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From Mitterand to Macron: Tracing the Evolution of French-Polish Relations

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Agata Stolarz

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Abstract: The first months of Emmanuel Macron's presidency have shown that one of his goals is to rebuild France's position on the international stage. Macron also seeks to promote several reforms at the EU level geared towards deepening European integration. Presumably, Macron's policy objectives will impact Central Europe, including Poland. This paper provides a general overview of the Franco-Polish relationship over the period 1989-2017. Against this background, the paper will discuss the main challenges in the Franco-Polish cooperation since the fall of the Berlin Wall through the first three months of Macron's presidency (2017).

Keywords: Franco-Polish relationship, French Foreign Policy, Macron, social dumping

Introduction

Contemporary Europe, struggling with problems such as the mass-migration crisis and rising unemployment among young people in Western Europe, is looking for new leaders to replace the old political elites. Many people from both the general public and the political establishment see hope for "rebuilding Europe" in the president of France. In May 2017, Macron won the French presidential election, although at the beginning of his campaign, many observers did not anticipate his success. The critics were particularly concerned with his inexperience in international politics. The first weeks of Macron's presidency showed that one of his main goals was not only to "improve France" but also to regain the country's former leading role in the international arena. Keeping in mind the French president's speeches on the occasion of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Versailles

and US President Donald Trump's to Paris, Macron aims not only to strengthen the French position in the spheres of the economy and defense but also to reclaim the French role as a world leader in soft power, which would help him introduce European Union (EU) reforms.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the political relationship between France and Poland since the fall of the Berlin Wall through the first three months of Macron's presidency. Tracking the evolution of the political relationship between France and Poland aims to indicate and discuss the main challenges in their mutual cooperation. The perspective used in the paper is a historical one. The analysis is carried out with the following research questions: How has France's foreign policy towards Poland changed in the past 25 years? What is Macron's policy toward Poland? What would be the consequences of this policy? What position will France play in the international arena? This paper attempts to address these questions and provides an overview of the development of the Franco-Polish relationship in the past two and a half decades.

This paper is not aimed at discussing these problems entirely, but tries to outline France's foreign policy in terms of Poland with some references to other EU countries in Central Europe—Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. It begins with an overview of Poland's place in the French political discourse in the 1990s, then in the first half of the 2000s, and then after Poland and other Central European countries' accession to the EU. A section on the main problems of Macron's policy towards Poland is next, followed by a discussion on the various directions of this policy as pursued in practice.

1. From Investment Risk to Strategic Partnership

● Franco-Polish relations even before the fall of the Berlin Wall were rather positive, especially considering the political situation of the time. It is worth recalling the visit of Charles De Gaulle to Poland in 1967. The president of France came to Poland to “give proof of friendship,” and to support Poland's claims on its western border with Germany. After the end of World War II until the 1990s, some of the German political environment had questioned the border between Poland and Germany. A position on it was adopted, for example, by the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (German: Christlich

Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU), which had stressed that real recognition of the border could only be made by a united Germany. In 1967, De Gaulle was the first leader of a Western country to make a statement about the “Polishness” of the western lands of contemporary Poland and of Pomerania. After the departure of the French president, communist propaganda presented his visit as a great success of diplomacy of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL).¹

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, France maintained proper cultural and diplomatic relations with Poland as well as with other countries of Central Europe. The political changes in the region were appreciated. Francois Mitterrand in September 1990, in front of the Czechoslovak government, declared: “A new era began in 1989 for our continent: the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe have achieved a great popular revolution that had been known since the French Revolution of 1789.”²

In the early 1990s, the cultural relationship was developed. For example, French Institutes (French: Institut français) were established in the capitals in almost every country in the region, in Poland in Warsaw and in Cracow. These institutions subordinate to the French ambassador to Poland receive subsidies from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and support its agenda to spread French culture abroad. At the heart of the French institutes’ mission is teaching the French language.³

At the same time, little was done in other spheres of Franco-Polish relations, such as economic or security. France was very cautious about the socio-economic transformation in Central Europe, which

