU’s freedoms. Only just recently the European Commission also passed on to the European Court of Justice a lawsuit against Poland because the government wants to build a motorway through a protected area in the north east of the country (*Polish News Bulletin* 4.04.2007). These examples correspond to the idea in Poland often raised of a Europe as a federation of nation states. This debate is not particularly new. Already in 1999 Polish politicians declared to be inspired by Gaullist ideas and expressed support for those types of conceptions in the European Union (Royen 2000, p. 2).

### **3.2.3 Self-image**

In this paragraph I will deal with two aspects of the Polish self-image, *victimization* and *big power aspirations*.

The Polish self-image of a victim is often clearly visible when from a Polish perspective Germany but also Russia or others “try to reverse” history and the status of Poles as a victim. Erika Steinbach is one of the most ‘popular’ Germans in Poland. The liberal conservative Polish political magazine *Wprost* showed her in 2003 depicted in a cover montage riding Chancellor Gerhard Schröder while wearing a SS uniform. The reason for this stylisation of a

persona non grata is Steinbach's position as head of the Federation of Expellees and her campaign for the building of a centre against expulsions, a memorial devoted to the victims of forced population migrations or ethnic cleanings in Europe, which should be situated in Berlin. Controversy awoke also in some other countries which were occupied by Germans during the Second World War but not to the same extent as in Poland (*Economist*, 18.12.2004). Of course the topic is sensitive in both countries and Erika Steinbach is by no means uncontroversial. However apart from the fact that Steinbach is hardly known in Germany, the current and also previous government denied her any political support and expressed various times not to intend in any way to change historical interpretations, which would remove the victim status from Poland (*APW* 19.03.2007).

A different debate was the careless wording of 'Polish concentration camps' used among others by the *Washington Post* and the *Economist*. This formulation provoked "furious protests" in Poland because it would indicate *Polish* responsibility for the Nazi crimes, thus turning the actor victim perspective around (*Economist* 13.05.2006; *Washington Post* 11.05.2007).

Apart from such recent events are the classical events which mark the Polish victim status like the refusal of the UK and France to stop Hitler from occupying Poland in 1939 and the outcomes of the after-war conferences among the allies, in particular Yalta when Poland felt betrayed by the West, because it was led into the Soviet sphere of influence. Also the Russian decision not to support the Poles in the Warsaw Rising in 1944 against the Germans left traits of being a victim of betrayal again in Polish collective memory (Davies 1989, p. 476-479). In an interview Polish President Lech Kaczyński summarised the outcomes as the Second World War as follows:

"Besides, development remained at standstill in Poland for at least two generations. Communism after all, was also a violent system that heavily curtailed opportunities for the people. If World War II hadn't ended with the communists coming to power, Poland may not have achieved the same per capita income as Germany, but we would certainly be on par with Spain<sup>22</sup>. Those were our own acute losses, and that was the outcome for Poland. West Germany on the other hand, was able to move forward at a tremendous pace after the first years of chaos" (*Der Spiegel* 6.03.2006).

The EU is therefore increasingly seen in terms of creditor and debtor. "In the eyes of the Poles it is Europe that has a debt to Poland, 'the knight of Europe' and 'the Christ of nations', a debt never paid back" (Törnquist-Plewa in Malmberg et al. 2002, p. 222). Similarly, the Polish Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński argues in his inaugural speech, in the Sejm, the Polish parliament, denying ambivalence between on the one hand sceptics against any form of deeper integration in the European Union, but on the other hand calls for more solidarity in the EU<sup>23</sup>, in particular in financial matters. "If you look at the course of history, then we are truly entitled to receive those [*structural*] funds" (Inaugural speech of Jarosław Kaczyński, Polish Parliament, 19.7.2006).

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<sup>22</sup> In 2005 the average GDP per capita expressed in percentages of the EU 25 was for Poland 50% and for Spain 98% (Eurostat 2006).

