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THE ROLE OF THE WEIMAR TRIANGLE IN THE PROCESSES OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN 1991–2004

DOI: 10.26399/meip.3(62).2018.37/m.czasak

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Yalta-Potsdam world order took place at the turn of the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. The Gorbachev reforms carried out from the second half of the 1980s did not heal the situation in the USSR, which contributed to the gradual breakup of the Eastern Bloc at the turn of the decades. Other states, former USSR satellites, gained more and more independence, and then gradually regained their full sovereignty.

At the same time, the collapse of a stable, bipolar world order created numerous dangers. The new world order emerging at that time was not very legible, after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 a number of Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland, found themselves in a grey security zone (Balcerowicz 2001: 107–108). They were states that did not belong to any alliance, neither did they create any, and at the same time they did not decide to be neutral or uninvolved (Balcerowicz 2001: 108).

Political changes began in Poland before the final collapse of the Warsaw Pact. They were initiated by the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki formed in August 1989, after the partially free parliamentary elections held on 4 June. These elections ended with the success of the current democratic opposition,

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which won almost all seats allocated for candidates not belonging to the Communist Party.

In his speech of 12 September 1989, Tadeusz Mazowiecki referred to the question of Poland regaining full sovereignty saying, 'We want to live worthily in a sovereign, democratic and law-abiding state' (Mazowiecki 2007: 149). In the part concerning foreign policy he expressed the desire to open Poland to Europe and stated: 'we have to catch up, especially in cooperation with the countries of the European Economic Community and the United States' (Mazowiecki 2007: 163).

Such formulation of goals at the beginning of the transformation process was evidence of a desire to change the vectors of foreign policy without simultaneously violently breaking relations with the USSR, which was impossible at the time due to existing numerous political, economic and military connections. The speech, however, signalled the desire for rapprochement with the West.

Krzysztof Skubiszewski was appointed the minister of foreign affairs in Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government. He became one of the architects of Polish foreign policy. In his speech on 26 April 1990 *Government information on foreign policy* among the priorities he mentioned the co-creation of the European security system and building new links with European organisations and groupings, in particular with the European Communities and the Council of Europe. At the same time, he stressed the importance of cooperation with neighbours, the USSR, with which Poland was linked through the described network of connections, and reuniting Germany (Skubiszewski 2007a: 179). In April 1990 Poland was already seeking to become a member of the Council of Europe, and contacts with the Western European Union and NATO were established.

In the following months Poland's aspirations for the complete reorientation of foreign policy and entry into the structures of the Western world became increasingly clear. These ambitions included European integration and rapprochement with NATO, guaranteeing security for numerous European states, which are also its members. For Poland, distancing itself since 1989 from the alliances within the Warsaw Pact and then being in the 'grey zone' of security after its collapse on 1 July 1991, cooperation with NATO and the Western European Union became a matter of special importance.

One of the first steps to bring Poland closer to integration with Western structures and to quickly deepen the relations was the signing of bilateral agreements with the most important Western countries. The agreements concluded with the most important countries of the European Communities,

especially France and the Federal Republic of Germany, were particularly important in this respect.

Since the beginning of the nineties, Poland attached great importance to relations with France. This country was seen as a traditional, even if not always reliable ally of Poland. Close relations with this state were even defined by the then minister of foreign affairs as ‘one of the canons of Polish foreign policy’ (Skubiszewski 1994: 20). Unfortunately, after the reunification of Germany, the French side did not support rapid European integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This resulted from concerns about its own position on the continent. French politicians assumed that through the possible extension of the EC, Central European states, including Poland, could become satellites of Germany. As a result of the fear of possible domination of reunited Germany the French side imposed on the Community the priority of deepening integration before enlargement. In this situation, a success of Polish diplomacy was the signing of *the Treaty of Friendship and Solidarity between the Republic of Poland and the French Republic* on 9 April 1991 (Kuźniar 2012: 63). This is still a basic document regulating the relations between the two countries. For the Polish side, the provisions that were included in the second article of the Treaty were particularly important. After a passage on the development of political cooperation between the two countries, France’s positive attitude towards Poland’s European aspirations is described. ‘The French Republic is committed to supporting the development of close relations between the Republic of Poland and the European Communities’ (*Treaty of Friendship and Solidarity between the Republic of Poland and the French Republic*, drafted in Paris on 9 April 1991). Unfortunately, this Treaty did not become the basis for France’s support for Poland’s European and Atlantic aspirations in the coming months.