- 1 About French-Polish relations see more J. Orzeł, M. Mróz (eds.), *Kontakty, tradycje i stosunki polsko-francuskie od XVI do początków XX wieku. Zbiór studiów* [Contacts, traditions and Polish-French relations from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century. Collection of studies], Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2012; A. Szeptycki, *Francja czy Europa? Dziedzictwo generała de Gaulle’a w polityce zagranicznej V Republiki* [France or Europe? General de Gaulle’s legacy in the foreign policy of the V Republic], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2005. Also the Franco-Polish relations in various fields of science and cultural cooperation, especially in the humanities, have long tradition. During the period of PRL French universities had offered numerous scholarships to Polish scientists, so Polish researchers had the opportunity to know the current achievements of western science. See P. Pleskot, *Intelektualni sąsiedzi. Kontakty polskich historyków z francuskim środowiskiem „Annales” w latach 1945-1989* [Intellectual neighbors. Contacts between Polish historians and the French “Annales” in 1945-1989], Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej-Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2010.
- 2 J.-C. Romer, T. Schreiber, ‘La France et l’Europe centrale’ [France and Central Europe], *Politique étrangère*, No. 4, 1995-1996, p. 921.
- 3 Institut français, *Faites notre connaissance* [Get to know us], <http://www.institutfrancais.com/fr/faites-notre-connaissance-o> [2017-08-13].

means that French companies were slowly entering the new market. For several years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, French companies considered the countries of Central Europe to be an “investment risk” on par with African countries.⁴ In short, in the 1990s, France’s foreign policy towards Central Europe was characterized by a paternalistic approach and limited economic relations.⁵

In the course of the socio-economic transformation, Franco-Polish relations improved. While President Jacques Chirac continued to deliver paternalistic opinions on Central European countries, that changed with the election of President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007. After his election, Sarkozy proposed the negotiation of strategic partnerships as part of French policy towards some countries in the region, mainly in relation to energy, environment, security, immigration, education, and culture.⁶ Of course, such a radical change of policy was the result of the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia to the EU in 2004.

EU accession of countries in the region intensified not only the penetration of French companies into eastern markets but also relations on a cultural level. In French political thought, there was great interest in the cultural and political systems of the new EU countries, and in particular on their belonging to Europe, which was a way to legitimize their joining union structures. Attention was paid to the common cultural heritage based on Christianity, as well as shared democratic values. The assumption of European cohesion, and later on, the cohesion of the EU, appeared in statements of French politicians and political thinkers, scientists, and philosophers. Such views were proclaimed, among others, by philosopher Chantal Delsol and historian Jacques Le Goff.⁷ Such a favorable point of view of Central Europe was expressed

4 C. Bayou, ‘La présence économique française en Europe centrale et orientale au seuil de 1993’ [The French economic presence in Central and Eastern Europe up to 1993], *Courrier des pays de l’Est*, No. 379, 1993, pp. 3-37; E. Tulmets, D. Cadier, ‘French Policies toward Central Eastern Europe: Not a Foreign Policy Priority but a Real Presence’, *DGAPanalyse*, No. 11, 2014, p. 3.

5 E. Tulmets, D. Cadier, op. cit., p. 4.

6 Ibid.

7 See more Ch. Delsol, ‘L’affirmation de l’identité européenne’ [The assertion of European identity], in: Ch. Delsol, J.-F. Mattéi (eds.) *L’identité de l’Europe*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010, pp. 1-7; Ch. Delsol, ‘Éloge de la singularité. Essai sur la modernité tardive’ [Praise of singularity. Essay on late modernity], Paris: Éditions la Table Ronde, 2007 (in Polish: *Esej o człowieku późnej nowoczesności*, trad. M. Kowalska, Kraków: Znak, 2003).

primarily by researchers and politicians who already had much contact with these countries, usually at the academic level.⁸

