

The Weimar Triangle and its Role in the European Integration after the end of the Cold War

Introduction

Undoubtedly, before our very eyes, radical changes are taking place in Europe, the world and Poland, which can be compared to those that took place in 1989. Thanks to the anti-communist opposition in Poland and one of its leaders Professor Bronisław Geremek, a process known in history as the 1989 Autumn of Nations occurred. The process started in Poland with the Round Table Talks and free elections to the Sejm and Senate in 1989. It led to a political transformation in Poland and the fall of communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, German reunification and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991⁴⁶⁹. As a result, the existing bipolar Yalta-Potsdam international order eroded, the Cold War ended and the process of developing a new democratic global order started. Poland, which could eventually conduct its sovereign foreign policy in conformity with the Polish national interests, took active part in it. The Weimar Triangle, established on 28-29 August 1991, became an important element of this policy, in fact a tool to carry out its tasks and achieve its objectives. Its main aim was to eliminate differences between the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the states of Western Europe, and to accelerate the European integration process⁴⁷⁰. The former Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski writes in his book "Polska może być lepsza"

⁴⁶⁹ J. M. Fiszer, The 30th Anniversary of the Sejm and Senate Elections in 1989. Systemic Transformation in Poland and its Consequences for Europe and the World, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2019, no. 3(66), pp. 139-163; *ibid*: *Przesłanki wewnętrzne i międzynarodowe upadku Związku Radzieckiego w 1991 roku oraz jego konsekwencje geopolityczne dla polityki zagranicznej Polski*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 2021, no. 19, Zeszyt no. 2, pp. 19-41.

⁴⁷⁰ J. M. Fiszer, M. Czasak, *Trójkąt Weimarski. Geneza i działalność na rzecz integracji Europy w latach 1991-2016*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Polsko-Niemiecka Fundacja na rzecz Nauki, Warszawa 2019; B. Koszel, *Trójkąt Weimarski. Geneza. Działalność. Perspektywy współpracy*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Zachodniego, Poznań 2006; K. H. Standke (ed.), *Trójkąt Weimarski w Europie. Das Weimarer Dreieck in Europa. Le Triangle de Weimar en Europe*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009.

published in 2018 about the genesis and objectives of the Weimar Triangle: "It was founded in 1991 as a formula supporting our accession to the European Union when Poland was a post-communist bankrupt but also an inspiration"⁴⁷¹.

The opinion on the Weimar Triangle, which came into being thirty years ago in August 1991, presented in literature in Poland, Germany and France is divided and assessed differently. On the one hand, its major role in the process of Poland's accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures, i.e. NATO on 12 March 1999 and the European Union (EU) on 1 May 2004, is emphasised because thanks to that Poland strengthened its security and position on the international arena. On the other hand, its role in the re-orientation of Poland's foreign policy after 1989 is depreciated and it is emphasised that the Polish 'reason of state' has been subordinated to the interests of Germany and France. Politicians in Poland, as well as in Germany and France, especially those who use it in their current international policy, treated and keep treating the Weimar Triangle instrumentally⁴⁷².

However, as the latest surveys show, the majority of the respondents in Germany and Poland and almost half of the French ones believe that the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle is very important or rather important. On the other hand, only a small minority believe that such cooperation is absolutely unimportant for the European integration. What is significant, in all the three countries, the respondents who are interested in international and European politics are much more convinced that the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle is of considerable importance. Exactly, 27% of the French, 32% of the German and 45% of the Polish respondents who are interested in politics and international affairs believe that the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle is very important. However, the proportion of people who believe it is important is 79% in Poland, 78% in Germany and 69% in France. The perception of the importance of the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle also depends on the respondents' political affection. For example, unlike the supporters of the opposition party, Civic Platform (PO), the supporters of the ruling party in Poland, Law and Justice (PiS), less often believe that the cooperation is very important. At the same time, the absolute majority of the supporters of PiS state that the cooperation is very or rather important while the majority of the supporters of the opposition parties emphasise that the cooperation is very important. In Germany, all the

⁴⁷¹ R. Sikorski, *Polska może być lepsza*, Znak Horyzont, Kraków 2018, pp. 177-178..

⁴⁷² J. M. Fiszer, *Uwarunkowania i cele polityki zagranicznej Polski – aspekty teoretyczne i użyteczne*, [in:] A. Chojan (ed.), *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 1989-2020*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 2021, pp. 19-50.

political parties' supporters' backing for the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle is strong with the exception of the electorate of Alternative for Germany (AfD), who clearly appear less enthusiastic than others: one third of them believe that this cooperation is insignificant. In France, the supporters of *La République en Marche* are least enthusiastic while the electorate of the national Rally (RN) and the French Communist Party (PCF) is most sceptical⁴⁷³.

