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Poland's Relations with Russia 2001-2013: Attempts at Normalisation

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Lenkijos santykiai su Rusija 2001- 2013: normalizacijos bandymai

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SUMMARY

International relations (IR) scholars have long argued that it is impossible to apply IR theories towards states in a unified way – there are important differences among states in terms of its' territory, geography, capabilities, etc. Hence, states should be categorised by its size and capabilities and IR theories' claims accordingly have to be adjusted. A substantial amount of work has been done on studying great powers and small states, their foreign policies and adaptations to challenges stemming from the international system.

One of key, though relatively less studied compared to others, categories of states analysed by IR scholars are middle powers. There are three ways to describe a middle power. First is identity: those states that claim to be middle powers, should be regarded as one. Second – behaviour. Scholars have identified certain foreign policy attributes which they ascribe to middle powers. If certain country's foreign policy behaviour resembles these attributes, then it can be classified as a middle power. The third way to identify a middle power is by evaluating a country's position in the international system: it should have less capabilities than great powers, but more than small states. These three approaches can be traced respectively to IR theories of constructivism, liberalism and realism.

However, each approach has its drawbacks. Though it is still discussed how to rectify these weaknesses, some progress has been achieved on the systemic view. Carr describes middle powers as having at least some capacity to defend their interests and an ability to initiate or lead change in the international system. However, a proposal to identify middle powers by their ability to influence the international system is not entirely new. David R. Mares argued to divide the international system into four categories of states: great powers are those around which balancing occurs, major powers are states that can disrupt, but are unable to change the system unilaterally, middle powers are states that can affect the system together with a few

smaller allies, and small powers – states that cannot affect the system, unless in an alliance, which the small power loses any influence on. It can even be argued that this classification is now a consensus among realists on how to divide states in the international system.

Nevertheless, when it comes to predicting middle powers' behaviour, the arguments of realists do not generally differ from their main theoretical claims. The majority of authors argue that middle powers either bandwagon or balance against great powers. One exception is the position of Steven E Lobell, Neal G. Jesse and Kristen P. Williams. They claim that states may pursue multiple strategies due to participation in different games at different levels, i.e. global, regional and domestic, but their model does not foresee that states may pursue multiple strategies at the same level even towards the same state.

Curiously, one can also find instances when such a strategy was actually implemented. Fareed Zakaria argues that the USA since the presidency of Richard Nixon until the terms of Barack Obama had been pursuing a policy of simultaneous engagement and deterrence towards China. What is more important, such a policy was also executed by middle powers. Michael Leifer and Amitav Acharya have described respectively Indonesia's and Malaysia's attempts to simultaneously balance and engage China at the end of the 20th century.

But instances of middle powers pursuing simultaneously engagement and balancing towards a rising power are not found solely in Asia – one may find such instances among European middle powers. One of the best examples could be Poland policy towards Russia between 2001 (when after winning the first parliament elections after Poland's entry into NATO in 1999 the parties of the left took power) until the 2013 Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, after which Poland solely balanced against Russia. This may seem counterintuitive at first glance, as both in the public sphere and in the academic literature, there is widespread belief that Poland since 1989 has solely balanced against Moscow. But when such views are

scrutinised empirically, these arguments appear to be incorrect, as shown by the works of Joanna A. Gorska and Wojciech Konończuk with Marcin Kaczmarski. This dissertation will put addition evidence to these claims, as it shows that Poland in 2001-2013 pursued simultaneously a policy of balancing and engagement towards Russia.

Looking from a theoretical point of view, middle powers' attempts to engage and balance at the same time a rising regional power should be treated as a anomaly. Having in mind the power disproportion among such state types and smaller leverage that middle powers have compared to great powers, a question arises: what could and did middle power offer so as to convince great powers to improve relations? It is exactly due to this disproportion in power and leverage that realists usually argue, that middle powers either balance or bandwagon with great powers. But if empirical evidence contradicts these claims, then a more important question arises: why do middle powers decide to pursue simultaneously a policy of engagement and balancing towards great powers?