Parallel to signing the Treaty with France, relations with reunited Germany were legally regulated. Two agreements were signed with this country. The first one is *the Border Treaty* concluded on 14 November in Warsaw. This document finally confirmed the course of the western Polish border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse. The other agreement was *the Treaty on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation*, signed in Bonn on 17 June 1991. It contains many important provisions regulating bilateral relations. In the context of European integration, the eighth article of the Treaty, concerning Germany’s support for Poland’s aspirations to membership in the European Communities, was of particular importance (*Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation*, signed in Bonn on 17 June 1991).

Two months after signing *the Treaty on Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation* in Bonn, a tripartite cooperation between Poland, Germany and France was initiated. This form of contacts was supposed to break France's reserve to Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Its aim was to strengthen Polish-French contacts and to create an opportunity to convince local decision-makers about the advisability of supporting Poland's European aspirations. The tripartite cooperation was also intended to dismiss France's concerns about Germany's possible endeavours to dominate the European continent. By cooperating in this shape, Paris would have an insight into the actions of Germany. For the Polish side, the Triangle was to be a significant new platform for dialogue.

The first meeting in the new formula took place in Weimar on 28–29 August 1991. At the end of the meeting ministers of foreign affairs of Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, France, Roland Dumas and Poland, Krzysztof Skubiszewski signed the *Joint Statement of Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany on the Future of Europe*.

This document consists of ten points, the first ones of which relate to political and economic changes in Europe at the turn of the eighties and nineties, emphasise the need for cooperation and the continuation of the European integration process. The seventh point refers to the issue of 'comprehensive support' for the reforming Central and Eastern European countries and the support of France and Germany for the rapprochement of Poland and 'other new democracies' with the European Community, which was particularly important for Poland. At the end of the Statement, a declaration is made stating that the ministers have decided to meet annually and also additionally if necessary (*Joint Statement of Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany on the Future of Europe*, Weimar, 29 August 1991). In the intention of the initiators of the meeting in August 1991 the Weimar Triangle was not supposed to be an organisation in the understanding of international law, but rather a discussion and consultative forum. In this framework representatives of the three countries had an opportunity to exchange views on important aspects of tripartite relations and international politics. It was also expected that its work would contribute to strengthening Polish-German-French cooperation (Koszel 2006: 17).

For the Polish side the support of the two largest countries of the European Communities for its aspirations for European and transatlantic integration was very important. The seventh point of the quoted *Joint Statement* explicitly underlined this support, in this way already at its dawn the Weimar Triangle became an instrument whose essential goal was to work to overcome

the division of Europe, and thus lead to European integration. Weimar's cooperation was also supposed to be a message about the interest of the two most important countries in the region in the successful transformation of the Central European region (Koszel, 2016)

Integration with European and Euro-Atlantic structures was also a priority for Polish foreign policy. It encompassed deepened cooperation with the European Communities, and then the European Union and the Western European Union. In the Euro-Atlantic dimension, Poland aspired to membership in the North Atlantic Treaty. Both goals were closely related, because they concerned Poland's cooperation with Western structures, which for many years had been complementary in the sphere of the Euro-Atlantic system.

Over the years, the Weimar Triangle in fact became one of the tools that helped to achieve this goal, since the tripartite cooperation helped the Polish side to fulfil its aspirations to strengthen cooperation and then to become a member of NATO and the European Communities.

