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Tomasz Wicha

Central European cooperation
in the *exposés* of the Ministries
of Foreign Affairs of Poland
in the 21st century

(before the inauguration of the Three Seas Initiative)

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of Foreign Affairs of Poland
in the 21st century**

(before the inauguration of the Three Seas Initiative)

Lublin 2023

Reviewer

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Introduction

Central and European cooperation is one of the major issues of the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland, and the notion of Central European cooperation has been presented in every yearly debate organised in the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament – the Sejm. Still, the information delivered by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs was not specific and there has been a lack of a particular analysis of the specific public policies in which such cooperation was possible.

The information delivered to MPs will be presented and the conclusions will be made. It is important to focus on contemporary presentations of the priorities of the foreign policy of Poland in the *exposés* of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs before the first summit of the Three Seas Initiative in Dubrovnik, Croatia (2016) to understand the levels of cooperation and other matters as well as the issues which ought to be conducted by the new format for cooperation of Central European states. There will be the presentation of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs working within the governments of Prime Ministers in Poland between 2001 and 2016.

The presentation demonstrates that there was a strong will to remain active in Central Europe, however – there was no office/bureau in the Republic of Poland dedicated to the formats of cooperation. Unfortunately, political conflict in Poland caused that there was not always the required continuity of the priorities in foreign affairs which were presented by previous ministers.

Summary:

1. Analysis of the *exposés* proves that there is more verbal (rather than pragmatic) confirmation of the importance of cooperation among the Central and European states but there is a need to put more of the statements into practice. Still, the formation of formats of cooperation such as Europe of the Carpathians and the Three Seas Initiative was a natural implication of the constant presence of Central European cooperation in the public disputes on international affairs in the Polish parliament.
2. The organisation of the special debate which focuses on international affairs gives an essential chance to focus directly on all the segments of the priorities of the foreign policy of Poland for the next year. Such an organisation makes it possible to establish a political programme and a plan of action. Unfortunately, the discussion on foreign policy is covered in different months of the year, therefore, it would be positive (in the context of strategic planning and tactics) to plan the financing for given activities. The presentation of the plan of action in foreign affairs ought to be presented the month before the new year, not within the year (unless unexpected events occur).

3. There is no skeleton of a debate on international relations and no stable formula, therefore, it would be positive to establish the geographic formula of the presentations of the core issues in the foreign policy of the state. The changes in government, president, and ministries responsible for foreign affairs did not change the perspective of Central European cooperation on the political agenda in Poland. The desire to cooperate within Central European states was treated as a necessity to keep security and enable them to develop and flourish.
4. Strategic goals after 2004 (membership in the EU) did not modify the will to cooperate among the Central European states. Nevertheless, foreign affairs are one of the public policies with a greater tendency to intensify the political conflict in Poland, however Central European issues was one of the issues which brought all the political subjects together. The problem for Central European cooperation was the institutionalisation of this cooperation, which would enable the formal segments of cooperation in all the public policies.
5. It is of the utmost importance to make use of all the means a state has to reach the goals in its foreign affairs – parliamentary diplomacy seems to be underused to promote cooperation or focus on one particular segment of international affairs which is Central European cooperation. Such a format would definitely help to achieve the strategic goals of the cooperation of Central European states. The use of parliamentary diplomacy would be complementary to the formats of the Three Seas Initiative and Europe of the Carpathians. There is, however, the necessity for every government and every minister

responsible for foreign affairs to be ready to present the issues in the scheme of the exact results of the cooperation formats and the particular plans for specific public policies to be conducted to prove the place of the importance of the Central European cooperation.

6. The pragmatic analysis of the *exposés* delivered by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to the Polish Parliament in the period from 2001 to 2016 proved there was space for particular solutions for a more concrete establishment of the cooperation of the Three Seas Initiative. There were many signs of the new cooperation format which started to operate in 2016 because there was the necessity to take care of the strategic interests of Poland to establish a new format of cooperation¹.
7. The debates on the foreign policy did not reflect the importance of the segments within the public policies which were the backgrounds for the cooperation². The politicians depicted the philosophy of cooperation rather than more pragmatic issues and the synergistic effect of cooperation between the states of Central and Eastern Europe³.
8. A stable and broad format of cooperation was not presented in the speeches of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Poland but was important in political practice – the

¹ G. Soroka, T. Stępniewski, *The Three Seas Initiative: Geopolitical Determinants and Polish Interests*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2019, vol. 17, issue 3, pp. 15-29, DOI: 10.36874/RIESW.2019.3.2.

² See more: M. Górka, *The Three Seas Initiative as a Political Challenge for the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*, "Politics in Central Europe" 2018, vol. 14, no. 3, DOI: 10.2478/pce-2018-0018.

³ J. Nowak, M. Wieteska, *Building closer connections. The Three Seas region as an economic area*, "Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny", Warsaw 2020, passim.

Europe of the Carpathians⁴. One missed opportunity was the lack of cooperation within the institutions responsible for the establishment of the formats of cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe.

9. There was no institutional office for cooperation within the states of Central and Eastern Europe, and this was classified as one of the barriers to flourishing cooperation. The lack of such an institutional office or even a leading institution for cooperation with the Central European states was not the way to make the cooperation closer, in particular, in every segment of public policy.
10. The lack of a dedicated structure responsible for the issues of cooperation across all the formats of cooperation in Central Europe caused that a synergistic effect was not possible due to the numerous subjects in the public arena of Poland responsible for selected segments of cooperation. The establishment of the Bureau of the Three Seas Initiative in the office of the President of the Republic of Poland would solve this issue and help establish closer pragmatic cooperation. Still, it ought to be widely understood by the authorities of Poland that there will always be segments in which cooperation between the Central European states would not be possible due to the difference in the national interests of the given states.

⁴ W. Paruch, *Europe of the Carpathians*, Warsaw 2016, *passim*.