The topic of the article, which is also its aim, is to present the tasks and role of the Weimar Triangle in the processes of enlargement and development of the European Union (EU). Poland, which accessed the European Union on 1 May 2004, is also subject to those processes. At the same time, the main thesis statement is that without the Weimar Triangle, the European integration and the accompanying processes of the European Union enlargement and development in the period 1991-2016, especially in 1991-2009, would not have been so dynamic and efficient as it had actually been and the Polish way to the Euro-Atlantic strictures would have been much more difficult. Here, let me explain the choice of the period 1991-2016. It is due to the fact that in that past period of 25 years the Weimar Triangle functioned actively and considerably contributed to the European Union enlargement and development. On the other hand, as a result of the parliamentary elections in Poland in 2015, Law and Justice came to power and the Weimar Triangle's activities stopped in fact. There were various reasons for that, mainly increased tensions and clashes in the relations between Poland, Germany and France. The electoral victory of PiS paved the way to a complete change in Poland's foreign policy. Civic Platform's governing was based on the stable development of Poland's position in the world and Europe, which often deserved costly compromises. However, the government formed by PiS adopted the so-called "standing up from kneeling" policy and made the activities on the international arena dependent on the internal policy aiming at the strengthening of the party's position in public opinion polls. Before 2016 Poland was pointed out as a model of political and economic transformation. The strategy of cooperation adopted by the then government in Warsaw was based on the improvement of the relations with the most important states in the EU and aspiring to sit at the main negotiation table. Good opinions on Poland in the EU made it possible to implement the initiative of the Eastern Partnership and Warsaw's influence in Brussels also served active cooperation between the Weimar Triangle states in the field of the EU enlargement and strengthening. Disputes and clashes with the EU started almost

⁴⁷³ J. Kucharczyk, *Z szacunkiem dla przeszłości, z odwagą w przyszłość. Jak Polacy, Niemcy i Francuzi postrzegają Trójkąt Weimarski i jego rolę w UE*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2021, p. 30.

straight after Peace and Justice came to power and led to the loss of Poland's reliability in Europe. Inefficient European policy caused by the lack of coordination in the government coalition superimposed on the court system crisis and unreasonable choice of partners in the EU. In 2016 the foreign affairs minister, Witold Waszczykowski, announced the wish to establish strategic partnership with the United Kingdom but half a year later there was a Brexit referendum in the UK. At the same time, Poland got into a dispute with the key partners so far: Germany and France. The main reason was the issue of the construction of Nord Stream 2 and breaking off negotiations with France concerning the purchase of multipurpose helicopters from Airbus. As a result, the Weimar Triangle's activities ceased and Poland, being in conflict with the EU, found itself in a difficult situation until the outbreak of the war in Ukraine⁴⁷⁴.

The cooperation within the Weimar Triangle was revived at the turn of 2022 in connection with its 30th anniversary and the murderous Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine. Subsequent military actions undertaken by the Russian Federation from 24 February 2022 against Ukraine violate fundamental principles of international law laid down in the United Nations Charter and also binding as customary international law. They also undermine the essence of a legal order regulating relations in the contemporary international community. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has diametrically changed the position of Poland on the international arena and France and Germany's attitude to it. The West has noticed that earlier warnings from Warsaw concerning Russia had not been a result of the painful treason in the past but of calculations based on real politics. For a long time, France and Germany have not seen any threats from close cooperation with Vladimir Putin because they have assessed it through the prism of their own interests, especially the commercial ones. That is why the Russian aggression against Ukraine was a total surprise for them and they found themselves completely unprepared. On the other hand, Poland noticed an opportunity to reshape the present image improvement into the stable strengthening of its position on the international arena, including the EU and the Weimar Triangle. Thanks to that Poland may also contribute to the revival of its activity in the interest of the EU enlargement and development. It can, *inter alia*, play an important role in the process of Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

⁴⁷⁴ R. Dutczak, *Teraz mamy złoty róg*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 11.04.2022, p. 11.

1. Genesis of the Weimar Triangle as a specific entity in the contemporary international relations

With the collapse of communism in the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War in the world, an idea of regional integration revived in international relations and, as a result, the Visegrád Group and the Weimar Triangle were established⁴⁷⁵. The latter was founded in a difficult moment for Poland and Europe, in particular for Central and Eastern Europe, because it was after the German reunification on 3 October 1990 but before the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had a negative attitude to the political transformation in its former allies and their Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The Soviet Union/Russian Federation had a tendency to ignore or disregard Poland's interests or position in Europe⁴⁷⁶. At the same time, the West led by the United States laid down conditions for Poland's membership in the Euro-Atlantic structures⁴⁷⁷. That is why at the initial stage of Poland's striving for membership in NATO and the European Communities/European Union the Weimar Triangle played a special role⁴⁷⁸. The main thesis statement here is that without the Weimar Triangle the post-Cold-War European integration, in particular in the period 1991-2009, would not have been so

⁴⁷⁵ J. Stańczyk, *Nowy regionalizm w Europie Środkowej*, „Wojsko i Wychowanie” 1999, no. 2, p. 94; Z. Czachór, *Regionalizm w stosunkach międzynarodowych*, [in:] W. Malendowski, Cz. Mojsiewicz (ed.), *Stosunki międzynarodowe*, Atla 2, Wrocław 1998, pp. 249-255; E. Cziomer, L.W. Zyblikiewicz, *Zarys współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, pp. 236-246; *Place and Role of the Visegrád Group Countries in the European Union*. Edited by Józef M. Fiszer, Adrian Chojan, Paweł Olszewski, Institute of Political Studies Polish Academy of Sciences, European Commission, Warsaw 2019.