After 2004, there was a further intensification of the mutual Franco-Central European connection. A good example of this is the Franco-Polish cooperation founded on the 2008 Declaration of Polish-French Strategic Partnership, initiated by the Sarkozy government and the subsequent Programme of Cooperation of 2013, which implements it.⁹ It is based on bilateral meetings, inter-governmental consultations presided over by the prime ministers of France and Poland and held since 2004, and Polish-French summits attended by the presidents of France and Poland and launched in 2005.¹⁰ The strategic partnership provided a roadmap for deeper cooperation at many different levels: political and strategic consultations, defense, economy, etc.¹¹

Other factors also influenced the improvement of Franco-Polish relations. In 2008, Poland supported the stabilization operation in Chad initiated and led by France and under the EU flag. The Polish military contingent (more than 400 soldiers and several helicopters) in Chad was a separate component of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland designed to ensure the safety of Darfur refugee humanitarian operations in 2008-2009.¹²

Relations between France and Poland and the rest of Central Europe continued to improve with the election of François Hollande as president in May 2012. Hollande's government sought to continue the bilateral relationship with Poland. There was a great intensification of visits by representatives of government and heads of state. Hollande

⁸ See example of Chantal Delsol and Jacques Le Goff.

⁹ Deklaracja Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i Prezydenta Republiki Francuskiej o polsko-francuskim partnerstwie strategicznym [Join Declaration by the President of the Republic of Poland and by the President of the French Republic on the Polish-French Strategic Partnership], https://www.prezydent.pl/download/gfx/prezydent/pl/.../deklaracja_wersja-polska.pdf [2017-08-13]; Polско-Francuskie Partnerstwo Strategiczne: Program Współpracy [Polish-French Strategic Partnership: Cooperation Program], https://pl.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/Francja_128a_polski_29-11-13_.pdf?7469/225160ed7839cc7ffe0e52b90d5a74e5a8c1018b [2017-08-13]. See also A. Szeptycki, 'Konsekwencje wyborów prezydenckich we Francji dla Polski' [Consequences of the presidential election in France for Poland], *PISM, Biuletyn*, No. 21 (435), 2007, pp. 1771-1772.

¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France: Bilateral cooperation, http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/c/MOBILE/foreign_policy/europe/bilateral_relations_europe/france [2017-07-31].

¹¹ E. Tulmets, D. Cadier, op. cit., p. 12.

¹² N. Dufour, M. Terlikowski, 'Poland and France: The (Un)Limited Strategic Partnership', *Strategic File*, No. 3 (66), February 2015, p. 2.

travelled three times to Warsaw and Polish President Bronisław Komorowski visited France in May 2013. It was the first visit by a Polish president to Paris since 2000. Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski also paid a visit to France, invited to attend the annual ambassador's conference in August 2013.¹³

During the Hollande presidency, France and Poland held regular political dialogue. The next Polish president, Andrzej Duda, paid an official visit to Paris in October 2016, followed by new Prime Minister Beata Szydło to Paris on 3 February 2016.¹⁴ From one of those meetings was the commencement of negotiations to supply the Polish military with the French Caracal helicopter. However, the conversation did not end in success. The Polish Ministry of Development breaking off of offset negotiations with French consortium Airbus Helicopters concerning the purchase of the helicopters weakened Franco-Polish relations, especially on the diplomatic front. President Hollande then canceled a previously planned official visit to Warsaw and did not attend international consultations with Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło. Only French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Marc Ayrault paid a visit to Warsaw on 13 June 2016.¹⁵ To many commentators, the cancellation of the planned visit of the French head of state was seen as a sign of a crisis in Franco-Polish relations.¹⁶

Since 2015's presidential and parliamentary elections in Poland, which Law and Justice (PiS) won, French media closely monitor the political and systemic changes in Poland, and also in Hungary. In the case of Poland, French media track with special attention the situation of Polish public media and in 2017, the judicial reform proposals. The discourse often refers to a "democratic crisis."¹⁷ Macron has made

¹³ E. Tulmets, D. Cadier, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, op. cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MT, 'Prezydent Francji odwołuje wizytę w Polsce. Powód? Decyzja rządu PiS' [The President of France cancels a visit to Poland. Reason? Decision of the PiS government], *Newsweek*, <http://www.newsweek.pl/swiat/prezydent-francji-odwoluje-wizyte-w-polsce-z-powodu-caracal-artykuly,398369,1.html> [2017-07-31].