The government of Jerzy Buzek – exposé delivered by Władysław Bartoszewski (6 June 2001)⁵

Władysław Bartoszewski claimed there was consent from the majority of the political parties of the Sejm regarding foreign affairs. The agreement of the political parties and the impact of such an agreement offered the chance to reach the goals set by the government, which is responsible for all public policies. It was stated that the strategic directions in the foreign affairs of Poland would be continued no matter the results of the upcoming parliamentary elections; however, the presentation of the goals in June 2021, three months before the parliamentary elections, was rather a conclusion and not the anticipated plan of action.

Participation in the cooperation of Central and Eastern European states was of utmost importance to the development of the region. Władysław Bartoszewski claimed there was solid, good, and safe surrounding of Poland. The impact

⁵ 3rd term of office of the Sejm, 110th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

the state brought to the regional cooperation formats was the feeling of stability, security, and democratic values. Poland remained a valuable and active partner in regional structures. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the actions undertaken by the state in the European (and global) arena did not exclude close cooperation on a regional level. Furthermore, it was expressed that the presence in the integration processes did not weaken the interests of the region. That is how the formulation of regional and local interests was possible.

The issue of Central and Eastern European cooperation was covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the context of the open-door policy of NATO to the states of Central and Eastern Europe. The expansion of values and security was positive to all the member states of the alliance but also important individually to Poland as well. The membership in NATO of Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia was not just a claim but the right. The deepening of the relations was possible because of the participation in the Membership Action Plan.

The goal for Poland was to actively participate in the work of the NATO Commission – Ukraine and the NATO Permanent Council – the Russian Federation. The will of Poland was to promote the idea of membership of Ukraine in the Euro-Atlantic formats of cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that there was a plan for Polish diplomacy to engage Ukraine in the operations of NATO.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland claimed there was a need for an active presence of the USA as its engagement in Central and Eastern Europe was perceived as confirmation of the security of the states in the region. This

engagement implied the maximalisation of the programmes and projects to establish links between the USA and Central and Eastern Europe to maximise their strategic cooperation. Furthermore, there was a plan to promote and keep the high dynamics of American investment in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe.

The intensification of this cooperation was possible because of the positive changes in infrastructure among the states in the region, still, there was a lack of satisfactory financing to fulfil the expectations of closer cooperation. The political asset Poland wanted to bring into the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was the concept of the East; relations among the Central and Eastern European states was Poland's contribution to European integration.

The main challenge for Central and Eastern European cooperation was the process of transformation in Ukraine. There was a lack of political will in Ukraine to reform the state and this was perceived as an obstacle to achieving a higher level of cooperation.

Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe was strictly connected with the idea of the region as an area of stability and security. Active participation in formats of cooperation such as the Visegrad Group (V4) was treated as a positive asset which might be fruitful to achieve the goal of closer cooperation. V4 was treated as a format for cooperation which aimed at building closer connections between the states in order to achieve their goals (mainly on the platform of the EU). Still, cooperation among the V4 states in the international arena did not exclude bilateral cooperation between Poland and Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary.

The aim was even to expand the cooperation with other Central and European states to include Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Croatia.

The government of Leszek Miller – exposé delivered by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (14 March 2002)⁶

The role of the government was to promote cooperation among Central and Eastern European states. Moreover, it was publicly stated that the conditions existed for the cooperation of the states in Central and Eastern Europe to flourish. Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz claimed that Poland could play the role of leader in the closer cooperation of Central and Eastern European states whose goal was to promote and leverage the position of the region. Furthermore, it was stated that the goal was also to establish the idea of cooperation among equal states in the European Union. The danger of the European project was the division into “better” and “worse”, “richer” and “poorer”. The perspective of the expansion of the European Union into the East was the goal of the state.

Particularly important in the context of closer cooperation were the activities aimed at integrating Ukraine with Euro-Atlantic institutions and the establishment of the cooperation mechanisms serving this purpose. Poland expected Ukraine to be invited to participate in the North Atlantic Treaty summit and to have closer cooperation with NATO and there was the intention to continue intensive cooperation with Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, supporting the integration aspirations of these countries into NATO and

⁶ 4th term of office of the Sejm, 16th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

sharing experience in the process of gaining membership of the alliance. Simultaneously, in its relations with Lithuania, Poland had the will to ensure effective protection of the important and legitimate interests of the Polish minority in the state.

Central and Eastern Europe was treated as a close neighbour of Poland, with which not only a common past was shared but also a common path to membership in the European Union. Despite the disputes and manifestations of disloyalty that were witnessed within the Visegrad Group, it remained an important direction for policy in the Central and Eastern European region. The exchange of views on security and European integration issues would continue to be an important element of the cooperation between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Poland also looked for opportunities to make relations with other countries in the region more dynamic – among which was Romania.

The Polish government wanted to continue to attach great importance to the activity in regional structures. One of the core actions was to participate in activities supporting the construction of democracy and progress in transformation as well as strengthening stability in both Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Moreover, in the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the left-wing government envisaged a great opportunity to develop local and non-governmental cooperation. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that an important dimension of cooperation would be the search for ways to finance the cooperation as it was widely understood that there would be significant costs. Therefore,

the rational use of aid funds for promoting democracy and transformation in Eastern Europe was declared a necessity.

An additional step was the development of mechanisms of institutional support for interregional and cross-border cooperation. The government expressed that there was a need to pay special attention to programs initiated by the Republic of Poland, e.g., a trilateral Polish-Lithuanian-Russian initiative in the field of training for administrative and business staff and activities in the field of civil security. As part of the Central European Initiative, the government wanted to pay attention to taking advantage of the presence of Poland in the format. Still, there was a need to develop the substantive, financial, and organizational program of the chairmanship of the CEI.

In the cross-border cooperation, the government had the intention to maintain the activity of 'Euroregions' in developing cooperation with neighbouring states, especially along the Eastern border of the Republic of Poland. Poland wanted to play an important role in the process of European integration. At the same time, such a plan of action required counteracting the possible negative effects of Poland's accession to the EU on cooperation with its Eastern partners. Still, the government had the will to promote the Polish experience in building self-government at the local and regional levels.