⁴⁷⁶ K. Przybyła, *Rosyjska polityka wobec Zachodu – wybrane zagadnienia*, "Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe" 2013, no. 26, pp. 67-89; R. Jakimowicz, *Zarys stosunków polsko-rosyjskich w latach 1992-1999*, Polska Fundacja Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2000; A.V. Kozhemiakin, R. E. Kanet, *Russia and Its Western Neighbours in the "Near Abroad"*, [in:] *The Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 1997, pp. 35-26.

⁴⁷⁷ A. Hyde-Price, *Dryf kontynentalny? Polska a zmiany relacji euroatlantyckich*, [in:] O. Osica, M. Zaborowski (ed.), *Nowy członek „starego” Sojuszu. Polska jako nowy aktor w euroatlantyckiej polityce bezpieczeństwa*, Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2002; J. M. Fiszer, *Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski do NATO i Unii Europejskiej*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2016, no. 1(60), pp. 264-289.

⁴⁷⁸ There is abundant literature on the genesis and the activity of the Weimar Triangle but most of the publications were developed in the first decade of the 21st century and does not cover all its activities. Those that deserve special attention include: B. Koszel, *Trójkąt Weimarski. Geneza-działalność-perspektywy współpracy*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 2006; K. H. Standke (ed.), *Trójkąt Weimarski w Europie*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009; H. Wyligała, *Trójkąt Weimarski. Współpraca Polski, Francji i Niemiec w latach 1991-2004*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010; S. Parzymies, *Trójkąt Weimarski w poszerzonej Unii Europejskiej*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2004, no. 2; H. Bogusławska, A. Konieczna (ed.), *Współpraca polityczno-wojskowa w ramach Trójkąta Weimarskiego i Trójkąta Polska-Niemcy-Dania*, Warszawa 1918; M. Bąk, *Trójkąt Weimarski w latach 1991-1999 i jego znaczenie dla bezpieczeństwa europejskiego*, "Przegląd Strategiczny" 2013, no. 2.

dynamic and efficient as it had been and Poland's way to the Euro-Atlantic structures would have been much more difficult⁴⁷⁹.

The Weimar Triangle was constituted in 1991 and there had been many complex prerequisites for it. In general, they can be divided into objective and subjective reasons, international and internal ones, and those determined by the contemporary international situation of Poland, France and Germany. In fact, all these countries had their reasons for founding the Weimar Triangle. Germany after the reunification, which Poland and France were afraid of, wanted to show that it did not pose a threat to their closest neighbours and Europe as a whole, and that it cared about the continuation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of integration and security of the Old Continent. On the other hand, France expected the Weimar Triangle to provide an opportunity to control foreign and internal policy of reunited Germany and a chance to strengthen its role of a superpower in Europe, which had weakened with the reunification of Germany and the end of the Cold War⁴⁸⁰. Close cooperation between France and Germany within the Weimar Triangle bore fruit: their joint initiative to create the European Union, which took place after the Treaty of Maastricht was signed on 7 February 1992. The European Union was to be a panacea for the French ambitions to continue playing a very important role in the post-Cold-War world⁴⁸¹.

The first summit meeting of foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland, which started their trilateral cooperation, took place in Weimar on 28-29 August 1991, i.e. several months after the German reunification and nearly three months after the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation and four months after the Polish-French Treaty of Friendship and Solidarity had been signed. The then foreign minister of Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, invited his counterparts in the countries that, as I mentioned above, were afraid of the German reunification and its foreign policy: Ronald Dumas of France and

⁴⁷⁹ B. Koszel, *Rola Francji i Niemiec w procesie integracji Polski z UE*, [in:] T. Wallas (ed.), *Polska w Europie w XXI wieku*, UAM, Poznań 2002, pp.121-147; M. Zaborowski (ed.), *Nowy członek „starego” Sojuszu. Polska jako nowy aktor w euroatlantyckiej polityce bezpieczeństwa*, Centrum Stosunków Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2002; R. Raś, *Ewolucja polityki zagranicznej Rosji wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych i Europy Zachodniej w latach 1991-2001*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2005.

⁴⁸⁰ F. Bozo, "Winners" and "Losers": France, the United States, and the End of the Cold War, "Diplomatic History", Vol. 33, No.5, November 2009, pp. 926-928; V. Malingre, M. P. Subtil, *Entente cordiale contre l'Histoire*, "Le Monde", 12.09. 2009, p. 8; S. Parzymies, *Przyjaźń z rozsądku. Francja i Niemcy w nowej Europie*, PISM, Warszawa 1994, pp. 57-106.