<sup>23</sup> See interview with Rafał Trzaskowski, political scientist and researcher in EU studies at the Natolin European Center in Warsaw, who points out the Polish position towards claims off other European members states to diminish the budget "You can not have more Europe for less money

This anxiety about being betrayed again can also be seen in Polish foreign policy. Last but not least, the favourable distribution of votes in Nice for Poland has also been perceived as a pay-off for the (potential) worse financial support of Polish farmers from the EU structural fund, in comparison to French or German farmers (Lang et al. 2003c, p. 1). In the same vein are also the troubles with the sugar market reform and the reduced VAT negotiations to assess. Poland claimed vital national interests were being endangered and posed additional demands. In the context of the sugar market reform Poland claimed an additional 50 Million Euro for its sugar produce because they would again be disadvantaged by the deal (*Rzeczpospolita* 21.2.2006). A similar pattern of behaviour appeared on the issue of uniform VAT rates where the Polish government also demanded exceptions (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 87).

The second element of what constitutes the Polish self-image is the conception of being a great and important power (Lang in Sapper 2006a, p. 90). Historically this conception is grounded in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which was the largest, most populous and most powerful state in Europe between the 16th and 18th century (Frank 2005, p. 10). Today structural dimensions such as economic potential, size or military tradition support this self-image.

One of the forums for displaying this great power ambition is potentially the Weimar Triangle, founded in 1991 between Germany, France and Poland with the intention of rapprochement and the “integration of Poland into the European structures” (Lang in *DIALOG* 2004a, p. 12). Poland was eager of participation in strengthening this form of cooperation (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2006a, p. 90). However the Weimar Triangle never really turned into a forum for important political discussions<sup>24</sup> or as Rafał Trzaskowski, researcher at the Natolin European Centre, asks “who takes it [*Weimar Triangle*] really seriously?” (Trzakowski in *DIALOG* 2004, p. 20). Poland remained a ‘junior partner’ in this forum, in particular the relationship to France cooled down. Especially when the French President Jacques Chirac accused Poland and other Eastern European states because of their open letter of support for the U.S. position on Iraq of “behaving like badly brought up children who had ‘missed a good opportunity to shut up’” (Washington Post, 9.05.2004).

The war in Iraq had several consequences. First Poland overcame its full opposition towards the development of a European Security and Defence Policy (Zaborowski 2004a, p. 15). Secondly it changed Poland’s perception of itself “Poland regards itself [*now*] as militarily capable of participation in CESDP, and has political ambitions to act as one of the European leaders in the field” (Trzakowski et al. 2004, p. 1). And thirdly the Weimar Triangle changed into, as Lang argues, “a coalition of losers” in the course of the Iraq dispute which made it even less attractive for Poland to participate in (Lang in *Osteuropa* 2004b, p. 452).

Nevertheless cooperation with France and Germany did continue, but shifted to the forum of the G6, the meeting of the six biggest member states of the EU. The smooth participation of Poland in that group can be interpreted as a way of satisfying the Polish self-image as a big state. “Poland’s size and its role in the EU-border management system mean it would be natural for it to join the G5” (*Rzeczpospolita* 13.07.2005). Additionally, I argue the G6 is a

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<sup>24</sup> There are several reason for this, see Lang in *Dialog*, 2006a, Lang in *Dialog* 2004a, Trzaskowski in *Dialog* 2004.

forum which allows, in comparison to the Weimar Triangle, to engage in counterbalancing coalition building. In that vein the constructive engagement of Poland also falls in the negotiation of the financial framework of 2007-2013, where Poland and France, expressed through a joint statement beforehand, fought against the British rebate. This can, similar to the counterbalancing perspective in the G6, be read as an attempt by Poland to secure its interests through a policy of flexible alliances.