The government of Leszek Miller – *exposé* delivered by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (22 January 2003)⁷

The government had a plan to establish close bonds with the states of Central and Eastern Europe and ensure that the

⁷ 4th term of office of the Sejm, 40th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

doors to NATO remained open. Poland expressed its support for the Atlantic aspirations of other countries in the region that would like to join it. Such a perspective concerned Ukraine as well. The goal was to completely eliminate the old geopolitical divisions. The government declared active participation in creating new forces and capabilities in the security format, which was a material way in which Poland wanted to confirm the viability of NATO.

Invariably, the priority of foreign policy was a regional policy in the immediate surroundings. Poland wanted the region of Central and Eastern Europe to retain its identity and subjectivity after the enlargement of the Union. The idea was to promote a good neighbourhood and partnership cooperation between Poland and other Central European states. In addition to bilateral and multilateral relations on a regional scale, the government wanted to promote the enlargement of the European Union to include the states of Central and Eastern Europe. The aim was also to support maintaining the good dynamics of trade development with these states. Nonetheless, there were some challenges in the cooperation. Poland wished for a positive reaction from the Lithuanian authorities to the justified demands of the Polish minority living in Lithuania that had been put forward for a long time. Poland would also contribute, after inviting Lithuania and Slovakia to NATO, to the successful ratification of the accession protocol ensuring these countries gained membership as soon as possible. Multilateral planes of regional contacts would be used primarily to counteract the emergence of new divisions after the enlargement of the EU and NATO. The absence of new divisions would be achieved, among others, by promoting and developing the

Riga initiative of the President of the Republic of Poland. This initiative became one of the important segments of achievement for Polish foreign policy.

The challenge for Polish foreign policy was to adapt the structures of regional cooperation to the new political quality created by the enlargement of the EU and NATO. In particular, an in-depth assessment of the current potential and prospects for cooperation within the Visegrad Group needed to be made, with the plan being to strategically intensify cooperation in the format. An opportunity for further partnership, in which Poland was deeply interested, was, among others, participation in developing the EU policy towards Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the establishment of the dialogue of subregions within the Union, and shaping the cultural and political identity of Central Europe.

In 2003, Poland took over the presidency of the Central European Initiative. This was an opportunity to rethink the current forms of operation of the institution and to promote Polish experiences in the field of transformation and democratisation as well as cross-border and interregional cooperation. The Polish government also wanted to make use of this leadership to initiate deeper reflection on the future of Central and Eastern Europe. The intention was to intensify policy in the Eastern European neighbourhood. The Polish representatives stressed that Poland did not enter the European Union as an action against its Eastern partners; Poland wanted the achievement of cooperation within Central and Eastern European states to stimulate development across the entire region. Therefore, Poland wanted to promote the concept of creating an Eastern dimension of the European Union.

Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz presented specific thoughts and proposals to the EU Presidency aimed at intensifying EU support for the transformation processes of the Eastern neighbours of the EU, including the creation of a European democracy fund, a European peace corps, and the introduction of a special European scholarship programme. Poland strongly supported the expansion of European structures to the East. The goal which the Polish government wanted to achieve was that the Central European region ought to be treated subjectively – both the states themselves and the region as a whole.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the strategic partnership between Poland and Ukraine had “stood the test of time” and, therefore, Poland had the will to work to fill the partnership between Poland and Ukraine with particular content of joint projects and undertakings. Poland wanted to continue to support Ukraine in bilateral and multilateral contacts, especially with Western countries of the EU and the institutions, hoping that the Ukrainian side would confirm its credibility as a partner. It was expressed that Poland contributed significantly to maintaining the dialogue between Ukraine and the European Union.

Cimoszewicz gave an example of the cooperation in practice. An important event which took place was the “Ukraine in Europe” conference, organised in October 2002 in Warsaw, and attended by the representatives of the authorities and opposition groups of Ukraine as well as high-ranking representatives of the European Union and EU member states. Poland wanted to support Ukraine’s efforts to conclude an association agreement with the EU. Still, Poland was aware of the undertakings which Ukraine had to conduct as such

a plan of action required Kiev to consistently implement free market mechanisms and EU legislative standards. The application to the EU caused the necessity to establish and promote the rules of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and freedom of speech in public political practice.

The relations with Poland and Belarus were also guided by the principle of good neighbourhood which was rather a general statement at that time. The goal was to support Belarusian independence, democracy, economic reforms and pro-European policies, despite obvious barriers. The Eastern dimension of the European Union ought to also support reforms in Moldova and the Caucasus, which were treated as the strategic borders – in a wider perception - of Europe.

The government of Leszek Miller – exposé delivered by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (21 January 2004)⁸

The main objective within the common EU foreign policy was to strengthen and make the Union's cooperation with its neighbours, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, more dynamic by building an Eastern Dimension of foreign policy in the European Union. Poland had the will to continue the involvement in working on the “Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood” initiative, and Poland wanted to make sure there would be an appropriate differentiation of neighbourhood policy towards individual partners/states. The eastern dimension of EU policy was perceived as a mechanism for coordinating various forms and instruments of EU actions and might also serve as a platform for regional cooperation in certain areas.

⁸ 4th term of office of the Sejm, 67th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

Poland claimed that the EU ought to have a coherent concept of regional cooperation in Eastern Europe. The government suggested there was a need for a concept that would strengthen bilateral programs and increase stability in the area of Central and Eastern Europe. The primary goals for the Eastern neighbourhood remained unchanged – support for democratic and free market reforms, building and promoting the rule of law, strengthening independence, bringing integration with the European Union closer, and establishing closer cross-Atlantic cooperation.