¹⁷ See e.g.: J. Iwaniuk, J.-P. Stroobants, 'Etat de droit : Bruxelles accentue sa pression sur Varsovie' [State of law: Brussels intensifies pressure on Warsaw], *Le Monde*, 28 July 2016, http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2016/07/28/etat-de-droit-bruxelles-accentue-sa-pression-sur-varsovie_4975723_3214.html#pHe23D420yl78e4G.99 [2017-07-31]; A. Frachon, 'La nouvelle bataille de Gdansk' [The new battle of Gdansk], *Le Monde*, 26 January 2017, <http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/ar>

many comments critical of the leaders and ruling parties in Poland and in Hungary, both during his campaign for president and once in office. In one of his pre-election rallies, he said: "We all know who Le Pen's allies are: the regimes of (Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor) Orban, Kaczynski [and] Putin. These aren't regimes with an open and free democracy. Every day they break many democratic freedoms."¹⁸ This statement was widely commented on in Poland.¹⁹ Although the tone of Macron's speech softened after his election, he remains one of the main critics of the current government in Poland.

Even in earlier years, during the presidencies of Sarkozy and Hollande, for example, despite the development of mutual cooperation, critical words were addressed to Poland. One of the main reasons for the criticism was the issue of social dumping.²⁰ A handy metaphor to talk about this problem was the "Polish plumber in France," a description initiated by Jean-Marie Le Pen about the employment of Polish repair crews in France who worked for wages much lower than the minimum in France (SMIC). According to the Services in the Internal Market Directive 2006/123/EC (also called the "Bolkestein Directive"), Polish companies could pay salaries for Polish workers in France at Polish rates, which was much lower than the French payroll. Another problem of the liberalization of the European labor market was the lack of control over the influx of workers from other countries in the EU.

The metaphor of the Polish plumber returned in the 2017 presidential election, this time in the campaign of the next leader of National

ticle/2017/01/26/la-nouvelle-bataille-de-gdansk_5069431_3232.html#qw9GQro5JciclSe7.99 [2017-07-31].

- 18 E. Macron, Discours du 1er mai d'Emmanuel Macron [Speech of May 1 by Emmanuel Macron], *En Marche!*, <https://en-marche.fr/article/discours-1er-mai-emmanuel-macron> [2017-07-31].
- 19 See, for example, the official reply of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Biuro Rzecznika Prasowego Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych, Oświadczenie MSZ w związku z wypowiedzią Emmanuela Macrona [MFA statement in connection with the Emmanuel Macron's declaration], 2 May 2017, http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/oswiadczenie_msz_w_zwiazku_z_wypowiedzia_emmanuela_macrona [2017-07-31].
- 20 I accept the understanding of social dumping as "creating a situation in which cheaper workers from another Member State occupy the workplace of the inhabitants of a given country". European Commission, 'Posted workers', <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=471> [2017-08-13]. See also M. Bernaciak, 'Social Dumping and the EU integration process', *European Trade Union Institute Working Paper 2014.06*, Bruksela 2014, p. 5.

Front, Marine Le Pen.²¹ Paradoxically, the problem of social dumping is one of the main challenges in Franco-Polish relations most likely to be undertaken during the presidency of Le Pen's opponent and the current president of France, Macron.