However, Donald Tusk, the long time presidential frontrunner in the 2005 presidential elections in Poland and now leader of the main opposition party, rejected the idea of a G6. The proposal of a “G6 directorate to lead Europe” was originally put forward by the French minister of the interior at that time, Nicolas Sarkozy, arguing that small countries should not be able to block initiatives by the six biggest members (Financial Times 1.10.2005). Tusk replied that “I don’t think that is the method for taking us forward [...] We believe in solidarity and that doesn’t mean some countries are better than others” (Financial Times 1.10.2005). Even considering that Donald Tusk made this statement in the last weeks of the campaign for the presidential election and that election to the Polish parliament also took parallel place in October 2005, it still indicates an interesting ambivalence, which I will analyse in the next paragraph.

### **3.2.4 Unconscious inferiority complex**

As stated above, on the one hand Poland enjoys, asks, and perceives itself as an important power and big member state in the European Union. On the other hand there is a constant fear, as I analysed earlier, of being betrayed and marginalised. These attitudes as Törnquist-Plewa points out, reveals regardless if Euro-enthusiasts or Euro-sceptics a “profound inferiority complex and insecurity with regard to the status of Poland in Europe and the strength of Polish identity” (in Malmberg 2002, p. 238).

There is one interesting question in this context to answer first and this relates to what are Poland’s *actual* power potentials, is it a great power? In regard to this question of the actual power potential of Poland in the European Union I will use Tallberg’s three pronged approach from which he conducts potential bargaining power in the European Council (2007). The first dimension is the most important one describing the *state sources* of power, namely economic strength, population, military capabilities and administrative capacity. The second dimension touches *institutional sources* of power such as the threat of the veto, the rotating Presidency and the participation of the Commission. The last dimension then deals with *individual sources* of power mainly personal qualities of chief executives in regard to their authority, level of experience and standing in domestic politics (Tallberg 2007, p. 12). How does Poland score according to this scheme?

In regard to the structural state sources Poland appears relatively strong. By contrast, it misses out on institutional sources, for example it will only hold its first presidency in 2011 and also the power of the veto is limited, in particular when overusing it. Finally, Poland clearly misses out on individual sources because on the one hand, as in most eastern European countries, the re-election of an incumbent government is a fairly rare phenomenon and thus the level of expertise or even the possibility of accumulation of such expertise minor. On the

other hand also domestic politics are very troubled<sup>25</sup> and thus do not help support power aggregation.

Tallberg points out that these three categories of power resources are of alternative theoretical backgrounds. Structural sources are of *realist* nature, institutional sources, such as the power of the veto belong to *rational choice institutionalism* and in terms of individual sources, the feature to use power of persuasion, originates in *constructivist* readings (Tallberg 2007, p. 47).

As I pursue in the paper an argument that the Polish perception of the European Union is grounded on realist assumptions (cooperative hegemony), then the last two categories will not be taken into account when assessing potential power in the EU. Thus, in comparison to other European countries' perceptions on the distribution of power in the European Union, a cognitive gap will occur. In other words, from a Polish perspective the country belongs to the great powers in the European Union, while when following Tallberg, it rather belongs in the second league because, despite the importance of state sources, their position is weakened through the mentioned weaknesses in institutional and individual power dimensions.

This different notice of the Polish power potentials in the European Union can be seen in Polish policy towards Ukraine, which is an excellent example to illustrate the frame in which Polish policy towards Ukraine have to oscillate. On the one hand the mediating role of Aleksander Kwaśniewski in the crisis in Ukraine has been seen to be very successful. For most of the European leaders like Jacques Chirac he was the first point of contact for information, and also the High Representative of the CFSP, Javier Solana did only depart to Kiev after Kwaśniewski advised him to do so (Vetter in *DIALOG* 2005, p. 37). In that moment Poland was an important player in the European Union, the only one who could sensitively and successfully handle the situation. Poland was in the *centre*, not a peripheral country. On the other hand when Poland tried to establish a clear membership perspective for Belarus and Ukraine, most of the European countries back-pedalled in the 'experiment' of allowing Poland the agenda setting function on EU's eastern policy (Sahm in *Osteuropa* 2006, p. 111). Therefore on the same policy issue Poland suddenly was not any longer a main actor, thus they realised their position as *peripheral* state again.