The process of Poland's accession to the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation lasted many years. At the very beginning of the political transformation, the Polish side could not unequivocally express its will to join the North Atlantic Alliance – Poland's membership in the Warsaw Pact formally existing until 1 July 1991 was an obstacle. The political declaration on Poland's will to enter into the Pact structures was made in 1992 by then prime minister Jan Olszewski. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski described it in his speech of 8 May 1992 as a prospective target (Skubiszewski2007b: 243). The intention of Poland to join NATO was announced in a binding manner in the *Assumptions of Polish Security Policy* adopted by President Lech Wałęsa on 2 November 1992 (Turczyński 2015: 24).

At the beginning of the nineties, the Alliance did not show the will to quickly accept new members. It was obvious that the position of the United States would be decisive in this respect. The first step towards rapprochement was the granting of an observer status to the parliamentarians of Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the USSR by the NATO Assembly in November 1990. A year later, on 20 December 1990, the inaugural meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was held. This council became a forum for cooperation between NATO and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, states formed after the collapse of the USSR and European countries with the status of neutral states. In the following months, during the talks between NATO decision-makers and Polish leaders, statements were made about the fact that 'the door to NATO is open for you' (statement by NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner from March 1992)

and about the support of the NATO Assembly chairman for Polish efforts to become a member of this organisation.

Another important initiative towards rapprochement with the Alliance was the 'Partnership for Peace' programme. It was presented by US Secretary of Defence Les Aspin on 20 October 1993 to NATO defence ministers as a new initiative of cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Bojczuk-Czachór 2014: 54–56). On the one hand, the programme provided for the participation of troops in joint missions, but it did not envisage to provide post-communist countries with a guarantee of security or obligatory assistance of the Alliance in the event of a security threat. Moreover, this document does not mention the expansion of the Alliance. Due to the lack of alternatives to this method of strengthening cooperation, Poland joined the 'Partnership for Peace' programme signing the Framework Document on 2 February 1994 (Otlowski 2002: 38; 42).

The decision of the Bill Clinton administration regarding the invitation of first candidates to NATO during the Madrid summit in July 1997 was crucial for enlarging the Alliance. At the time, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were officially invited to negotiate on joining the Alliance. After the completion of the negotiations, the protocols on joining NATO were signed in December 1997. They were still the subject of ratification by the members of the Alliance (Fiszer 2002: 78–79). The German Bundestag and Bundesrat ratified the protocols in March 1998, even before the US Senate, both houses of the French parliament did it in May and June 1998. Poland officially became part of the Alliance on 12 March 1999, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Geremek, handed over the act of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty to the US Secretary of State, Madelaine Albright. The USA's position was crucial throughout the many-year process of approaching and joining the Alliance, although the dangerous situation in the Balkans at that time had an impact on the positive course of the accession negotiations (Fiszer 2002: 78–79).

We cannot overlook the significance of the support, though expressed with varying intensity, of the Weimar partners for the process of bringing Poland closer to the North Atlantic Alliance. The shift of the NATO border to the east was beneficial from the point of view of Germany, because it meant filling the discussed 'grey zone' of security, which began just behind the eastern border of the country. The stability of Central and Eastern Europe was also important for France, which from 1966 remained outside the military structures of the North Atlantic Alliance (Koszel 2006: 43–44). Since 1991, France has pursued the so-called double detente policy, it consisted in getting

closer to NATO's military structures and, at the same time, in attempts to create a European pillar of security. It is significant that most of the activities undertaken by the French side towards Central and Eastern Europe were carried out jointly with Germany. Thanks to such a conduct, it was able to minimise the possible threat of German domination in this region, which the French side was afraid of since the reunification of this country in 1990 (Mickiewicz 2002: 119). One of the manifestations of this policy was the establishment of institutional military cooperation with Poland. The official agreement on cooperation in this field, *the Agreement between the National Defence Ministry of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of France on the Establishment of Cooperation in the Field of Defence*, was signed on 15 June 1992. At the same time, on 25 January 1993 the Polish side signed *the Agreement between the National Defence Ministry of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany on Cooperation in the Military Field* (Mickiewicz 2002: 119).