Poland wished to play the role of leader for the process in Ukraine and to be an advocate of Ukraine's integration path within NATO and the European Union. Still, it was widely perceived that the pro-Western stance of Ukraine had to be based on facts. As a member of the European Union, Poland would work to present Ukraine with a clear European perspective as soon as possible, including the possibility of membership in the future. Nevertheless, Poland was sure it was a demanding and long-term process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that 2004 would bring Poland increased responsibilities in the field of regional policy. In June 2004, Poland would take over the one-year presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and in July 2004 – the presidency of the Visegrad Group. Poland also participated in the work of the so-called three of the Central European Initiative. Cimoszewicz claimed there was a need for in-depth reflection on the role of these organizations in the new European Union realities and, therefore, a redefinition of the goals and tasks had to be conducted. Such a perspective applied in particular to the Visegrad Group, which would become an internal group of the European Union.

The necessity to present a new horizon as well as plans for cooperation within the V4 was treated as a must-be in the foreign policy of Poland.

Poland wanted to consolidate the region of Central and Eastern Europe within the enlarged Union and Cimoszewicz was sure that the Visegrad Group, despite its weaknesses, could play a useful role. Poland supported the idea of renewing the claims of the Visegrad Group under the new conditions, based on a realistic assessment of expectations and possibilities. Poland expressed the great importance of cooperating with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary in pursuing common interests within the European Union as well as in developing cooperation in the region, especially in the field of infrastructure, mobility, and culture. Poland claimed that the state would especially like to see the principle of open borders implemented within the Visegrad Group, also as an instrument of economic and social integration. Poland had the will, in particular, to support the integration processes of Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia with the European Union and NATO.

The government of Marek Belka – *exposé* delivered by Adam Daniel Rotfeld (21 January 2005)⁹

Adam Daniel Rotfeld claimed that in 2004, there was a triumph of democracy in Ukraine which was achieved peacefully by millions of Ukrainians. The result of the peaceful revolution in Ukraine was perceived as a Polish success as well. The mediation of President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the engagement of the European Union representatives,

⁹ 4th term of office of the Sejm, 96th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

the involvement of many Polish politicians, the activity of the MPs across party lines, the involvement of Polish MEPs and thousands of young election observers – these and other activities all contributed to the successful resolution of the crisis and were a very important investment for the future. The mass solidarity of Poles with democratic Ukraine was a good starting point for a breakthrough in the relations between our societies. Ukrainians and Poles demonstrated the highest political maturity and the correct understanding of the *raison d'état*.

Poland remained understandably concerned about the state of affairs in Belarus, with which it had a common border. Poland expressed support for the democratic and pro-European aspirations of society in the state. Together with their European and transatlantic partners, Poland tried to co-shape the Western policy in such a way that the democratic tendencies in Belarus could have solidarity from the Polish side.

A new challenge for Poland was to participate in a joint discussion on the vision of relations in the region of Central and Eastern Europe after the enlargement of the European Union. Therefore, the place and role of regional policy in the overall tasks of foreign policy were to be clarified after public debate. Cooperation within the Visegrad Group, the Central European Initiative, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States contributed to strengthening the identity of Central Europe and ensuring stability across the entire region.

After the accession to the European Union in 2004, and even 2-3 years before the EU's enlargement, some of the partners of Poland had doubts about the sense of maintaining subregional structures. Poland had a plan to maintain the

formats of cooperation, and through specific initiatives, e.g., being the chair of the Visegrad Group, Poland managed to launch the discussion on the direction of the evolution of the format. Rotfeld claimed that the partners could see that Poland did not perceive the region simply as a base for the political ambitions of Poland in the EU. Rotfeld expressed publicly that Poland did not aspire to the role of a regional leader. The aim was to use the prestige and position of Poland in the European and transatlantic formats of cooperation to pursue the interests of the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

The government of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz – exposé delivered by Stefan Meller (15 February 2006)¹⁰

Stefan Meller claimed that the government was inspired by the Orange Revolution to support the Ukrainian nation on the way towards modernity and democracy, which was perceived as not without unexpected turns and turbulences. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland claimed that Ukraine started to become a visible actor in European politics, with new, pro-Western elites firmly defending the Ukrainian *raison d'état* and the crystallizing civil society. Still, it was widely understood that the Ukrainian nation would cope with the next great tests of democracy. Poland had the desire to continue to make efforts to fill the strategic partnership between the countries with new content. This applied especially to cooperation in the political and military fields. Moreover, it applied to energy cooperation.

¹⁰ 5th term of office of the Sejm, 10th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

Meller claimed that relations with Belarus would depend on the development of the situation inside the state, and on the extent to which the clearly undemocratic regime in Belarus would continue to disobey human and civil rights. The next presidential elections would be a test of the development of this situation. Poland had a desire that what was civil and democratic in Belarus would prevail. In any case, Poland would try to maintain inter-ministerial contacts and economic, cultural, legal, and social cooperation justified by pragmatic needs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to continue to support democratic and civic forces in Belarus, among others, by providing them with greater opportunities to access information thanks to the planned launch of a radio station broadcasting to audiences in Belarus.

The government of Jarosław Kaczyński – exposé delivered by Anna Fotyga (11 May 2007)¹¹

The government placed great importance on strengthening cooperation within the Visegrad Group, a forum for cooperation between four neighbouring countries of Central Europe. Anna Fotyga wished to maintain the integrity of the group, remaining open to proposals for cooperation with other countries. Cooperation on the possible construction of an anti-missile defence system would also contribute to deepening cooperation with the Czech Republic. Hungary and Slovakia remained important partners for Poland in European, Euro-Atlantic, and regional politics. Political dialogue and visits in both directions were very intense.

¹¹ 5th term of office of the Sejm, 41st session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

Poland valued relations with Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia extremely highly. Poland cooperated with these states to increase energy security and develop a joint project to expand the nuclear power plant in Ignalina. Poland had strategic relations with Lithuania, including the construction of a connection between the power systems of both countries and the participation of Polish entities in the refinery in Mažeikiai. The Baltic states were important partners for Poland in shaping the Eastern dimension of the European Union. There was a necessity for cooperation to implement joint projects to expand the communication infrastructure. In order to maintain such intense cooperation, connecting Poland with the Baltic states, primarily Lithuania, appropriate infrastructure was needed, including road infrastructure because it was very important that both states could communicate efficiently.