The main challenge of the peripheral status was to overcome the "bane of geopolitics" (Maćków 1998, p. 119). As a result of the lack of an effective 'buffer' zone, Poland throughout the centuries has been an arena for fights with foreign, mostly stronger and expansive orientated powers (Frank 2005, p. 7). As Frank argues these are not only historic traumatic experiences because they unconsciously get passed on to following generations<sup>26</sup>

However, not being able to design the EU's eastern policy dimension is also in a different way for Poland problematic. Historical good relations to Ukraine and Belarus belong, similar as a good relationship to the US, to Polish *raison d'être*. A common policy towards the eastern border of the EU was the only substantial concept Poland developed already before EU membership<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> With "troubled domestics" I refer to the number of political scandals as well as various threats of early elections.

<sup>26</sup> Frank uses the concept of the "sozialer habitus" (Frank 2005, p. 18-21). Additionally on distinctive problems and attitudes of peripheral countries Törnquist-Plewa in Karlson et al. 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland 2001.



Why is this important? Besides the fact that “the idea of Poland’s peripheral position permeates Polish thinking about Europe” (Törnquist-Plewa in Malmborgs 2002, p. 215) people in borderlands are often oversensitive in regards to their identity (Törnquist-Plewa in Karlsson 1998, p. 101). Recalling earlier analysed Polish calls for protecting national identity and national culture, as for example the object of Polish policy in the European Union has to be to activate economic development and infrastructural modernisation but not create identity jeopardising modernism (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 91; inaugural speech Jarosław Kaczyński, 19.07.2006). Then I conclude in line with Törnquist-Plewa that

“Behind these campaigns against foreign influence we can discern a fear that the native culture might lose its originality in the encounter with patterns from Western Europe. This in turns reveals a lack in self-confidence as to the strength of the native culture. This is a characteristic feature of cultural peripheries. It emerged in Poland in the eighteenth century and came to stay until our own times.” (in Malmborg et. al. 2002, p. 220)

## 4 Cooperative hegemony in the EU?

I claimed in the introduction to deliver in this paper an alternative explanation for the assumed Polish “awkward partner” behaviour in the European Union. To what extent does the model of cooperative hegemony help? I argue that the picture of the European Union as a cooperative hegemonic construct merges with the Polish perception of the EU. Hence, if Polish European policy are analysed under those preconditions it delivers a coherent and logical framework for the assumed sinister or pathetic behaviour of Poland (*Economist* 13.05.2006, p. 6).

First the anchorage of Pedersen’s concept in realist theory corresponds to the dominant categories of Polish European policy. I showed that concepts of security or state sovereignty are very dominant. Additionally foreign policy is conducted in correspondence to a fundamentally realist principle, assessed in terms of power distribution where states’ only goal is to maximise power, as for example the discussions about the Nice Treaty proved.

Secondly, Pedersen’s three preconditions for pursuing a strategy of cooperative hegemony are also prominent in the Polish perception of Germany, who in accordance to Pedersen and also in the Polish reading, follows such a line of strategy. Germany inherently is prepared to *share power* simply because of its membership in the EU. In terms of power-aggregation and the explained strategies for ‘Einbindungspolitik’ we can from a Polish perspective find quite a few examples. In the negotiations for the 2007-2013 budget of the EU the German Chancellor Angela Merkel impressed by her “astonishing negotiating skills” (*Economist*, 18.11.2006). She ‘improved’, in the course of looking for a compromise, the German-Polish relationship through handing 100 Million Euros in funds which had been largely earmarked for eastern German regions over to five Polish voivodeships<sup>28</sup> in need (Lang in Osteuropa 2006a, p. 84). This can be clearly read as a strategy of side payments in the course of power aggregation. Different strategies include lock-in or tactical differentiation. Angela Merkel offered in the controversy about the NEGP to offer a gas branch to Poland. However, this idea has been categorically refused by the Polish government because it would not change anything in regard to the situation that the NEGP is a project which diametrically contradicts Polish interests (Samoletova in Kozlova et al. 2006, p. 73). Thus the proposed ideas are perceived as not more than as, to speak with Pedersen, lock-in or tactical differentiation. The last precondition, the need for a long term commitment to a strategy such as cooperative hegemony, can be viewed in the several remarks to Germany as an always aggressive neighbour, who in particular since the time of the three partitions consequently tried to improve its hegemonic position. Similarly the construction of the European Union is perceived in Poland as an entirely German project (interview with Nowak 02.05.2007).