In the initial phase of the Weimar Triangle, the support of both these countries for Polish aspirations for membership in the North Atlantic Alliance was not univocal. At the second meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Triangle in French Bergerac, on 24 April 1992, the role of the OSCE was underlined, and proposals for cooperation with the Western European Union were mentioned. Possible membership in the Alliance was defined as a long-term goal. This position is reflected in the *Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Germany and Poland* from Bergerac. It states that the goal of the three countries is 'To build free and united Europe, based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE and the Paris Charter' (*Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany*, Bergerac, 24 April 1992). In the context of cooperation with NATO, a general statement is made 'On the other hand, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council has started to play a prominent role in the cooperation between the members of the North Atlantic Alliance and the countries of Central Europe, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe' (*Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany*, Bergerac, 24 April, 1992).

The meeting of the foreign ministers of the Triangle in Warsaw on 11–12 November 1993 brought the consent of Germany and France to support the Polish association with the Western European Union. With this declaration, both countries confirmed their support for Poland's tightening of ties with the European and Euro-Atlantic security structures. Poland obtained the status of an associate partner of the Western European Union in May 1994 (Halamski, and Kazana 1997: 18).

The year 1994 brought also the extension of Weimar cooperation to the meetings of national defence ministers. The fact that in 1994 consultations at this level took place three times indicated the increase of support of the German and French sides for Polish integration with the North Atlantic Alliance. Joint exercises of the armed forces of three countries were initiated (Bogusławska 2000: 9). In addition, this support was also expressed during the annual consultations of foreign ministers in September 1994 in Bamberg, Germany. Unfortunately, it was not connected with the declaration regarding the date of accession to NATO (Bogusławska 2000: 24).

After a period of increased cooperation, military contacts between the Weimar partners cooled down. In 1995 and 1996 there was no meeting of defence ministers. Their revival took place in 1997. The reason for this was the approaching prospect of Poland's membership in the North Atlantic Alliance. New forms of Weimar cooperation were created, *the Initiative of the Ministers of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic and the Republic of Poland Regarding the Intensification of Tripartite Political-Military and Military Cooperation* played an important role in this field. This document was signed by the Ministers of Defence of Poland, Germany and France in Warsaw on 3 February 1997. The initiative aimed at adding a new dimension to the previous military cooperation and expressed the partners' will to develop a common position in the most important political and military issues. Another goal was also to intensify military cooperation, to this end, the creation of a Joint Military Coordination Group was announced, the task of which was to develop a three-year cooperation programme. The programme of tripartite military cooperation was to include conducting at least once a year joint exercises with the participation of all types of armed forces, a meeting of defence ministers and intensification of staff exchanges (*Initiative of the Ministers of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic and the Republic of Poland Regarding the Intensification of Tripartite Political-Military and Military Cooperation*). The described initiative gave an impulse for significantly closer cooperation. Statements regarding the annual manoeuvres of all types of armed forces are particularly important in this document. This meant extending the existing cooperation in this area. This document was also a gesture towards Poland, striving to give Weimar cooperation a more institutionalised character (*Engere militaerische Zusammenarbeit vereinbart*). A cooperation plan for 1998–2000, described in the document, was also created and approved at the next meeting of defence ministers in Weimar in 1997.

In the second half of the nineties, the Weimar Triangle was an important instrument for the Polish side to implement the priorities of Polish foreign

policy (Halamski 1998: 148). Due to the approaching membership in NATO, issues related to security policy became a particularly important element of tripartite cooperation during this period (Bogusławska 2000: 6). For these reasons, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, elected president of the Republic of Poland in 1995, sought during bilateral talks with Chancellor Kohl and President Chirac to give the Weimar Triangle a higher rank by launching consultations at the level of heads of state and government. The first meeting in the Weimar format at this level took place on 21 February 1998 in Poznań (Koszel 2016: 67–68). At the meeting of President Jacques Chirac, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, President Kwasniewski's guests assured him that Poland should integrate with the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union as quickly as possible. Western leaders promised Poland their support in this regard (*Kohl und Chirac befürworten eine schnelle Integration Polens*). The consultations of defence ministers of the three countries took place in subsequent years fairly regularly, also after Poland's accession to NATO.