⁴⁸¹ S. Parzymies, *Przyjaźń z rozsądku ...*, pp. 181-182; A. Szeptycki, *Czynnik niemiecki w polityce wschodniej V. Republiki (1958-1991)*, "Stosunki Międzynarodowe" 2000, no. 3-4 (vol. 22).

Krzysztof Skubiszewski of Poland to Weimar, Goethe and Schiller's town near Buchenwald. He did it under the pretext of celebrating Johann Wolfgang Goethe's 242nd birthday. During the meeting the three ministers discussed the international situation in Europe, which was determined by the collapsing Yalta-Potsdam order and the reunification of Germany and determined the directions of their mutual cooperation. They signed their first common declaration titled "France, Poland and Germany's responsibility for the future of Europe", in which the aims and tasks of the Weimar Triangle were laid down⁴⁸². It was emphasised, inter alia, that: "Europe finds itself at a turning point of its history. Its nations and states took a route to new forms of coexistence. We are aware that the Poles, Germans and French are particularly responsible for developing such forms of good neighbourhood in Europe that will prove themselves to be good in the future. (...) At the present moment the task is to tighten cooperation bonds that unite nations and states regardless of the former borders separating them, on all planes and in all spheres of life. We feel a need of a whole variety of European and regional links. In particular, regions' cross-border cooperation will let people realise that Europe is uniting. Such cooperation has become standard in the German-French relations and one between Germany and Poland is a key to future community of states and their citizens. The number of European confederate structures will be growing. (...) The strength of new Europe inheres in the vital diversity of its institutions. The European Community is their core. It must continue the process of integration. (...) The Poles, Germans and French with their partners, the CSCE members, created a great fundamental document, the Charter of Paris, based on which a new European peace order should develop. That is why the political treaties our countries have entered are especially important. It is in particular necessary to mention the treaties that Poland recently signed with France (the Treaty of Friendship and Solidarity of 9 April 1991) and Germany (the Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation of 17 June 1991). (...) France and Germany support all possible activities aimed at bringing Poland and other new democracies closer to the European Community. They insist on entering association agreements with the democracies of Central and Southeast Europe fast and support the political dialogue development. Opening the way to full membership for those new democracies is in conformity with the aims of European Community. (...) Together, we have to do everything in order to

⁴⁸² "Zbiór Dokumentów" 1992, no. 2, pp. 9-12.

create worthy living conditions for all people. This is the only way to save them the fate of refugees and avoid migration within and to Europe"⁴⁸³.

The above-quoted statements indicate that the main aim of the Weimar Triangle was to break the barriers between reunited Germany, France and Poland and to develop cooperation in order to confirm their attempts to overcome the division of the Old Continent, as well as to eliminate France's concerns over Germany's ambitions to be a superpower in Central Europe, and to balance its influence in Europe. This way, the then president François Mitterrand wanted to continue France's foreign policy following the motto of the founder of the Fifth Republic, general Charles de Gaulle: "France cannot be France without greatness"⁴⁸⁴.

Thus, the Weimar Triangle formula had a pertinent historic and geopolitical foundation. The meetings that were informal at first gradually changed into regular trilateral consultations. They aimed to improve and tighten cooperation between the three states and accelerate integration processes in post-communist Europe. In the successive years the Weimar cooperation was extended by meetings of ministers of defence (1997), justice (1997) and finance (2001), and to a parliamentary plane (from 1992). Raising the cooperation to the level of heads of state and governments was the biggest achievement (from 1998). The Weimar cooperation from the beginning meant not only political but also social contacts. Here it is necessary to mention youth cooperation and exchange, partnership of towns and regions, and cultural cooperation.

The superior aim of the cooperation between Poland, Germany and France within the Weimar Triangle, as I mentioned earlier, was to overcome the division of Europe and to introduce countries of Central and Eastern Europe, mainly including Poland, to the European Community states. Acknowledging that "the Poles, French and Germans are in particular responsible for working out such forms of good neighbourhood in Europe that will prove to function well in the future", the ministers decided to initiate the work of developing stable structures of cooperation. When the aim was achieved with Poland's accession to NATO and

⁴⁸³ Ibidem.

⁴⁸⁴ Ch. de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre et Mémoires d'espoir*, Plon, Paris 2016; K. M. Ujazdowski, *V Republika Francuska. Idee, konstytucja, interpretacje*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Kraków 2010, pp. 45-46; W. J. Szczepański, *Charles de Gaulle i Europa*, Editions BNW, Warszawa 2001; A. Szeptycki, *Dziedzictwo generała de Gaulle'a w polityce zagranicznej V Republiki*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2005; S. Parzymies, *Le Triangle de Weimar a-t-il encore une raison d'être dans une Europe en voie d'unification?*, "Annuaire français de relations internationales" 2010, volume XI, pp. 515-530.

the EU, it was necessary to redefine the tasks of the Weimar cooperation. The Weimar Triangle within the EU started to play the role of a forum for consultation and development of common stances in the key European policy matters. The main tasks of the cooperation within the Triangle format included: strengthening Common Security and Defence Policy, the EU internal affairs, and particularly its Eastern policy. The above-mentioned social dimension and inter-parliamentary cooperation also played an important role in the strengthening of the trilateral cooperation. The first years of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle ennobled Poland on the international arena and confirmed its expectations connected with this formula, and in the next periods the routine contacts were interspersed with vivid dialogue and attempts to widen the trilateral relations⁴⁸⁵.