At that time the political dialogue and cooperation between politicians at a presidential level was excellent. The President, Lech Kaczyński maintained ongoing, permanent contacts with President Valdas Adamkus on all matters related to foreign policy, including matters related to the internal situation of both states, and retained the possibility of cooperation with the third states. It became a custom that during all multilateral meetings and before important meetings, the partners from Central and Eastern Europe held quick consultations “on the fringes”. The relationships were, therefore, intense and important, helping to build connections between societies and businesses, and strengthening relationships between the states.

The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union on 1 January 2007 would open up new opportunities

for cooperation with these states, including the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Poland hoped that the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy would be a dimension that was equally involved in relations with the society of Belarus and states such as Ukraine and Moldova. Poland hoped that in the European Neighbourhood Policy, the involvement and intensity of ties towards the South Caucasus would flourish.

Fotyga claimed there was a developing of good relations with Ukraine. Granting Poland and Ukraine the right to host the European Football Championship in 2012 would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations, opening new opportunities for cooperation and contacts. As a member of the European Union, Poland wished to develop a common aid offer for the state. Poland supported the efforts of the authorities in Ukraine to ease the EU's visa regime for Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine was perceived as a strategic partner for Poland. The Polish authorities maintained a very intense political dialogue with Ukraine at all levels. Energy summits were one of the instances of cooperation. Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński maintained permanent contacts with Prime Minister Yanukovych and there was hope that Polish-Ukrainian relations would remain good and stable, regardless of political arrangements. Poland was a great promoter of both the European and transatlantic aspirations of Ukraine. As far as relations with Moldova were concerned, Poland would consistently support the country's pro-European aspirations.

The government of Donald Tusk – exposé delivered by Radosław Sikorski (7 May 2008)¹²

The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union on 1 January 2007 created new opportunities for cooperation with these states, including the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. There was the will to establish close Central European cooperation and to do this with the closest partners with whom Poland shared its fate in the past – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia as well as Romania and Bulgaria. A special partnership in this respect was created in relations with Sweden. The Eastern neighbourhood policy was intended to raise the social and political standards of these neighbours to the EU level. As a result, the neighbourhood policy would complement their individual partnership and cooperation agreements with the Union, which would outline the European perspective of these countries.

Ukraine was an increasingly credible candidate for membership in Western institutions. Poland encouraged its partners and allies to creatively combine elements of stimulating reforms with enforcing transformational progress in Ukraine. Poland stated that it was primarily the readiness of the Ukrainians to determine Ukraine's membership in the institutions of the Western world. Ukraine's integration would confirm the strength of the European civilization model.

Sikorski turned to his Belarusian neighbours and assured them that Belarus could count on Polish support wherever it chose to respect human rights and the political rights of

¹² 6th term of office of the Sejm, 15th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

the opposition, to dialogue and compromise, and openness towards Europe. Poland would be ready, along with the entire European Union, to help Belarus in its development.

The government of Donald Tusk – exposé delivered by Radosław Sikorski (13 May 2009)¹³

The Georgian-Russian conflict made the Polish authorities realize how strong the neighbourhood of the European Union was. During the time of war between Russia and Georgia, the government started to discuss the notions of power politics, spheres of influence, and zero-sum games. The gas crisis made Poland aware that energy resources were used to achieve political goals. Lack of stability may be the result not only of a hot conflict but also a cold one. Poland became more involved in deepening the integration of the continent and started to be perceived as a predictable partner in Europe. It was able to respond appropriately during the days of the Russian intervention in Georgia, pressing for a quick and appropriate response from the European Union, believing that the European Community was strong thanks to the unity of its member states.

During the government of Donald Tusk, Poland promoted the Polish-Swedish Eastern Partnership initiative, which, pursuant to an intra-EU decision, was transformed into a joint European project. It showed the strength of Polish diplomacy based on credible projects and rational arguments. Moreover, it confirmed the recognition of Polish competence in Eastern affairs. Still, despite good cooperation with President Kaczyński and the United States, Poland

¹³ 6th term of office of the Sejm, 35th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

did not manage to convince all NATO allies to grant Ukraine and Georgia membership action plans.

The Czech Republic was the first of the Visegrad Four to hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union. Poland supported the priorities of the Czech Presidency, in particular, the inauguration of the Eastern Partnership and the strengthening of European energy solidarity. Poland used the presidency of the Visegrad Group to deepen cooperation within this forum, sharing not only similar experiences with the Visegrad and Baltic states, as well as Romania and Bulgaria, but also common, measurable, and strong interests in the European Union.

Poland supported Ukraine's integration with the institutions of the Western world. However, it was publicly stated that it was Ukraine that ought to care most about such integration. The modernisation effort would require a sense of state responsibility and determination for reforms from Ukrainian society, and especially from its elites.

Poland hoped that Belarus would also choose the European perspective. This would open the way to closer relations with its Western neighbours and finally the entire European Union. However, the scope of this cooperation depended on the readiness of the Belarusian authorities to liberalise the political system. Poland would support efforts to build a democratic society in Belarus in which all citizens, including Poles, associated with independent organisations, would have the opportunity to freely express their views, needs, and aspirations.

The Polish government was concerned about the continuing instability in the Caucasus region, which played an important role in the transit of energy resources to Europe.

After the Georgian-Russian conflict, all democratic states were particularly sensitive to the development of the situation in this region. Sikorski reaffirmed solidarity with Georgia and recognition of its territorial integrity and declared that Poland would remain a spokesman for the country's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

The government of Donald Tusk – *exposé* delivered by Radosław Sikorski (8 April 2010)¹⁴

Poland hoped that the Ukrainian political class would put Ukraine on the path of accelerated modernisation of the state and economy and that it would confirm its pro-European choice by implementing the Eastern Partnership projects. Poland thought that Ukraine was striving for the European Union. Therefore, it was perceived that it would maintain good relations and cooperate with neighbouring countries. Poland had a will to remain an advocate of Ukrainian affairs.