2. Social Dumping and the "Macron Law"

The issue of social dumping appeared, though not explicitly, a few days before the second round of the presidential elections when Macron met with striking workers at a Whirlpool plant in Amiens in April 2017. The plant was to be closed and the production lines relocated to Łódź, Poland. After his meeting with factory workers, Macron gave an interview to the regional newspaper *La Voix du Nord*. He said Poland offers better conditions (lower labor costs) for non-Polish companies and thus violates EU principles, including solidarity between countries in the union. He also stated that if elected president of France, he would consider the situation with Poland in detail. In the same interview, Macron advocated the introduction of sanctions on Poland without giving any details.²²

Social dumping is one of the main problems in the relations between France and Central European countries, especially Poland, the leader in posted workers. Bearing in mind the electoral program of both Macron and his party La République En Marche (LREM), as well as the first months of their government, changes in the European labor market can be expected. Many of Macron's important electoral proposals referenced the EU, but that does not mean he is in favor of maintaining the status quo. As president of France, he and his government will strive for the introduction of "fairer rules" within the EU. Probably, they will concern the aforementioned restriction on the freedom of movement of people and services that benefits poorer EU countries such as Poland. Similar restrictions also can be expected in trade.

21 B.T. Wieliński, 'Wybory we Francji. Polski hydraulik do bicia' [Elections in France. Polish plumber to beat], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 May 2017, <http://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/7,124059,21770587,wybory-we-francji-polski-hydraulik-do-bicia.html> [2017-07-31].

22 M. Verrier, '« Je ne poursuivrai pas l'Europe comme elle est », affirme Emmanuel Macron' ["I will not continue Europe as it is," says Emmanuel Macron], interview with E. Macron, *La Voix du Nord*, 27 April 2017, <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/154291/article/2017-04-27/je-ne-poursuivrai-pas-l-europe-comme-elle-est-affirme-emmanuel-macron> [2017-07-31].

Further changes concerning the transport sector and Polish carriers are predicted. The so-called “Macron Law” (*Loi Macron*) was first enunciated in a policy document from 2015 about the French minimum wage in the transport sector. The law applies a minimum wage to cabotage and all international transport operations (transit excluded). This law entered into force on July 1, 2016. In practice, this means that “a driver performing transport to/from France, including cabotage, is entitled to French minimum wage, that is, 9.76 euros per hour. [The driver] is also entitled to additional social rules on working time and rest, overtime, occupational health and gender equality.”²³ The law provides new obligations on French inland transport movement and international transport to or from France. Under the new law, foreign-based drivers are subject to the French social law once they enter French territory.²⁴

The purpose of the “Macron Law” (like the German Minimum Wage Act, or MiLoG—Mindestlohngesetz) is to ensure the same minimal working and social conditions within the EU, and consequently to prevent social dumping. The law also introduced a series of administrative obligations that create problems for Polish carriers. They are obliged to create a certificate of *détachement* using a French website and which must contain specific data.²⁵ The declaration system itself can be complicated at first for foreign haulers. As a result, the vast majority of Polish commentators on the transport industry have perceived the establishment of the new legislation as an attempt to expel Polish transport companies from France. According to the Polish observers, France (as well as Germany) is seeking legal means to curtail access for Polish carriers to its domestic market and lower their competitiveness.²⁶

Based on Macron’s declarations and his previous accomplishments, the “introduction of more fair rules” in trade and the labor market can

23 ‘What Is LOI Macron?’, <https://www.macron-fr.eu/en/macron> [31.07.2017].

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 S. Suchcicki, ‘Płaca minimalna a transport we Francji: Ustawa Macrona dotknie polskich przewoźników’ [Minimum wage and transport in France: The Macron Act will affect Polish carriers], *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 June 2016, <http://www.rp.pl/Firma/306109981-Placa-minimalna-a-transport-we-Francji-Ustawa-Macrona-dotknie-polskich-przewoznikow.html#ap-2> [2017-31-07]; A. Knopik, ‘La Loi Macron – czyli francuskie uderzenie w transport międzynarodowy’ [La Loi Macron – a French hit in international transport], *Transportowy.pl*, 26 June 2016, <http://transportowy.pl/la-loi-macron-czyli-francuskie-uderzenie-w-transport-miedzynarodowy/> [2017-07-31].

be expected. The current administration may also introduce regulations that will in some way discriminate against foreign competition, particularly in transport. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Macron announced the introduction of reforms aimed at restoring competitiveness. However, it can be assumed his proposal will be implemented in the French economy rather than at the EU level. Apart from the weakening of the competitiveness of Polish transport companies in France, it is difficult to give a more detailed account of the economic policy of the French president towards Poland. Macron himself speak very little about his foreign policy, which can be seen as deliberate. He likes to repeat that he refers to De Gaulle and Mitterrand.²⁷