For the Polish side Weimar cooperation was one of the elements of actions the aim of which was to maintain the support of Western countries for its aspirations for membership in the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty. Although, as I have already mentioned, the position of the United States was decisive in this respect, the support of Germany and France certainly helped Poland to become a member of this alliance. In this context, the support of both these countries for the Polish association with the Western European Union was not without significance. Joint military exercises carried out since 1994, extended under the Initiative of February 1997, brought together the structures of the German and French armies remaining in the Alliance and the Polish Army.

The tripartite military cooperation, joint exercises, together with the forms of cooperation with NATO, such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and participation in the 'Partnership for Peace' programme were a signal of Poland's approach to Euro-Atlantic security structures. For Poland, it was particularly important in the discussed period, because it enabled it to gradually leave the described 'grey zone' of security. In this respect, the support of the Weimar partners, although not always so univocal, contributed to the implementation of this strategic goal of Polish foreign policy in accordance with the wishes of the Polish side.

The other most important goal of Polish foreign policy was accession to the European Union. The Polish road to membership in this organisation was several years longer than to the North Atlantic Treaty.

The procedure of the accession of a new country to the European Union is a multi-stage process. It begins with the submission of an application for EU membership to the Council of the European Union. After the European Commission has drawn up its opinion on the application at the Council's request, the Council unanimously decides to open negotiations. The negotiations end with the draft accession treaty, which must be approved by an absolute majority of votes by the European Parliament. At the last stage, the Council of the European Union must unanimously approve the project. Then the treaty is signed by the Member States and the candidate country. The ratification of the treaty by the member countries and the candidate country proceeds in accordance with their internal regulations. The candidate country also conducts a referendum on joining the Union. The last stage is the entry into force of the accession treaty and amendments to the Treaty on the European Union at a given date (Dyńia 2006: 88–89).

In the case of countries whose economy and political conditions do not allow direct admission to the EU, association agreements are concluded before taking steps leading directly to membership of the Union. The purpose of the association is to enable gradual preparation for joining the Union (Dyńia 2006: 90). Poland also went along this path from association to full membership of the European Union.

Rapprochement with the European Communities was one of the main strategic goals of Poland, clearly articulated since the beginning of the political transformation in 1989. Already on 25 May 1990 Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski submitted in Brussels an official motion regarding the commencement of negotiations of the Association Agreement with the Communities (Willa 2016: 174). *The Europe Agreement Establishing an Association between the Republic of Poland and the European Communities and their Member States* was negotiated on 16 December 1991. It came into force after ratification on 1 February 1994.

The Europe Agreement established the main framework for the integration of Poland with the European Union created at that time on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty. Already a few weeks after the entry into force of the Europe Agreement, the Polish side submitted an official application regarding joining the European Union (Czachór 2009: 39). Three years later, in July 1997, the European Commission presented an Opinion on the applications of associated countries, including Poland, regarding membership. On this basis, the Commission recommended the European Council to start accession negotiations, among others, with Poland. During the summit of the states and governments in Luxembourg on 12–13 March 1998, it was

decided to launch bilateral Intergovernmental Conferences with six countries, including Poland (Czachór 2009: 40–41).

Poland's accession negotiations consisted of two stages. The first of them was a review of the compliance of Polish legislation with EU law. In the other one, the Polish side prepared negotiating positions on 31 negotiation areas. In December 1999 in Helsinki, the European Council prepared a 'negotiation road map'. It contained a timetable planning their completion in 2002. The signing of the Nice Treaty on 26 February 2001, which carried out a certain institutional reform of the European Union, gave a new impetus to the negotiations.

The finalisation of the negotiations with Poland took place during the Copenhagen summit in December 2002. The accession treaty was signed on 16 April 2003 in Athens. After the referendum, which was conducted on 7–8 June 2003 and was successful for supporters of Poland's accession to the Union, Poland became a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004 (Kreile 2004: 655).