Poland wanted Belarus to integrate with Central European states as well. It was widely perceived that in the post-soviet reality, independence could not be consolidated without democratic progress. Therefore, the Polish authorities encouraged the Belarusian authorities to change the system. The new system ought to include, in accordance with the principles of democracy and human rights, the right to freedom of association, which would especially apply to the Polish minority in Belarus.

Democratic Moldova was also important for Poland and the European Union. Poland supported the ruling democratic coalition in Chisinau, which was demonstrated by offering

¹⁴ 6th term of office of the Sejm, 64th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

it credit and technical assistance. Poland invariably demanded the territorial integrity of Georgia. Sikorski encouraged Georgia to modernisation reforms. The Polish experience showed that the path to membership in the institutions of the Western world was a smart choice. A great opportunity for Georgia and the other South Caucasus states was their participation and engagement in the Eastern Partnership. The authorities of Poland saw the key role of these states as well as the countries of Central Asia in creating alternative routes for the transmission of energy raw materials, which was of utmost importance to the energy security of Central European states.

The government of Donald Tusk – *exposé* delivered by Radosław Sikorski (16 March 2011)¹⁵

The Eastern Partnership was presented as an opportunity for Central and Eastern European states. Ukraine ought to sign an association agreement with the EU. Moldova would start negotiations on a free trade agreement. The Eastern Partnership included support projects for small and medium-sized enterprises, energy efficiency projects, and administrative reforms as well as dialogue between parliamentarians (parliamentary diplomacy) and efforts to ease the visa regime.

Poland strongly supported the enlargement process with the rule that “once the door was opened to us, today we open it to others”. The Polish Presidency intended to support the completion of accession negotiations with Croatia and their continuation with Turkey. Other Balkan countries also had a chance to obtain candidate status. Poland supported the

¹⁵ 6th term of office of the Sejm, 87th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

completion of the integration of the Western Balkans with the Union.

Sikorski stated that the politicians of the Orange Revolution did not fulfil the hopes placed on them. Declarations of willingness to join European institutions had to be supported by difficult reforms. Corruption, the weakness of the legal system, and the decline in democratic standards made it difficult for Poland to create a European perspective for Ukraine. Still, the Polish-Ukrainian Partnership Forum implemented the local border traffic agreement. Ukraine was named as a strategic partner. Its accession to the EU was in the long-term interest of Poland.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the policy towards Belarus was determined by the principle of conditionality. Poland expected Belarus to turn back from the path of violating elementary human and civil rights.

V4 was classified as a necessary and well-functioning formula for 20 years. Poland had the best relations in history with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. These states coordinated their positions, including before European Council meetings. The success of the Visegrad Group was an example for the Eastern Partnership countries that regional cooperation can lead to membership in the Union.

Lithuania and Poland were classified as partners by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After the fall of communism, Poland and Polish citizens supported the path of Lithuania to independence in conditions which could be more difficult than those of Poland. Both states moved together towards NATO and the EU, furthermore – they built institutions of governmental and parliamentary dialogue (parliamentary democracy). Poland was ready to return to deeper

cooperation but the Republic of Poland asked not to worsen the situation of Polish education and to implement the long-standing demands of Poles in Lithuania. The Polish minority were loyal citizens of democratic Lithuania with the full right to maintain their identity, culture, and property. The upcoming vote in the Lithuanian Parliament on the draft new education law was an important test of how far the Lithuanian side wanted to protect the rights of its minorities, which would be fair to the Polish minority.

The government of Donald Tusk – *exposé* delivered by Radosław Sikorski (29 March 2012)¹⁶

Poland took over the presidency of the Visegrad Group in July with the intention of proposing new initiatives to strengthen the best-ever relations with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. It was publicly stated by Sikorski that Hungary was responsible for the reputation of the entire region in respecting democratic norms. It was planned to create the Visegrad Battle Group as a regional contribution to the development of the European Union's defence capabilities. Poland had a determination to invite very important partners Romania and Bulgaria to numerous projects, including Visegrad projects.

Poland was eager to establish greater relations with Estonia and Latvia and in the relations with Lithuania, Poland counted on a new beginning with the government that would be appointed after the October elections. Sikorski claimed that Europe on the Eastern side of the continent

¹⁶ 7th term of office of the Sejm, 11th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

was a part of Europe for centuries and had an equal right to become part of a united Europe.

Ukraine remained the most important non-Atlantic strategic partner of Poland, which claimed it was always ready to support Ukraine as long as it chose a European destiny. Poland appealed to the Ukrainian authorities to create political conditions, including standards of treatment of the opposition and the quality of electoral and judicial processes. The reforms would enable the signing and entry into force of the association agreement with the EU. Poland was looking forward to the upcoming European Championships which was classified as a chance to build closer relations and integrate the regions of Central and Eastern Europe.

The government of Donald Tusk – exposé delivered by Radosław Sikorski (20 March 2013)¹⁷

Sikorski claimed that a strong Poland in the EU also meant a stronger Visegrad Group because Central Europe was no longer a place of bad fate. The potential of this part of Europe was already quite considerable and was constantly growing. The rate of economic growth of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary had exceeded the EU average in recent years. Sikorski shared statistics showing that in the mid-1990s, the GDP of the four Visegrad Group countries was less than USD 270 billion, whereas by 2013, it was almost four times as much. Collectively, V4 is also Germany's most important trading partner. In the Council of the European Union, the voice of the V4 was important as it had 58 weighted votes – exactly the same as Germany and

¹⁷ 7th term of office of the Sejm, 36th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

France combined. During this time, a gas connection with the Czech Republic was opened and there was progress in the construction of roads connecting Poland with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Poland had the desire to organize the Winter Olympics together with Slovakia in 2022 and confirmed the decision to launch a Visegrad battle group. There was a determination to continue the proven formula of meetings of prime ministers, heads of diplomacy, and ministers of European affairs before EU summits. It was of utmost importance to discuss the issues of the budget negotiations in the V4 format. Together, there was support for the European aspirations of the Eastern Partnership states.