3. EU Reform, or “Multi-Speed EU”

Another problem in France’s current relations with Poland, as well as with some other countries in Central Europe, concerns the political sphere. Macron has repeatedly expressed the need for Poland and Hungary to respect democratic values. He says these countries do not obey EU rules.²⁸ Judging by Macron’s statements, EU coherence occupies an important place in his political thinking. Macron was the only candidate in the French presidential election in 2017 who strongly advocated for the EU. During and soon after his campaign, Macron often pointed to issues related not only to the EU budget but also to social problems such as human rights, solidarity between different countries of the union, and the importance of respect for democratic values.²⁹ The last statements were clearly directed towards Poland and Hungary.³⁰

27 M. Encaoua, P. Théveniaud, ‘Emmanuel Macron, l’hyper président’ [Emmanuel Macron, the hyper president], *Le Parisien*, 2 July 2017, <http://www.leparisien.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron-l-hyper-president-02-07-2017-7103979.php> [2017-07-31].

28 P. Moszyński and others, ‘Prezydent Macron w wywiadzie dla „Wyborczej”: Europa nie jest supermarketem’ [President Macron in an interview for “Wyborcza”: Europe is not a supermarket], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 June 2017, <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,21990918,prezydent-macron-w-wywiadzie-dla-wyborczej-europa-nie-jest.html> [2017-07-31].

29 Conférence du presse d’Emmanuel Macron le jeudi 22 juin 2017 au Conseil Européen [Press conference by Emmanuel Macron on Thursday 22 June 2017 at the European Council], 23 June 2017, <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/conference-du-presse-d-emmanuel-macron-le-jeudi-22-juin-2017-au-conseil-europeen/> [2017-08-13].

30 P. Moszyński and others, op. cit.

In an interview after the election, Macron expressed the opinion that some East-Central European politicians admit nowadays a “double betrayal.”³¹ Following a cynical approach to the EU, they reject the principles that are characteristic of Europe, and therefore also for themselves. The reason for this rough assessment was the position of East-Central European countries, specifically Poland and Hungary, in relation to the mass-migration crisis and refugee relocation. Poland’s position, like that of other countries in its region, is, in Macron’s opinion, a manifestation of the lack of solidarity with other EU countries, as well as a selective approach to EU rules, which the French president defined as “treatment of the EU as a supermarket.”³²

Macron’s views on Poland and other countries of East-Central Europe became more balanced after his election. As president, Macron made more moderate statements, not only on issues related to Poland or Hungary but also to Russia and the US. He has often emphasized that he is open to dialogue, proving it by inviting Putin to Versailles. A friendly atmosphere was visible during the meeting of the French president with Prime Minister Szydło on the occasion of the Visegrad Group meeting on June 23, 2017, in Brussels.³³

At a time when European markets await the economic reforms announced in Macron’s and LREM’s election campaigns, the French president has been re-establishing France’s former international position as a leader in soft power. A good example of this is the visit by the Trump and First Lady Melania Trump to Paris and their participation in the Bastille Day. This official visit had a special character. During the first day, the American presidential couple toured many of Paris’ public spaces. The next day, they were honored guests at a Bastille Day parade. The purpose of the visit from the French side was obvious—it was not just about impressing the leader of the US but also about showing to the world that Paris is a strong and, equally important, safe capital that welcomes people from all over the world.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Premier Beata Szydło: Polityka migracyjna musi być pragmatyczna i skuteczna [Prime Minister Beata Szydło: Migration policy must be pragmatic and effective], <https://www.premier.gov.pl/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/premier-beata-szydlo-polityka-migracyjna-musi-byc-pragmatyczna-i-skuteczna.html> [13.08.2017].