The Weimar Triangle, formally called the Committee for Supporting French-German-Polish Cooperation, became a permanent element of the European policy in the form of periodic summit meetings of the three foreign ministers as well as other initiatives joining Poland, Germany and France, including summits of the states' presidents. The trilateral cooperation within the Weimar Triangle went far beyond its boundaries and was of big importance for the integration of post-Cold-War Europe and the construction of a new international order in the world.

Summing up the discussion on the genesis of the Weimar Triangle, one can say, as I mentioned above, that its main aim was to eliminate differences between the poor post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the rich Western European countries, and to accelerate the European integration and strengthen the position of Poland on the international arena. As far as Poland is concerned, the aim was achieved to a great extent. However, the economic and social differences between the states of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western countries still maintain in the same way as the differences between the former GDR and the 'old Lands' in the FRG.

In relation to the above, I believe that the wide-ranging relations between Poland, Germany and France should keep developing and become an engine and brace clipping together post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, which still has to overcome economic, social and political consequences of the divisions created by the 'iron curtain' in the past decades. The

⁴⁸⁵ R. Kuźniar, *Droga do wolności. Polityka zagraniczna III Rzeczypospolitej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2008, p. 60; W. Cimoszewicz, *Krajobraz za horyzontem. Polityka zagraniczna RP po wejściu do Unii Europejskiej*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 2004, no. 2, pp. 35-49;

Weimar Triangle should again become an engine enlarging and developing the European Union, as well as an important element in the system of security in Europe⁴⁸⁶.

2. The Weimar Triangle's stance and role in the processes of enlargement and development of the European Union

The Weimar Triangle has had considerable success as well as failures and lost opportunities. It played a positive role in the process of Poland's 'return' to Europe after 1989. Many researchers and experts directly state that the Weimar Triangle founded on 28-29 August 1991 played a special role in the processes of NATO and the European Union enlargement, and Poland's attempts to join the Euro-Atlantic structures⁴⁸⁷. It became an important instrument for including Poland in the European policy and its integration with the Euro-Atlantic structures. It is necessary to draw attention to the Euro-Atlantic direction of the Polish-German-French cooperation, especially in the context of Polish aspirations and accession efforts. From 1991 German politicians together with France implemented most of the activities targeting Central and Eastern Europe. Both countries could also achieve their own aims and at the same time control one another. Reunited Germany stated that its Eastern policy took into account the stance of the European Union and its involvement in the region was not aimed at maintaining hegemony in Europe, which Poland, France and other countries were afraid of⁴⁸⁸.

On the other hand, France took a stance that a danger for its interests in entire Europe would be limited through common Eastern policy with Poland. However, the reason for the adoption of this strategy was not the willingness to recognise Poland as the most important partner and a leader in Central Europe but the necessity of forcing Germany to implement common European policy taking into account the interests of France. In practice, the common policy of Germany and France manifested itself in the activities consisting in successive inclusion of Poland in the

⁴⁸⁶ J. Holzer, *Próba bilansu i oceny stosunków polsko-niemieckich w latach 1989–1995*, [in:] J. Holzer, J. M. Fiszer (ed.), *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie w latach 1970-1995. Próba bilansu i perspektywy rozwoju*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1998, p. 55.

⁴⁸⁷ J. M. Fiszer, *Przesłanki wewnętrzne i międzynarodowe upadku Związku Radzieckiego w 1991 roku oraz jego konsekwencje geopolityczne dla polityki zagranicznej Polski*, "Rocznik Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" no. 19, zeszyt 2, 2021; *ibid*: *Stanowisko Rosji wobec akcesji Polski do NATO i Unii Europejskiej*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i polityczna" no. 1(60), 2018.

⁴⁸⁸ J. M. Fiszer, *The Role of Reunified Germany in Poland's Accession to NATO and the European Union*, "Politeja" no. 6(75), 2021, pp. 51-74.

Euro-Atlantic system⁴⁸⁹. Without Germany and France's support in NATO and the EU accession negotiations, our membership might have been postponed and achieved on less favourable conditions⁴⁹⁰. Of course, as far as the membership of NATO is concerned, the keys to this alliance were in Washington but the support from Germany and France also played an important role because, without it, the idea of its Eastern enlargement would have met with stronger opposition from Russia than the one we experienced in the period 1991-1999. On the other hand, it was mainly the tandem of France and Germany, which decided about Poland's accession to the European Union⁴⁹¹.