It can be argued that middle powers' attempts balance and engage great powers at the same time is an understudied issue and this dissertation aims to fill these knowledge gaps. It also contributes to the development of middle power studies and brings Poland closer to the field. So far, authors have preferred to study mostly Canada, Australia, South Korea, Turkey, though from a structural approach Poland without doubt can be classified as a middle power. And last but not least, this dissertation will show that neoclassical realism can be a solution to the middle powers structural approach's weakness in predicting states behaviour.

But first, it is necessary to define how "engagement" is perceived. In this research a policy of engagement is understood as a foreign policy strategy, when positive sanctions, comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts are used to achieve its goals.

Thus, from an academic point of view there exists a paradox: contrary to structural realism's predictions, Poland as a middle power

in the European international system did not pursue neither a purely bandwagoning, nor a purely balancing policy towards Russia. Thus, the main objective of this research is to explain, why Poland in 2001-2013 in addition balancing also executed a policy of engagement towards Russia.

This is done using neoclassical realist theory and the method of systematic process analysis. Four hypotheses are formulated and tested in this research: 1) Poland tried to improve relations with Russia due to perceived changes in the international balance of power by Polish decision-makers; 2) Poland chose a strategy of engagement with Russia in the hope of altering its intentions towards Poland; 3) Poland tried to improve relations with Russia due to the fact that Polish foreign policy decision-makers were affected by domestic political interest groups; 4) Poland's attempt to engage Russia was a consequence of domestic political struggle between competing political actors. This was an attempt to discredit the foreign policies offered by other political groups and in so doing diminish their political influence.

It must be emphasised that expressions “improve relations with Russia” and “pursue a policy of engagement towards Russia” are used as synonyms. To check the hypotheses, Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2013 was split into three cases, based on the political parties that formed Poland's foreign policy: 2001-2005 when the leftist Polish Democratic Left Alliance (*polish*: Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – SLD) was in power, 2005-2007 the right Law and Justice (*polish*: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) and 2007-2013 when the centrist Civic Platform (*polish*: Platforma Obywatelska – PO) party dominated in Polish politics. To substantiate the findings and conclusions on the appropriateness of the hypotheses in these cases, Poland's policy towards Russia between the 2013 European Union's (EU) Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius and the May 26th 2019 elections to the European Parliament in Poland, when Poland pursued solely a balancing policy towards Russia.

According to that, this research's main tasks were formulated: 1) outline a theoretical model, able to explain the potential reasons of Poland pursuing a policy of engagement towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013; 2) define the research's hypotheses and the method by which they should be checked; 3) based on the theoretical model and the definition of a policy of engagement, review Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007, 2007-2013 and check the validity of the theoretical model's hypotheses; 4) compare Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007, 2007-2013 with Poland's policy towards Russian in 2014-2019.

The main source of empirical data for this research were semi-structured expert interviews with Poland's politicians and diplomats, that were involved in the formation and execution of Poland's policy towards Russia in respective periods. All in all, during 2018-2019 22 anonymous interviews with Poland's ministry of foreign affairs and Poland's Chancellery of the President former and current employees, Polish governmental and foreign ministry experts, Polish politicians' public advisors, former member of Poland's parliament.

While conducting interviews with the mentioned interviewees, it was attempted to understand how they did or did not perceive Russia's threat towards Poland, potential ways to overcome it, Poland's capabilities and opportunities in bilateral relations with Russia; how much did they agree on policy towards Russia; how decision-makers perceived changes in the international balance of power and its effects on Poland. It was also tried to find out, whether the political situation and stability, low societal support for a balancing strategy, disagreement on the appropriate balancing strategy with the political opposition, members of parliament interest groups influenced the decision to improve relations with Russia. It was also searched, how conflicts among foreign policymakers regarding the evaluation of the international system and responses to threats emanating from it were resolved; how much other actors could negotiate with foreign policymakers on foreign policy; which internal actors and under what circumstances had to the most influence on foreign and security

policy; if the political elites in conflicts on foreign policy had to step down to internal actors and if so, then how, so that they could implement their desired foreign policy; how elites managed to mobilise resources for the realisation of its foreign policy and whether internal actors could affect it. The interview questions were formulated according to the dissertation's theoretical model. Besides, in this research Poland's decision-makers evaluation of the engagement policy and its perspectives were analysed. It must be emphasised that Russia's foreign policy decision-makers views on Poland's conducted policy of engagement is not the object of this research.