Poland had the will to become an active promoter of the EU's partnership policy. Still, the authorities realised that progress towards democracy, the rule of law, and modernisation depended mainly on the states themselves. Poland expected the signing of the association and free trade agreements with Ukraine and the finalisation of negotiations of similar agreements with Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia. Poland had the intention to extend visa-free travel to the citizens of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Poland abolished fees for the national visas for citizens of Ukraine and Belarus, and later also Moldova. Thanks to Poland's actions, it was possible to launch an EU fund in the amount of EUR 37 million, addressed to the civil societies of 6 Eastern Partnership countries.

Poland strived to fully open up the "Erasmus for All" program to thousands of students from Central and Eastern European states. Poland also wanted to support civil society in Belarus, in particular through the European Endowment for Democracy, a fund that would promote democracy

throughout the Union's neighbourhood. This and other initiatives demonstrated the determination to maintain and develop dialogue at the civil level, especially in the event of any unfavourable political climate. Poland also had the will to strengthen the Community of Democracies – a legal framework for the operation of its Permanent Secretariat in Warsaw was made and a generous Solidarity Award was established.

It was explicitly stated that Ukraine was facing a fundamental dilemma similar to that of the mid-17th century or the beginning of the 20th century. For Kiev, it was a choice between modernity and democracy and – as an alternative – a different civilization model. Poland wished Ukraine to be granted a European perspective at the Eastern Partnership Summit. Still, there were unresolved issues in the history of Poland and Ukraine – the Volhynian massacre resulted in the death of tens of thousands of Poles and Poland was still waiting for some signs from Ukraine to finally resolve the problems in bilateral relations.

The government of Donald Tusk – *exposé* delivered by Grzegorz Schetyna (6 November 2014)¹⁸

The situation in Eastern Europe was problematic after the breach of Ukraine's borders by Russia in 2014. Poland was the only European Union country bordering both Ukraine and Russia, the main actors of the current crisis. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the conflict in Donbas questioned the basic principles of European security contained

¹⁸ 7th term of office of the Sejm, 79th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Grzegorz Schetyna suggested it was worth supporting the Eastern Partnership. Ukrainian society, in the results of the last parliamentary elections, confirmed the importance of the European and reformist orientation and the marginalisation of radicals and extremists. The determination of Ukrainians to maintain their chosen direction against all odds deserved respect. It was in the strategic interest of Poland to transform Ukraine into a modern and stable state, based on the rule of law and participating in European cooperation. The position on total absolute respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine remained unchanged and stable. Poland provided support for reforms in Ukraine and it was one of the priority areas of Polish development and humanitarian aid.

The crisis in Ukraine was a challenge for Belarus as well. Belarus wished to try and act as an impartial intermediary to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which was evaluated positively by Poland. Still, the policy of Poland towards Belarus depended on the pace of solving bilateral problems such as improving the situation of the Polish minority in Belarus, opening visa centres, and cross-border cooperation.

The government of Ewa Kopacz – *exposé* delivered by Grzegorz Schetyna (23 April 2015)¹⁹

Grzegorz Schetyna claimed publicly that the Maidan in Kiev was the beginning of the modern European identity of the Ukrainian nation. Poland supported the international

¹⁹ 7th term of office of the Sejm, 91st session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

community's efforts to stop the expansion of Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. Poland felt it would be necessary to decide on stronger support for the Ukrainian state, including in the area of defence. Furthermore, the Polish authorities were eager to support the authorities in Kiev in the reform process. The issue of support for Ukraine was supra-political and there was a social consensus in Poland. The priority was to stabilize the political situation and undergo the process of reform.

Poland wanted to initiate the activities of the Polish-Ukrainian Youth Exchange Council. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would also enable Ukrainian citizens to study under scholarship programs. Schetyna also proposed assisting in the development of institutions to fight corruption. A government plenipotentiary for the support of reforms in Ukraine was appointed. Poland was also strengthening the potential of the Ukrainian armed forces as part of the NATO training program, which was aimed at helping to reform military education. A sovereign, democratic, pro-European and prosperous Ukraine was an element of the Polish *raison d'état*.

It was of the utmost importance to the authorities of Poland that for two decades Poland had never imposed any solutions or choices on the neighbours. The aim was to continue the process of historical reconciliation based on the truth with a strategic partner – Ukraine. Schetyna further confirmed that Poland would not remain silent about its history, including the Volhynian massacre. It satisfied the authorities of Poland that Ukraine was creating its modern identity and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that this was the obligation of mature nations. The Polish *raison d'état*

was strictly connected to close cooperation with Ukraine and the Central and Eastern European states.

The challenge for this diplomacy was the Eastern Partnership. The goal of the summits was to confirm the EU's readiness to continue its ambitious cooperation not only with Ukraine but also with Moldova and Georgia as well as to implement new initiatives with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. Closer integration with them would be very fruitful for many segments of multilateral cooperation. Apart from the economy, it would be important to establish a strategy of flexible response to emerging threats to the stability of this region. There was another important element, a core, which brought all six countries together, which was the desire to consolidate independent and sovereign states.

Supporting the European aspirations of their eastern partners was a strategic goal in Polish diplomacy. Poland expected confirmation of the Eastern European societies' right to choose their own path of civil development and to choose a European direction. Central Europe was an essential point of reference for Poland.

Regular consultations of the Visegrad Group prime ministers before their meetings served to pursue the interests of the region's states. Still, it was widely understood that there would be differences among these states due to their different interests. New geopolitical challenges were revealed which caused discrepancies within the group, and intensive dialogue was conducted over certain topics with Poland's partners. It was of the utmost importance to attempt to maintain unity by making key decisions in solidarity with the European Union. Simultaneously, the Visegrad Group was primarily a format for regional cooperation

which focused on the development of four states. Therefore, a different approach to some international problems could not eliminate the positive dynamics of cooperation in other areas, e.g., development of communication and transport infrastructure, environmental protection, tourism, or energy security.