The Weimar Triangle undoubtedly was one of the biggest successes of Poland's foreign policy, the main aim of which after 1989 was the above-mentioned 'return' to Europe and accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures in order to ensure sovereignty and security for the state. The Weimar Triangle fulfilled this task. Moreover, it contributed to the development of German-French cooperation in the field of European integration and strengthening the role and position of Poland in the post-communist world.

One must agree with the opinion that the foundation of the Weimar Triangle was an element of Poland's foreign policy skilfully conducted after the collapse of communism in 1989; by the way, the policy conducted in very difficult geopolitical and geo-economic conditions. Its foundation was possible thanks to Germany and France's friendly attitude towards Poland and their expectations (interests) involved. Many politicians and experts also saw strong driving power in the Weimar Triangle for integration processes in post-Cold-War Europe. They believed that the common economic, political, demographic and military potential of France, reunited Germany and democratic Poland would make Europe play an important role in the construction of post-communist, multipolar, democratic and peaceful international order in the world. However, the expectations did not materialise fully for objective reasons. The construction of a new multipolar and democratic order in the world was hampered by the

⁴⁸⁹ R. Asmus, *NATO – otwarcie drzwi*, MUZA SA, Warszawa 2002, pp. 279-290; S. Parzymies, *Unia Europejska a Europa Środkowa. Perspektywy współpracy w dziedzinie bezpieczeństwa*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" 1999, no. 3, pp. 83-111.

⁴⁹⁰ P. Mickiewicz, *Współpraca wojskowa Polski, Francji i Niemiec*, "Wojsko i Wychowanie" 2002, no. 2; S. Michałowski, *Nowa jakość w stosunkach z Niemcami*, [in:] R. Kuźniar, K. Szczepanik (ed.), *Polityka zagraniczna RP 1989–2002*, Wydawnictwo Askon, Warszawa 2002, pp. 145–147; S. Sulowski (ed.), *Polska–Niemcy – nadzieja i zaufanie*, Fundacja Politeja, Warszawa 2002.

⁴⁹¹ J. M. Fiszer, *Rosja wobec akcesji Polski do NATO i Unii Europejskiej*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2018, no. 1(60), pp. 264-289; J. Kiwerska, *Partnerstwo w przywództwie? Stany Zjednoczone i Niemcy (1989-2016)*. *Perspektywa polska*, Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 2017.

quickly changing international situation and the return of Russia ruled by Vladimir Putin to aggressive international policy towards its neighbours, the European Union and NATO.

However, the Weimar Triangle undoubtedly accelerated the conclusion of the Treaty of Maastricht, which was signed on 7 February 1992 on France and German's initiative and entered into force on 1 November 1993. It established the European Union and accelerated the European integration. According to Jan Barcz, "It is rightly described as a quantum leap in the development of the European integration but first of all as a 'breakthrough' in the process. The conclusion of the work on the Treaty coincided with the first steps taken by independent Poland to get closer to the European Community: an association agreement (Europe Agreement) was signed on 16 December 1991 and entered into force on 1 February 1994 (the part liberalising trade in March 1992). In mid-June 1993, the Member States made a crucial decision giving, inter alia, Poland an opportunity to obtain membership of the Union"⁴⁹².

The Treaty of Maastricht, officially called the Treaty on European Union (TEU), is an indefinite-term international agreement initialled on 11 December 1991 and signed on 7 February 1992, which after its ratification entered into force on 1 November 1993. It was a quantum leap into the European integration initiated after the Second World War and became its accelerator when the Cold War ended. The Treaty of Maastricht founded the European Union (EU) defining it as "a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen" (Article A TEU). The task of the EU is to organise, in a manner demonstrating consistency and solidarity, relations between Member States and between their peoples⁴⁹³.

Contrary assessments of the condition, tasks, objectives and the future of the European Union dominate among researchers and politicians. On the one hand, there is a dominating opinion that the EU has already created a specific system of internal bonds, built up its own structures and original governing procedures, and its main bodies reflect a specific system of legislative, executive and judicial powers with limited enforcement possibilities. According to them, the Union signposts the most advantageous development of Europe as a whole. On the other hand, there are opinions that for years the European Union has been drifting in an unknown direction, which is a serious threat for it, that it needs further improvement of the Union structures and

⁴⁹² J. Barcz, *30 lat temu podpisany został Traktat z Maastricht*, "Monitor Konstytucyjny. Konstytucja. Państwo, Prawo", 5.02.2022, p. 1.

⁴⁹³ J. J. Węc, *Spór o kształt ustrojowy Wspólnot Europejskich i Unii Europejskiej w latach 1950-2010*, Księgarnia Akademicka Sp. z o.o., Kraków 2012, pp. 209-215.

new rules of cooperation and broader development of the European and global awareness among its Member States and their citizens.