A third point which stresses from my view the argumentation that Polish foreign policy can be explained coherently when applying the cooperative hegemony model, is a so called ‘Russian factor’. Pedersen of course does not incorporate Russia in his analysis. However he

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<sup>28</sup> Voivodeship is the name for the 16 Polish second-level administrative units or regions, as created by the 1st of January 1999.

argues that the strategy of cooperative hegemony is not bounded to the European Union<sup>29</sup>. So enlarging Pedersen's concept by an external factor, such as Russia, it strengthens the argumentation of the Polish perception of foreign policy in terms of cooperative hegemony. Russia is perceived as a hegemonic power which seeks to maximise power and influence, thus realist core assumptions seem to capture the picture of the Polish eastern neighbour best in comparison to other theoretical approaches

The fourth argument, why the concept of cooperative hegemony is useful in understanding Polish policy is the perception of the Franco-German relationship as a dominant hegemonic constellation, at least expressed in the constant fear against it (see chapter 3.2.1).

Generally the idea of a Franco-German motor steering and dominating the EU has been very prominent in literature on the EU integration process, but also caused substantial doubts (Dinan in Bomberg et al. 2003, p.20-28). In arguing that the Franco-German axis is still dominant from a Polish perspective, I need in order to underline my arguments first to briefly discuss my own perspective on this 'motor' as I view it in 2007. Therefore a short excursus on Franco-German relationship is necessary.

In former years German and French leaders<sup>30</sup>, as for example Helmut Schmidt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing or Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand, managed to transform during their times in office the relationship between both countries into a political symbiosis. It was a symbol of power and strength that the leaders of Germany and France agreed before Inter governmental conferences (IGC) on the main points and pursued so, as Pedersen convincingly shows in his analysis on the SEA and the TEU, a strategy of cooperative hegemony (Pedersen 1998). However at the Nice European Council summit in December 2001 it came to "acrimonious clashes between France and Germany" indicating the end of the privileged partnership (Pedersen 2003, p. 15). Most prominently those doubts had been raised by former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt who wrote at the occasion of the 40th year celebration of the Elysée contract in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, that the Franco-German motor no longer exists (23.01.2003). An example to underline this development is the position of the UK, which in recent years has pursued more leadership than earlier in the EU in particular after the Saint-Malo declaration in 1998 and the commitment to a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). France here acts together with The UK, while Germany's influence on European security policies has remained marginal.

However despite those 'set-backs' in regard of the motor function of Germany and France, I argue in line with Pedersen that the Franco-German relationship has never been an unconditional love story. The relationship "has always been ambiguous with tensions swept under the carpet for many years" (Pedersen 2003, p. 14). Therefore "the obituary of Franco-German collaboration has often been written prematurely. Time and again, French and German leaders have overcome misperceptions and misunderstandings, and indeed stressed the benefits that accrue to them when operating from a common policy platform" (Pedersen 2003, p. 14).

Two recent publications on power relations in the European Union, and particular the Council and related working groups support this argument (Tallberg 2007, Naurin 2007).

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<sup>29</sup> Pedersen argues that cooperative hegemony also is meaningful in the relationship between the US and Western Europe after the Second World War, Japan and China and Germany and Japan (Pedersen 2002, p. 695f).