The French president's actions have already achieved the desired result. France has overtaken the US and Britain as the world's leader in soft power according to "The Soft Power 30" annual index.³⁴ The list is assembled based on Joseph Nye's concept of soft power as the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion,³⁵ and its three pillars: political values, culture and foreign policy. Using those three pillars, more than 75 metrics across six sub-indices—government, culture, global engagement, education, digital, and enterprise—of objective data and seven categories of new international polling data, lead to the creation of the index.³⁶ The framework of the categories was built on a survey of existing academic literature on soft power.³⁷ In 2015 and 2016, France was 4th and 5th, respectively, in the ranking. France's top ranking in this year's edition of the index came in part from the election of Trump and the British referendum on the EU exit (Brexit). At the same time, the French diplomatic network held great importance. According to the authors of the list, Macron's election appears to have shifted global perceptions.³⁸

This digression allows for a better understanding of Macron's foreign policy, both towards Poland and other countries of Central Europe. Macron's long-term plan is to rebuild its leadership in international politics after the uncharismatic presidency of Hollande and its position in EU structures. As a result, Macron's foreign policy in the first few months after taking office is based primarily on diplomatic relations. In the first five months, the French president invited to Paris the presidents of Russia and the US, and the Israeli prime minister, to give only a few examples.³⁹

34 PR firm Portland Communications and the University of Southern California School of Public Diplomacy, *The Soft Power 30 annual index*, 2017, <http://softpower30.com/> [2017-07-31].

35 J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: New York Public, 2004.

36 PR firm Portland Communications and the University of Southern California School of Public Diplomacy, op. cit., p. 29-30.

37 Ibid., p. 30.

38 Ibid.; P. Wintour, 'Macron helps France become world leader in soft power, survey finds', *The Guardian*, 18 July 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/18/macron-helps-france-become-world-leader-soft-power-survey-finds> [2017-07-31].

39 See e.g. http://www.elysee.fr/videos/conference-de-presse-conjointe-avec-m-vladimir-poutine/?input-search=&input-date1=&input-date2=&input-theme=&input-type2=&search_index=2#content; <http://www.elysee.fr/videos/new-video-29/>, Dossier de presse – Conseil des ministres franco-allemand [Press kit – Franco-German Council of Ministers], 13 July 2017, <http://www.elysee.fr/assets/Uploads/Conseil-des-ministres-franco-allemand2.pdf> [2017-08013].

An openness to dialogue and a leading position in soft power are in Macron's political thinking a way to facilitate EU reform. A particularly ambitious goal of the French president's foreign policy is to reform the Eurozone, appoint its own finance minister, and form a separate chamber in the European Parliament for parliamentarians from Eurozone states, as well as a separate budget.⁴⁰

In view of the above, it can be expected that in the near future, EU leaders will have to decide whether the union should continue to develop through integration with Central European countries or whether the region will be marginalized and deeper integration follow only within the Eurozone. The issue is complicated by the fact that Central Europe is not homogeneous. Slovakia is the only country in the region to adopt the common currency. At the same time, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are trying to distance themselves from the other countries in the region, especially from Poland and Hungary. For their part, Poland and Hungary have different positions regarding Russia. And then, Romania and Bulgaria are not even in the Schengen area.

Macron's point of view on a "two-speed Europe" or "multi-speed EU" is relatively difficult to estimate. Judging from his proposals for reform of the Eurozone, this solution can be expected. At the same time, the president of France is famous for his positive attitude towards the project of further European integration and was one of his most frequently repeated election slogans.⁴¹ Likewise, Macron has often proclaimed the need for EU cohesion and the obligation of all EU countries to respect its principles. He also strongly emphasized the need to introduce fairer rules within the EU. Probably much depends on whether France finds a partner in carrying out its planned reforms in the Eurozone, and above all, how Franco-German relations will develop in the near future.⁴²

40 Charlemagne, 'Emmanuel Macron is revitalising the European Union – and dividing it', *The Economist*, 22 June 2017, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21725332-eurocrats-should-temper-their-new-optimism-bit-caution-emmanuel-macron-revitalising> [2017-07-31]; B. Judah, 'Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy doctrine(s)', *Politico*, <http://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macrons-foreign-policy-doctrines/> [2017-07-31].