To verify hypotheses and to check the information gathered during interviews data was also gathered from other primary sources. These are Poland's foreign policy's publicly available document, public statements by diplomats and politicians, party documents, Chancellery's of the President of the Republic of Poland and Poland's Ministry's of Foreign Affairs publications, press releases. Secondary sources were also utilised: media, academic literature, research centres' and think tank publications on Polish-Russian relations and its events, memoirs.

It can be stated that the academic literature on Polish-Russian relations is dominated by works which depict the development of Polish-Russian relations, emphasising its unstableness. Some others are prone to blame for this Poland, others – Russia. Besides them exists a substantial group of authors, which notices the improvement in Polish-Russian relations during 2007-2013 and tried to give their explanations for that. Quite a few underline resolution of historical disputes and the role of historical memory in Polish-Russian relations. But this literature lack works, which would analyse the full picture of Poland's relations with Russia, not just focusing on one sphere, and which would attempt to explain the reasons behind Poland's certain decisions towards Russia. A partial exemption from this trend was research on PO terms in office. What is more, most of this literature

overlooks various nuances, mostly claiming that Poland pursued a confrontational policy towards Russia.

Such critique can be the least applied to the works of W. Konończuk with M. Kaczmarski and J. A. Gorska. They claim that Poland attempted to normalise relations with Russia. However, the former did not explain Poland's motives behind such a policy, whereas J. A. Gorska did not notice, that Poland in addition to engagement, was also pursuing a balancing policy towards Russia. Moreover, the author did not look deep enough into the wider context in which Poland conducted its policy towards Russia, especially its Eastern policy and relations with the West. From this stems that there exist a niche in the academic literature for new research on Poland's policy towards Russia, taking in the account besides balancing Poland in 2001-2013 was also pursuing engagement towards Russia, studying the wider context in which Polish-Russian relations were developing and trying to understand, why Poland engaged Russia. This research attempted to fill in this gap and niche in the academic literature.

To analyse factors that shaped Poland's decisions to engage with Russia this paper shall apply the theory of neoclassical realism, which by preferencing the structural level analyses how states respond to pressures coming from it. This was done for several reasons. First, taking into account Poland's size and power, it can be stated, that unlike Russia, USA or China, it has much fewer chances to change the global or regional European balance of power and more reacts to it and the situations created by it. Second, neoclassical realism explains why states do not follow systemic imperatives stemming from the international system. In other words, it analyses, why states do not pursue a stringent balancing policy against other states power and its created threats or why they do not bandwagon with great powers as foreseen by neorealism.

Neoclassical realism analyses states' foreign policy on two levels. The first is the structural international system level. It is based on the theory of neorealism and analyses the state's position in the international system, evaluating, how its situation changed in terms of

balance of power. States' behaviour is determined by the international system's polarity, i.e. the amount of great powers and its place in the international system, which is based on states' current military and economic capabilities.

Currently, it is common to look in the balance of power and the amount of great powers while analysing the international system level through the lens of neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realists also claim, that it is necessary to evaluate the strategic environment in the system, whether it is permissive or restrictive, i.e. to determine the size and seriousness of threats and opportunities in the international system. It also compulsory to judge the clearness of signals and information in the international system: how clear are threats and opportunities in the international system, whether it is possible to discern the time frame of their materialisation, whether the system provides a clear answer, which policy would be optimal for the state. To that structural modifiers should be added, which have an impact on the mentioned variables – geography, the rate of technological change, the offence-defence balance. Finally, attention must be paid to threats stemming from the international system, radical changes in the international system and how they states' internal politics. From all this the independent variable may be formulated: systemic pressures for Poland's foreign policy that rise from the power difference between Russia and Poland. The stronger is Russia compared to Poland, the more Russia demonstrates its readiness and intentions to use this difference against Poland, the stronger is the systemic pressure for Poland to balance against Russia.