<sup>30</sup> A list of German, Polish and French Prime Minister and their times in office is included in the appendix.

Both argue that the French–German coalition pattern is obvious, but only changed momentum (Naurin 2007, p. 28, Tallberg 2007, p. 38f). Tallberg concludes that the Franco-German axis, which was able to deliver central compromises and set the agenda for European summits through pre-meetings and high level political cooperation does not exit in the same way any longer (Tallberg 2007, p. 39). But simultaneously he points out, that while through successive enlargements coalition patterns are not fixed anymore and increasingly build on the logic ‘easiest first’, “(t)he partial exception to this principle is the Franco-German alliance, which carries distinctive traits of logic of ‘most influential first’, and owes much of its influence to the negotiation of pre-agreements that bridge French and German interests and establish the parameters for subsequent European Council decisions” (Tallberg 2007, p. 38).

Summarising, I follow Tallberg’s argument that the Franco-German ‘alliance’ is still present but not in agenda setting form on top-level meetings like it was before. It is rather visible in bilateral and informal “mini-lateral sessions” (Tallberg 2007, p. 45).

How does that influence the Polish perception? It supports the Polish perception of German and French dominance in the European Union, which I showed in various examples in this analysis. However, in correspondence to the outlined difference between top-level and sub-level influence, this differentiation does not seem to make a difference from a Polish perspective. Thus, the growing institutionalization of the Franco-German axis in the aftermath of the 40th anniversary of the Elysée treaty in 2003, the joint Franco-German proposal for the dual presidency concept in the EU in 2002 or the demonstrative coalition against the war in Iraq together with the frequency of French-German coalition patterns on lower EU levels manifest the Polish view of the continued ruling of the Franco-German motor over EU matters.

## 5 Conclusions

In this paper I analysed Polish foreign policy in the European Union. After Poland joined the EU in 2004 many observers were astonished by the countries confronting way of pursuing its policies and accused Poland of being a ‘notorious grumbler’, a ‘new awkward partner’ or a ‘saboteur’. Most of the explanations for this behaviour in my opinion were incoherent, short sighted and generally not very profound nor convincing. I therefore aimed to deliver a different explanation in this paper. My point of departure was Thomas Pedersen’s (cooperative) hegemonic conception of Europe. I showed in this analysis on a number of events of Polish foreign policy that Pedersen’s realist conception of the EU matches the Polish perception, as for example in relation to the concept of sovereignty, the importance of security or the assumption that state rational interest is to maximise power.

One important question in that context is to analyse, what shapes state rational interests? In Pedersen, history is the determined structural factor. Consequently I analysed and showed in my analysis of Polish foreign policy that historical experience is a constant variable in the determination of Polish state interests. Pedersen calls this form ‘ideational realism’. Despite some criticism I noted earlier on, I think that this is a very useful concept.

It is too simple to say only that ‘history matters’. It is rather important to ask why, where, how and for what purpose does history matter? As Pierson points out “(i)n contemporary social science, the past serves primarily as source of empirical material, rather than as a spur to serious investigations of how politics happens over time” (Pierson 2004, p.4). Political scientists mostly look on the past only to support or discredit causal hypotheses, but the best way to connect history to the social sciences is through theoretical means (Pierson 2004, p. 5). I argue that this is of particular importance considering the topic I chose in this study. What “new Europe”<sup>31</sup> divides from “old” Europe are not as much different in GDP, it is rather the different historical remembrance. It seems maybe from a Western European perspective that the fears about the repetition of history, if such things are possible, seems like an odd idea. However, as I showed in this paper those fears as well as myths and historical symbolism have decisive influence on actual political decisions. It would be wrong to dismiss this as historical bounded paranoia. Note in that context the recent controversies about the elimination of Soviet monuments in Estonia, a topic which also raised discussions in Poland again.