However, the enlargement process, which resulted in the accession of ten new members on 1 May 2004, took many years. The admission of new members and the preceding institutional reforms of the European Union would not have been possible without the Weimar Triangle and the support from France and Germany. Of the two states, Germany was the one that showed more involvement and will to enlarge the European Union from the very beginning. In the period called 'Polish-German community of interests', i.e. the time when Helmut Kohl was in power, the German party was perceived as Poland's advocate in the process of the European integration. After 1998 the relations cooled considerably and the German policy rather resembled Realpolitik. As regards France, its stance was more difficult to understand and accept by the countries aspiring to the EU membership. France theoretically supported the European Union enlargement, however, in practice, it looked for ways of lengthening the negotiation period. Eventually, the aspiring countries succeeded in obtaining the two Member States' support and the biggest enlargement of the European Union was possible.

The specificity of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle, unlike in the multilateral relations and cooperation within a group of many states, e.g. in NATO or the European Union, results from the existence of a small number of decision-makers. As a result, the position of Poland in the Weimar Triangle has always resulted from current bilateral relations with France and Germany, and these have not been very good lately. The nature of these relations, their dynamics and efficiency that instilled optimism in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, have recently led to the necessity of re-evaluating the usefulness and cooperation within the Weimar Triangle. Today, the difficulties in Warsaw-Paris and Warsaw-Berlin relations can be seen with the naked eye and not only at the diplomatic level. Poland differs from France and Germany about the vision of international security and the stance on the enlargement and development of the European Union, as well as the attitude to the United States, NATO and Russia. Germany and France, as I mentioned above, have strengthened cooperation with Russia and limited it with Poland for years. And Poland governed by Peace and Justice in fact has intensified a war on two fronts, i.e. the European Union and the United States, and has seen an enemy not only in Russia but also in Germany. It has not had good relations with France, either. What is more, since 2015 France and Germany, i.e. since the moment Peace and Justice came to power in Poland, have not recognised Poland as a fully democratic country. At the same time, many contemporary challenges, e.g. concerning security,

defence, combating terrorism, migration, or climate, have required cooperation of all the European states, especially the Weimar Triangle members, and a revival of its activity. Unfortunately, not all Polish, German and French decision-makers thought so, which was a serious mistake in the context of the growing imperial policy of the Russian Federation governed by Vladimir Putin, which has posed a growing threat to the security of Europe and the world.

I propose a few theses and hypotheses in this paper. I am also trying to answer some relevant questions, *inter alia*: Has the Weimar Triangle formula been already exhausted, as some politicians think, and why have its partners faced a crisis in their relations? Should the Weimar Triangle be revived, and how should it be done? Why did Poland stop being a desired partner of cooperation for France and Germany? Has the Polish government re-evaluated our alliances too radically? What are the reasons for that? Is the Weimar Triangle still necessary and why? It is not an easy task because the Weimar Triangle is composed of states with different interests, potential and possibilities of influencing the international environment and its evolution. In addition, there are many factors of internal and environmental nature that influence their behaviour and efficiency of their actions on the international arena. In the light of the theory of foreign policy, strong states that are commonly known as superpowers have greater possibilities and they conduct the most offensive foreign policy and create international reality, as well as decide on the development of international systems. France and Germany, unlike Poland, can be classified as such states, but in relation with the current international situation determined by the Russian war against Ukraine, they should not rival for leadership in the European Union and care about their particular national interests. They should tighten cooperation and together with Poland and other European Union Member States build a strong coalition around the Weimar Triangle in order to fight against Putin's international policy, which poses a threat to Europe and the whole world.

Conclusions

According to the latest surveys, the majority of the respondents in Germany and Poland and nearly half of the French ones believe that the cooperation between the countries of the Weimar Triangle is very important or rather important. On the other hand, only a small minority believe that such cooperation is unimportant for the European integration. Thus, one can say that the Poles, Germans and French are still for the maintenance and even strengthening of the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle.

Although many researchers and some politicians admit that the present level of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle leaves a lot to be desired, they present different opinions on how this cooperation should be continued in the future. The above-mentioned surveys show that very few Poles, Germans and French would like this cooperation to be limited or abandoned. Similar groups of respondents in Germany believe that the cooperation should be strengthened or maintained at the former level. The Poles are most enthusiastic and most of them would like this cooperation to be closer than it is at present. On the other hand, the French declare smaller support for closer Polish-French-German cooperation but this option is still more popular than others. All in all, one can state that all the three nations are decidedly for the maintenance and even strengthening of this cooperation and against abandoning it.

Unfortunately, the politicians in power in Poland, France and Germany do not take it into account and for various reasons ignore the cooperation within the Weimar Triangle. As a result, we have observed stagnation or even regression in the cooperation between Poland, France and Germany within the Weimar Triangle over the last years. From time to time it is officially mentioned in the three states that there is a need to revive its activity but in practice nothing happens. The recognition of the term 'the Weimar Triangle' is also decreasing. For example, over half of the respondents in France state that they have never heard the term although every fourth respondent knows the name or its meaning. On the other hand, most Poles and a considerable proportion of the Germans know the name. A question arises here: Why does this happen and what hampers the revival of the Weimar Triangle? As I mentioned above, all the three countries are guilty of that but the scale of their guilt differs. It results from re-nationalisation of their internal and foreign policy. However, I hope that the war in Ukraine and a threat of the Third World War will accelerate the revival of the Weimar Triangle and its activities for the enlargement and development of the European Union.