Neoclassical realism argues that states' foreign policy is shaped but not completely determined by incentives coming from the international state system. In order to explain the states' selected behaviour strategies, neoclassical realists introduce the second level of analysis. This is the states' domestic politics level, where it is analysed how states' decision-makers react to imperatives stemming from the international system and where intermediate variables are identified.

Neoclassical realists use numerous variables in this level and received a huge amount of criticism that their variables for domestic politics are selected on an *ad hoc* basis. Norrin M. Ripsmann, Jeffrey W. Talieferro and Steven E. Lobell tackle this issue in their newest book on neoclassical realism *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*. After having reviewed the main works in neoclassical realism, they attempted to group the variables for domestic politics. According to these authors, the stimuli from the international system goes through three stages, until they materialise into policy response: perception, decision making, policy implementation. These stages are affected by four groups of variables: leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions. The perception stage is influenced by leader images and strategic culture, whereas decision making and policy implementation stages – by strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions.

Each of the mentioned domestic politics variable groups is comprised of separate variables. Leader images consist of individual decision makers' beliefs and images, leaders' personal traits and character, leaders' operational codes. Meanwhile strategic culture is made of organisational culture, society's beliefs, worldviews and expectations, dominant ideologies. State – society relations are created by the autonomy of foreign policy decision makers from other actors of domestic politics and society's pressures, disagreements between state institutions and society, the dynamics of political coalition formation, the shape of civil-military relations. Domestic institutions are described by formal institutions, organisational and bureaucratic routines and processes, the concentration of power among foreign policy decision-makers, the relationship between the executive and legislative powers, party systems, the quality of the administration, informal institutions, decision making procedures, political practices.

The importance of each group of variables is chosen according to the degree of systemic clarity, i.e. the information provided by the system, and the nature of strategic environment, i.e., whether it is

restrictive or permissive. When the strategic environment is restrictive, foreign policy is determined by leader images and strategic culture, irrespective of the degree of systemic clarity. Strategic environment is dependent on time: the faster states have to make decisions, the more restrictive is their strategic environment. For example, while analysing decision-making during an extreme situation or crisis explanations ought to be sought in leader images and strategic culture groups of variables, whereas analysing states' foreign policies during a period of years or decades – strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions groups of variables.

But even when the strategic environment is permissive, one must analyse the degree of systemic clarity in the international system. When there is high clarity, foreign policy is shaped by strategic culture, domestic institutions and state-society relations. Nevertheless, when there is low clarity in a permissive environment, the effect of domestic politics variables is unclear. It can be affected by any group of variables. The view in this dissertation was that Poland in the cases of its relations with Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 existed in a permissive environment with relatively high clarity of information. Henceforth, Poland's foreign policy towards Russia should be mostly affected by strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions groups of variables.

But how to select the relevant variables from each of these groups necessary for a given case? Ripsmann, Taliaferro and Lobell provide two ways to solve this puzzle: deductive and inductive. As the authors themselves claim, practically it is very difficult to separate these methods. Each induction has at least a bit of deduction and vice versa. In this dissertation variables from each of the selected potentially influential groups were chosen deductively with a bit of induction. This means that it was based on the recent discussions among neoclassical realists and realists and its applicability to Poland's relations with Russia.

In this way variables, potentially affecting Poland's decision to pursue a policy of engagement towards Russia, were identified and

from them this research's hypotheses were derived. Strategic culture variables: 1) Poland's foreign policy decision-makers' perception of the international balance of power – hypothesis 1: Poland tried to improve relations with Russia due to perceived changes in the international balance of power by Polish decision-makers; 2) Poland's foreign policy decision-makers' perception of Russia's intentions towards Poland – hypothesis 2: Poland chose a strategy of engagement with Russia in the hope of altering its intentions towards Poland. State-society relations variable: Poland's foreign policy decision-makers' perception of their capabilities to implement the chosen foreign policy course – hypothesis 3: Poland tried to improve relations with Russia due to the fact that Polish foreign policy decision-makers were affected by domestic political interest groups. Domestic institutions variable: Poland's foreign policy decision-makers' perception of their parties self-identification – hypothesis 4: Poland's attempt to engage Russia was a consequence of domestic political struggle between competing political actors. This was an attempt to discredit the foreign policies offered by other political groups and in so doing diminish their political influence.