Summarizing the above introduced discussion I would like to go along with a statement of the German historian Hartmut Kaelbe:

“We need to understand, why the East- and Central Europeans, did position themselves differently in the question about Iraq. It makes no sense to accuse them of having a ‘false consciousness’. We need first to understand, why they perceived the war on Iraq differently. Only in a second step should Western Europeans try in a discussion to search for common ground, including foreign

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<sup>31</sup> The conception of “new“ and “old“ Europe refers back to a statement made by former American minister of defence made in January 2003 in the course of the controversy about Iraq. New Europe contains the former communist states which just recently joined the EU, whereas old Europe refers to the old members and Rumsfeld in particular meant France and Germany.

policy. Then without consensus on common occurrences will the Constitution of the EU stay an empty shell (in *DIALOG* 2003/2004).

However, there is one more important point to make in regard to generalisations. It would be wrong to generalise for example purely on the ground of this analysis. It cannot be assumed that the special Polish relationship with Russia for example will automatically find its equivalent in every former communist country. Poland is a particular case of history and represents even in the context of Eastern Europe an exception. Polish history with such peculiar events as being portioned off between three empires or the specific role of Polish Catholicism cannot be compared with that of other countries. Therefore drawing conclusions from this special case might be hazardous. However, it seems that some traits of Polish policy may be also found in other countries. Thus it is necessary to enlarge this case study to other regions in order to examine when, why, how and what role history plays. Applicable are probably Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Lithuania for such a study, all share apart from the Catholic religion a similar peripheral status as Poland.

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## **Appendix 1 - List of Polish Presidents and Prime Ministers, German Chancellors and French Presidents**

### **Presidents of the Third Republic of Poland**

Lech Kaczyński	since Dec. 2005
Aleksander Kwaśniewski	Dec. 1995 – Dec.2005
Lech Wałęsa	Dec. 1990 – Dec.1995
Wojciech Jaruzelski	July 1989 – Dec. 1990

*<http://www.prezydent.pl>*

### **Prime Ministers of the Third Republic of Poland**

Jarosław Kaczyński	since July 2006
Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz	Oct. 2005 - July 2006
Marek Belka	May 2004 – Oct. 2005
Leszek Miller	Oct. 2001 – May 2004
Jerzy Buzek	Oct. 1997 – Oct. 2001
Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz	Feb. 1996 – Oct. 1997
Józef Oleksy	March 1995 – Jan. 1996
Waldemar Pawlak	Oct. 1993 – March 1995
Hanna Suchocka	July 1992 – Oct. 1993
Waldemar Pawlak	June 1992 – July 1992
Jan Olszewski	Dec. 1991 – June 1992
Jan Krzysztof Bielecki	Jan. 1991 – Dec. 1991
Tadeusz Mazowiecki	Aug 1989 – Dec 1990

*<http://www.kprm.gov.pl>*

### **German Chancellors since 1949**

Angela Merkel	since Nov. 2005
Gerhard Schröder	Oct. 1998 – Nov. 2005
Helmut Kohl	Oct. 1982 – Oct. 1998
Helmut Schmidt	May 1974 – Oct. 1982
Willy Brandt	Oct. 1969 – May 1974
Kurt Georg Kiesinger	Dec. 1969 – Oct. 1969
Konrad Adenauer	Sept. 1949 – Oct. 1963