Summing up the above considerations, I state that the Weimar Triangle is still a necessary entity on the international arena and should keep playing a significant role not only in the strengthening of the trilateral Polish-German-French cooperation but also the integration processes in Europe and strengthening the position and role of the European Union in international relations. I also hope that after the elections to the Bundestag, which took place on 26 September 2021 and caused radical changes on the German political scene, and after the presidential election in France on 10 April 2022⁴⁹⁴, and probably after early parliamentary

⁴⁹⁴ For information on the electoral campaign in France see inter alia: Ostrowski M., *Cherchez la femme*, "Polityka", 1.01.-11.01.2022, pp. 69-71; Ch. Sente, T. Duverger, *Um die Chancen der französischen Linken bei*

elections in Poland, the revival of the Weimar Triangle will take place and broad cooperation between Poland, France and Germany will be strengthened and developed. I also hope that France and Germany will stop competing for hegemony in Europe, that they will start constructive cooperation for the benefit and security of Europe and for the enlargement and development of the European Union. In the face of the current threat to the peace and security of Europe and the world provoked by the Russia's aggression against Ukraine, France and Germany together with Poland should take steps to improve the European defence and not only speak about it⁴⁹⁵. The more so as the destabilising actions undertaken by Russia and attempts to force Europe and the United States to start negotiations with it are in fact an example of cracks in the structure of international security. They show that the Russian president Vladimir Putin has not given up his plan to break up the European Union, to divide its members. They also prove the weakness of the NATO's deterrence system.

In the present international situation, taking into account the war in Ukraine, France, Germany and Poland together should revive the Weimar Triangle, which should again become a 'flywheel' generating the European integration and help strengthen the position and role of the European Union on the international arena. In my opinion, the Weimar Triangle still has great potential, which should be used to enlarge and develop the European Union, and this way stop disintegration processes in Europe and strengthen its security.

Streszczenie:

Artykuł w syntetycznym ujęciu przedstawia genezę Trójkąta Weimarskiego i jego rolę w integracji Europy po zakończeniu zimnej wojny. Na temat Trójkąta Weimarskiego w literaturze przedmiotu w Polsce, Niemczech i Francji krążą sprzeczne oceny i opinie. Z jednej strony podkreśla się jego duże znaczenie w procesie tworzenia Unii Europejskiej (EU) oraz akcesji Polski do struktur euroatlantyckich, tj. do NATO i Unii Europejskiej, a z drugiej strony deprecjonuje się jego rolę w reorientacji polityki zagranicznej Polski po 1989 roku podkreślając, że racja stanu Polski została podporządkowana interesom Niemiec i Francji.

Zarówno w Polsce, jak i w Niemczech czy Francji Trójkąt Weimarski często był i jest nadal traktowany instrumentalnie, zwłaszcza przez polityków, którzy wykorzystują go do bieżącej polityki międzynarodowej. Tymczasem zaś nie ulega wątpliwości, że odegrał on dużą rolę nie tylko w procesie utworzenia UE, ale również determinował jej poszerzanie i

den Präsidentschaftswahlen im April steht es schlecht. Eine Wählerinitiative will das jetzt ändern. "International" International@fes.de, 28 January 2022.

⁴⁹⁵ R. Sikorski, *Rosja-Ukraina-Unia Europejska. Europo, pobudka! Awanturyczna polityka Putina to dzwonek alarmowy*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 28.01.2022, p.16; M. Czarnecki, *Zachód mówi jednym głosem w sprawie Rosji*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 21.01.2022, p. 12.

pogłębianie, choć jego potencjał i możliwości nie były w pełni wykorzystane. Jest to jedna z głównych tez niniejszego opracowania.

Co więcej, analiza działalności Trójkąta Weimarskiego, jego sukcesów i porażek pokazuje, że jest on wciąż niezbędnym podmiotem w stosunkach międzynarodowych i powinien nadal odgrywać istotną rolę w procesie integracji Europy. Nadal też powinien odgrywać zasadniczą rolę w umacnianiu trójstronnej polsko-niemiecko-francuskiej współpracy i wzmacnianiu pozycji Unii Europejskiej w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Renesans Trójkąta Weimarskiego jest nie tylko możliwy, ale wręcz niezbędny w obecnej sytuacji międzynarodowej w Europie i na świecie, którą determinuje agresja Rosji na Ukrainę w dniu 24 lutego 2022 roku oraz groźba wybuchu trzeciej wojny światowej.

Słowa kluczowe:

Trójkąt Weimarski, Polska, Francja, Niemcy, integracja, Unia Europejska, zimna wojna, Europa, bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe.

Keywords:

Weimar Triangle, Poland, France, Germany, integration, European Union, Cold War, Europe, international security

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