41 'Conférence du presse d'Emmanuel Macron le jeudi 22 juin 2017 au Conseil Européen', op. cit.

42 Com. E. Tulmets, 'L'impact de l'élargissement de l'Union européenne sur la coopération française et allemande à l'Est: quelle gouvernance' [The impact of the enlargement of the European Union on French and German cooperation in the East: what governance], *Revue d'Etudes Comparatives Est-Ouest*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2003, pp. 111-156.

However, it can be expected that the French president will continue to take a firm stand against Poland and Hungary. The two countries were not included in Macron's visit to Central Europe. Instead, he visited Austria, Romania and Bulgaria between 23 and 25 August 2017, and met with the Czech and Slovak prime ministers.⁴³ The official meetings with representatives of Central European countries except for Poland and Hungary can be seen as a sign of the crisis in Franco-Polish and Franco-Hungarian relations, and a clear indication of a future "two-speed" or "multi-speed" EU.

In turn, the position of Central European states on the issue of "two-speed" or "multi-speed" EU is rather clear. For example, Poland's PiS government says a "two-speed" EU would result in the breakdown of the union in its current sense. Becoming "second-class" citizens and receiving a "double standard" in terms of services and goods is a great threat in Central Europe. To not find themselves in this situation, the countries from the region would have to look for the right strategic partner.

Conclusions

Over the past three decades, there have been significant changes in the French and Polish political relationships. In the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, France was active in cultural policy towards Poland. However, the level of investment was limited. This meant that the main challenge in Franco-Polish cooperation in the 1990s was economic. The first decade of the 21st century, especially its second half, and the next years, were conducive to mutual cooperation. After 2004, in particular during the presidency of Hollande, France invested in its relationship with Poland. It was done both at the diplomatic level (developing mutual partnerships) and economic level (investing in French companies in Poland). Security and defense was another area of collaboration.

Franco-Polish relations weakened in 2016. This was the result of the Polish Ministry of Development breaking off offset negotiations

43 J.-B. Vey, *Macron fin août dans l'est de l'UE sur le travail détaché*, *Reuters*, 7 August 2017, <http://fr.reuters.com/article/topNews/idFRKBN1AN1EI-OFRTF> [2017-07-13].

with the French consortium Airbus Helicopters. Another reason was the criticism of the changes introduced by the PiS government and its position on the resettlement of refugees. The next turn in Franco-Polish relations took place with the election of Macron as president of France, one of the loudest critics of the PiS government. While in the early 1990s the main challenges to Franco-Polish relations were economic in nature, in 2017 they have a rather socio-cultural background.

The recession in relations between France and Central European countries took place primarily in diplomatic terms. In the case of Poland, it was manifested by, among others, the cancellation of an official visit by Hollande in October 2016 and the exclusion of Poland and Hungary from Macron's visit to Central Europe in August 2017. Furthermore, the political changes in Poland and Hungary are perceived in France as attempts to control the courts and media, both by French politicians and the greater public. It is therefore difficult to expect an immediate improvement in Franco-Polish relations or in general Franco-Central European relations, especially in the face of Macron's critical statements about Poland and Central Europe.

The discussion about a "two-speed" or "multi-speed" EU clearly shows that relations between Western Europe and Central European countries have been considerably weakened. Similarly, the cooperation between France and Poland has decreased. It was predicted that a test of French-Polish relations would be the Ukraine crisis, since it has the potential to exacerbate divergences on Russia and the Eastern Partnership. However, this issue was positively resolved, thanks to collaboration within the Weimar Triangle. In the near future, cooperation with Poland, also within the Weimar Triangle, may be hampered by the less-than-positive image of Poland in France and in the EU.

Macron, during his election campaign, adopted the image of a "political outsider." Unlike other world leaders who took power in 2017, instead of nationalism and economic populism, he proposed a recovery program for not only his own country but also the EU. While it is difficult at this stage to talk about the effective implementation of reforms, there is a shift in the force arrangement, both in Europe and in the world.

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