Providing support for bringing Poland and other 'new democracies' closer to the European Community was one of the reasons why the Weimar Triangle was brought to life. The seventh point of *Joint Statement of Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Poland on the Future of Europe* signed in Weimar on 29 August 1991 says: 'France and Germany support all efforts to bring Poland and other new democracies closer to the European Community. They insist on the rapid conclusion of Association Agreements (...), support the development of political dialogue' (*Joint Statement of Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Poland on the Future of Europe*, Weimar, 29 August 1991).

After Poland signed the Association Agreement with the EC in December 1991, the issue of closer links and European integration was the subject of discussion during subsequent consultations of foreign ministers (Koszel 2016: 67). This was reflected in the declarations being the result of tripartite consultations. In the *Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Poland and Germany* (Bergerac, 24 April 1992), there is a statement about the satisfaction of Germany and France with the signing of association agreements by Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, both western partners of Poland declared to make every effort to ensure that the prospect of accession to the EU can be realised when the economic conditions are fulfilled (*Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of France, Poland and Germany*, Bergerac, 24 April 1992). Also in the next document, created during the meeting in Warsaw in 1993, there are numerous references to issues related

to European integration. Already in the first point, the ministers declared that the common goal of the three states 'is to build united, democratic and free Europe' (*Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of Poland, France and Germany*, Warsaw, 12 November 1993). In the third point, there was a statement, important for the Polish party, regarding granting Poland and other associated states membership in the European Union, after they met the necessary conditions. In addition, the support of the Weimar partners in the process of achieving membership in the Union was expressed (*Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of Poland, France and Germany*, Warsaw, 12 November 1993).

Similar words can also be found in the document that crowns the Bamberg summit of 15 September 1994. It contains the announcements of extending tripartite cooperation, Germany and France express their satisfaction with the entry into force of the Europe Agreement. They also promise to help Poland 'to better meet the conditions of accession' (*Declaration of Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland*, Bamberg, 15 September 1994). At the initial stage of Poland's European integration the unequivocal expressions of support expressed by the two most important players on the European arena were valuable to Poland. They were a testimony that Poland was not alone in its efforts, and although it had to fulfil all the requirements necessary to enter the ranks of the Member States of the Union, it could count on a certain favour, assistance from the Weimar partners. Regular meetings made it possible to build mutual trust between politicians and to personally explain some of the doubts on an ongoing basis.

The Weimar Summit in Poznań in 1998 was a success of Weimar cooperation on the plane of European integration. Both President Chirac and Chancellor Kohl stressed that Poland should become a member of both NATO and the European Union as soon as possible (*Kohl Und Chirac befürworten eine schnelle Integration Polens*). From the point of view of European integration, the Poznań summit of the Triangle was also of symbolic significance, as it was held shortly before launching accession negotiations with Poland in March 1998.

During the next Weimar Summit, which took place in French Nancy on 7 May 1999, President Kwaśniewski thanked his Western partners for help in preparing Poland for membership in the Union, but the talks were largely dominated by the Kosovo crisis (*Kosovo-Krise Hauptthema beim Weimarer Dreieck*). Both during that summit and the January meeting of foreign ministers of the three countries, devoted to a large extent to European integration, no specific deadlines for possible Poland's accession to the European Union were mentioned.

One of the reasons for this was the change in the position of the German Chancellor which took place in autumn 1998. Helmut Kohl, known for his special support for Poland, was substituted by Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder. Initially, the government of Chancellor Schröder confirmed the will to follow the foreign policy of his predecessor, but at the same time focused on greater pragmatism in German foreign policy (Fischer 2017: 374). During the reign of Gerhard Schröder, the opinion, which was supported since the beginning of the nineties by France, that enlarging the European Union by new members required its institutional changes began to consolidate (Koszel 2016: 69–70).