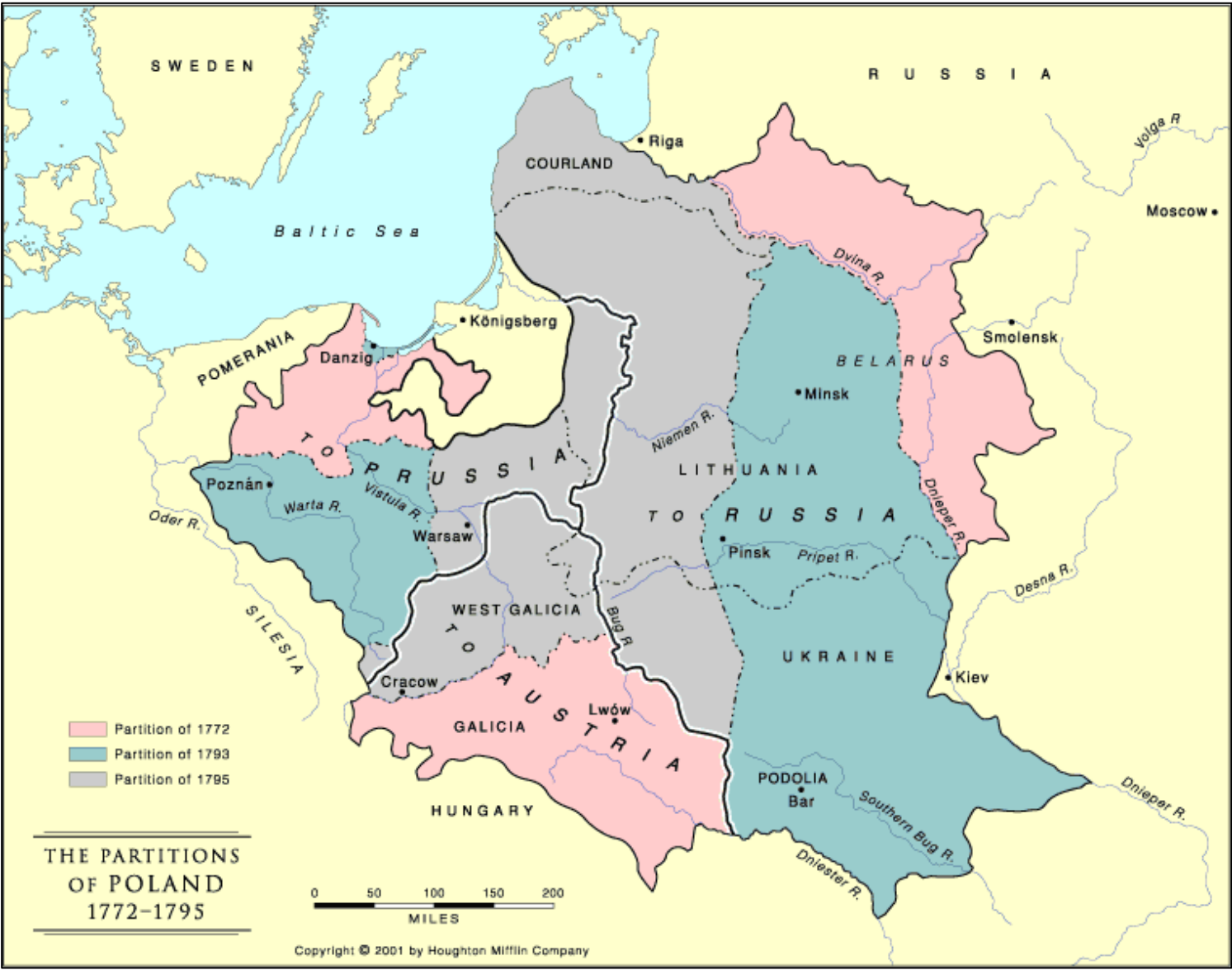
<http://www.bundestkanzlerin.de>

### **French Presidents of the Fifth Republic**

Nicolas Sarkozy	from May 2007
Jacques Chirac	May 1995 – May 2007
François Mitterrand	May 1981 – May 1995
Valéry Giscard d'Estaing	May 1974 – May 1981
Georges Pompidou	June 1969 – April 1974
Alain Poher	<i>interim in 1969 and 1974</i>
Charles de Gaulle	Jan. 1959 – April 1969

<http://www.elysee.fr>

# Appendix 2 - Map on the three partitions of Poland, 1772-1795



<http://www.unlv.edu/faculty/pwerth/422.html>