There were some discrepancies between the policies of the Central European states, and in particular with Lithuania. The issue of the Polish minority was one of the problems in bilateral relations, which was why further deepening of contacts would be achieved only if the Lithuanian side took specific actions to ensure compliance with the Polish-Lithuanian bilateral treaty of 1994 in points relating to respecting the rights of ethnic minorities.

An important impulse for strengthening Polish involvement in the Baltic Sea is the Polish presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, which will start in July this year. Poland wants the presidency of the council to foster stronger Polish involvement in the affairs of this region, including the lasting stabilisation and modernisation of the Western Balkan countries. Poland will continue to share its experiences from the period of transformation and accession to the European Union with the countries of this region, as well as provide political and expert support.

The government of Beata Szydło – exposé delivered by Witold Waszczykowski (29 January 2016)²⁰

There was a power switch in Poland in 2015, but the concept of cooperation with the Central European states remained

²⁰ 8th term of office of the Sejm, 10th session, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

stable. It was explicitly stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland that interest in supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine was firm. A democratic, politically and economically stable Ukrainian state was an important element of the European order and the security system which was built after the political transformations of 1989-1991. Witold Waszczykowski stated that after 2014, the independence of this Eastern neighbour was severely tested.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the scale of pressure and attempts at destabilization corresponded with the scale of freedom and democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian nation. It was explicitly stated that the pro-European reforms supported by Ukrainian society at Euromaidan needed the support of the Western world and the active involvement of Poland. The Republic of Poland was eager to help Kiev but simultaneously required that the aid would be used effectively.

Poland looks forward to the revival of relations between the European Union and Belarus. Waszczykowski said that Polish diplomacy did not intend to interfere in the politics of any country. Still, there was the expectation of compliance with the standards which were set by law and international organisations. Poland expected the release of political prisoners by the Belarusian authorities, with such an action being a step that would demonstrate respect for international standards.

Poland hoped to activate cooperation in the field of infrastructure, including improving the capacity of border crossings and simplifying the rules for passenger traffic, especially through the implementation of the agreement on local border traffic. At the same time, there was an awareness

that dialogue with Minsk would not avoid difficult issues. The problems of the Polish minority in Belarus would always remain high on the agenda.

An important area of economic and political cooperation for Poland was the countries of the South Caucasus, the diversity of which required well-balanced activities from the authorities. Georgia was consistently taking further steps towards the European Union and NATO and Poland had strongly supported Tbilisi in this respect since 2008.

The government would pursue a regional policy resulting from Poland's special location in Europe. Poland connected large areas of Europe and, therefore, had ambitions to moderate the cooperation in the region. The plan was to bring the north and south of Europe closer together through Poland, to create a new regional identity within the European Union and a new axis of cooperation.

In the political sphere, a manifestation of such thinking was the summit of nine Central European leaders organised in Bucharest on the initiative of Poland and Romania. In the economic and communication sphere, Poland wanted to make every effort to ensure that Via Carpathia became the link connecting various parts of Europe in the field of infrastructure.

Waszczykowski claimed that the Visegrad Group, built on the example and drawing on the experience of Benelux, was a proven element of European architecture and a format for joint representation of the interests of the Central and Eastern European region. The aim was to increase the effectiveness and cooperation within the format, in particular in matters of cooperation within the European Union: the European agenda, defence, energy security, cohesion policy,

and infrastructure. The challenge was the scope of reviewing EU budget issues, the development of the digital market, the energy union, the migration crisis, and the situation in Ukraine. Still, there was a will to develop cooperation with Visegrad partners bilaterally which would mean organising a series of intergovernmental consultations.



Conclusions

The cooperation of Central European states is presented by all the political subjects in the political arena in the Sejm as one issue of the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland, and as the notion which is jointly perceived as a necessity in order to maintain security and promote the values and development that will be beneficial to all the Central European states.

The cooperation of Central European states is widely perceived in the political arena of Poland as the key issue in international affairs as it has an impact on the entire arena of the European Union (“stronger voice”) and on the global arena as well (the Eastern flank of NATO). Parliamentary diplomacy is the concept which puts the cooperation of Central European states into practice. There are several fields of cooperation which could be implemented to achieve the synergistic effect of cooperation (security issues, infrastructure, science diplomacy, economy, culture, education, and science).

The existing formats of cooperation, i.e. the Three Seas Initiative and Europe of the Carpathians, would be complementary to the ongoing processes of Central European cooperation. The institutionalisation of these formats would help to achieve the particular synergistic goals of cooperation among Central European states.

The existing problem was formulating the agenda with the partners; there was a lack of discussion on the particular public policies which would bring the states of Central Europe closer in their actions, not just within the plans and long-term strategies of cooperation.

There was no stable formula for the formats of cooperation within the frameworks of cooperation with Central European states as there were divergent authorities responsible for selected formats – Europe of the Carpathians and the Three Seas Initiative. The establishment of one office in Poland, e.g. in the Chancellery of the President of Poland, would give the cooperation a chance to flourish in every possible format of cooperation and display to the partners of Central and Eastern Europe that the establishment of one bureau of the Three Seas Initiative would implement the formation of the office (e.g. a rotary style) of the Three Seas Initiative and Europe of the Carpathians. Every Minister of Foreign Affairs claimed it was a strategic necessity to establish closer cooperation, nevertheless – the organisation of the formula for cooperation would help to build a constant cooperation stage by stage in the selected public policies, and not just organise the annual summits of a given format.

Primary source

Transcripts of statements by Members of the Sejm (2001-2016), <https://www.sejm.gov.pl>.

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The main aim of the publication is to present an analysis of Central European cooperation as described in the exposés of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Poland in the 21st century before the inauguration of the Three Seas Initiative. The presence of the topic of Central European cooperation in the contemporary Polish parliamentary debate was regular, however, there were significant differences between the exposés of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Poland in the period from 2001 to 2016 which are discussed herein.

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