Appropriate solutions in this regard preparing the EU for enlargement were provided by the Treaty of Nice, which was adopted during the EU summit in this city in 2000 and came into force on 1 February 2003. In the meantime, the third Weimar Summit took place on 27 February 2001 in the German town of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse. Chancellor Schröder and President Chirac announced that Poland would belong to the first group of countries from Central and Eastern Europe that would become members of the European Union. President Kwasniewski mentioned real chances that Poland would be able to take part in the European Parliament elections planned for 2004 (*Schröder, Chirac Und Kwasniewski sprechen über EU-Politik*). The summit in Neustadt was the next step on the road to bringing Poland closer to the European Union. In the period preceding the end of the accession negotiations, each meeting with the Western partners was of considerable importance, as it enabled the discussion on current divergencies in negotiated topics and possible approximation of positions.

The last Weimar Summit before the enlargement of the European Union was held in Wrocław on 9 May 2003. It took place partly in the shadow of the conflict within NATO concerning the American intervention in Iraq, which began on 20 March 2003. The Polish side joined the coalition under the US command, which attacked Iraq ruled by Saddam Hussein. Germany and France strongly criticised this conduct. Such conditions of the meeting had an impact on the content of conversations in a large part devoted to this conflict. However, the communication summarising the discussion contained Germany's and France's appreciation of Poland's will to travel the path to accession and the words about expecting Poland's return to the European family (*Summit of the Weimar Triangle in Wrocław, 9 May 2003, Statement of the President of the Republic of Poland*). These words were of great symbolic importance in the face of Poland's expected accession to the European Union, especially due to the fact that during the summit in Wrocław the possibility

of further cooperation in the Weimar formula after the accession of Poland to the Union was also discussed.

In line with the expectations expressed during the summit in Wrocław, less than a year later the European Union enlarged by 10 countries, including Poland. The enlargement of the Union, which took place on 1 May 2004, closed an important stage in the functioning of the Weimar Triangle. The informal platform for consultations of the three countries, launched in 1991, played an important role in favour of the integration processes in Europe in the years 1991–2004.

Despite the variable intensity of contacts, partly caused by the weakening interest of France in this form of cooperation, it was possible to maintain a certain continuity of meetings at the level of foreign ministers during the first 13 years of the functioning of the Triangle. Weimar cooperation was also consistently expanded to consultations of national defence ministers and other ministries, parliamentary cooperation, and finally summits with the heads of states and governments. Regular meetings in the first phase of integration were for the Polish side an important demonstration of support for its aspirations in the field of European integration. This support, expressed by two strong European countries, constituting the motor of integration, was an important sign for both Poland and other countries. In this respect, Poland was in a privileged position, none of the other countries aspiring to membership in the Western structures could count on such a form of cooperation. Polish-German-French military cooperation, although carried out with varying intensity, also contributed to bringing the Polish Armed Forces closer to the Western structures, which was of particular importance before Poland's admission to NATO. On the one hand, the military cooperation reduced the alienation of Poland remaining in the 'grey zone' of security since 1991, on the other hand, it led to better preparation of our army for accession to the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty.

From the second half of the nineties, and especially in the period immediately before Poland's accession to the European Union, the subject of accession negotiations was discussed at various levels of Weimar cooperation. Regular tripartite dialogue was conducive to the approximation of positions. Although in the context of the accession negotiations with the EU, bilateral relations with Germany and France were decisive, the Weimar Triangle's actions supported them significantly. They were also a symbol of the continuation of good relations, especially the subsequent Weimar summits.

Apart from the cooperation at the ministerial, parliamentary and military levels maintained from the very beginning of the Triangle, regional cooperation

also had certain significance for European integration. Its expression was, inter alia, the Agreement on Regional Cooperation and Partnership between Pomeranian Voivodeship, the Middle Franconia District and the Limousin Region of 8 February 2001 (*Agreement on Regional Cooperation and Partnership between Pomeranian Voivodeship, the Middle Franconia District and the Limousin Region*, 8 February 2001). Such initiatives enable citizens of the three European countries to better understand one another and to deepen ties between them, which is a great value for the European integration process.

CONCLUSIONS

The activities of the Weimar Triangle significantly contributed to the European integration processes on many levels. Despite its different intensity, since its establishment in 1991, it remained a permanent element of the policy of Poland, Germany and France. Since 2004, despite many perturbations and recurring doubts about the strategic goals of the Weimar Triangle, the tripartite cooperation has continued. The fact that this form of cooperation continues, despite difficulties, may indicate the still existing potential for meetings of representatives of the three large European Union countries. Each of them represents different, characteristic for its region, interests that can be discussed from various perspectives. Perhaps numerous challenges that the crisis-hit European Union is facing now will in future lead to the formulation of a new programming document for Weimar cooperation that will set further strategic goals for it.

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THE ROLE OF THE WEIMAR TRIANGLE IN THE PROCESSES OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN 1991–2004

Summary

In the year 1989 Poland began to reform its political and economic system. In parallel it started to implement the processes of Europeanization. Rapprochement with the western structures became the main objective of the Polish foreign policy. The ultimate goal was the full membership of the NATO and European Union. The Weimar Triangle was established in August

1991, it was one of the tools which should help Poland in achieving this objective. Regular meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Polish, German and French politicians took place within this area of cooperation. In the article I analyse the actual impact of this form of cooperation on the processes of European integration in the years 1991–2004.

Key words: Weimar Triangle, Poland, Germany, France, European Union, European integration, political changes

ROLA TRÓJKĄTA WEIMARSKIEGO W PROCESACH INTEGRACJI EUROPEJSKIEJ W LATACH 1991–2004

Streszczenie

W 1989 roku rozpoczęły się w Polsce procesy przemian politycznych i gospodarczych. W ich wyniku już na początku lat dziewięćdziesiątych głównymi celami polskiej polityki zagranicznej stały się akcesja do Unii Europejskiej i uzyskanie członkostwa w NATO. Jednym z narzędzi, które miały pomóc w ich realizacji był, powołany do życia w 1991 roku, Trójkąt Weimarski. W ramach tej nieformalnej płaszczyzny polsko-niemiecko-francuskiej współpracy, miały miejsce regularne spotkania ministrów spraw zagranicznych oraz innych polityków trzech państw. W artykule poddany jest analizie wpływ tej formy kooperacji na procesy integracji europejskiej w latach 1991–2004, w szczególności na przyjęcie Polski w szeregi Unii Europejskiej i NATO.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, Niemcy, Francja, Unia Europejska, przemiany ustrojowe, integracja europejska, Trójkąt Weimarski

РОЛЬ ВЕЙМАРСКОГО ТРЕУГОЛЬНИКА В ПРОЦЕССАХ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ В 1991–2004 ГОДАХ

Резюме

В 1989 году в Польше начались процессы политической и экономической трансформации. В результате в начале 90-х годов основными целями польской внешней политики стали присоединение к Европейскому союзу и членство в НАТО. Одним из инструментов, призванным способствовать их

реализации, был созданный в 1991 году Веймарский треугольник. В рамках этой неофициальной платформы польско-германо-французского сотрудничества состоялись очередные встречи министров иностранных дел и других политиков – представителей этих трех государств. В статье анализируется влияние этой формы сотрудничества на процессы европейской интеграции в 1991–2004 годах, в частности, на вступление Польши в Европейский союз и НАТО.

Ключевые слова: Польша, Германия, Франция, Европейский союз, политические реформы, европейская интеграция, Веймарский треугольник

Cite as:

Czasak, M. (2018) 'The Role of the Weimar Triangle in the Processes of European Integration in 1991-2004'. *Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna* 3(62), 173–193. DOI: 10.26399/meip.3(62).2018.37/m.czasak

Cytuj jako:

Czasak M., *The Role of the Weimar Triangle in the Processes of European Integration in 1991–2004 [Rola Trójkąta Weimarskiego w procesach integracji europejskiej w latach 1991–2004]*, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna” 2018 nr 3(62), s. 173–193. DOI: 10.26399/meip.3(62).2018.37/m.czasak