To answer the main research question, the method of systemic process analysis, formulated by Peter A. Hall, was used. Its purpose is to study the causal relations of a small amount of cases and to evaluate, which theoretical perspectives are best suited to explain these cases. This method is made of four steps. In the first step of theory formulation the researcher has to choose the relevant theories, potentially best suited to explain the selected cases, derive from these theories the main variables and explain the potential causal relations between them.

In the second step of this method it is necessary to make predictions, based on the chosen theories, what results and causal relations have to be found in empirical evidence, so as to confirm the hypotheses and the theory's suitability. For hypothesis 1 to hold, Polish foreign policymakers should notice, that despite the huge difference in power between Poland and Russia and the systemic

pressure to balance Russia stemming from it, the majority of Western states and Poland's allies were interested in keeping good relations with Russia. This should lead Poland's foreign policymakers towards an understanding, that Poland in order to maintain its good relations with Western states must adjust to its' agenda in relations with Russia and as a result pursue a policy of engagement towards Russia.

To accept hypothesis 2, it should become clear that Poland's foreign policy decision-makers, even having perceived the necessity to balance Russia's disproportionately huge power, nevertheless were not convinced that Russia would dare or even will to use it against Poland. Even if it was thought, that Russia had malign intentions towards Poland, Poland's foreign policymakers possible spotted certain trends inside Russia, its domestic politics or among Russia's elite, which could be used to alter Russia's elites view of Poland. In this context a policy of engagement to Russia ought to be perceived by Poland's foreign policymakers as a way to persuade Russia not to use its military force against Poland.

To approve hypothesis 3 evidence must show that Poland's foreign policy decision-makers after having understood the enormous power differential between Russia and Poland and the necessity to alleviate it through balancing, could not realise the chosen policy due to their weak positions in Poland's internal politics. They needed to get acceptance for such a policy from actors without whose support they could not stay in power (coalition partners, groups inside parties, groups in the bureaucratic apparatus, media with its influence on public opinion, financial backers). These actors not only had to oppose a balancing policy towards Russia, but also demand improvement of relations, which would lead to a policy of engagement towards Russia. Another situation which would signify approval of hypothesis 3, would be if Poland's foreign policymakers did not know what policy to pursue towards Russia under the circumstances of huge power disproportion and would ask for advice, consult with other groups from outside. Some of these groups could persuade Poland's foreign policymakers to pursue a policy of engagement towards Russia.

In the case of hypothesis 4 being true, it is necessary to find evidence, which demonstrate that Polish parties' and foreign policy decision-makers, belonging to them, identity is related and dependent upon their conducted policy towards Russia. And that the pursuing of a policy of engagement was exactly necessary to manifest that identity both to oneself and to society.

When systemic pressures go through the filter of intermediate variables in domestic politics, they turn in the dependent variable – state's foreign policy. This dissertation utilised the definition of foreign policy provided by Charles F. Hermann: "it is a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative policymakers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymakers' political jurisdiction." Thus the dependent variable of this research is Poland's foreign policymakers and Poland's diplomats' program orientated towards Russia, which seeks to realise certain goal and/or solve certain problems.

The third step of systematic process analysis is the gathering of empirical evidence and its analysis. It is worth emphasising that in the framework of this method it is imperative not only to identify the values of the independent, intermediate and dependent variables, but also to take into account whether their interaction, the process bringing to the value of the dependent variable matches the chosen theory's predictions. For these reasons, besides the valuation of the various variables, evidence on events, its' sequence, on specific actions performed by actors, on these actors' private and public statements explaining the motives behind their actions, must be gathered and to assess whether this additional information confirms the predictions derived from the chosen theory. While checking this dissertation's hypotheses evidence from primary sources, especially interviews with Poland's foreign policymakers in the periods of 2001-2005, 2005-2007, 2007-2013 and 2014-2019, was used. It was analysed with the help of descriptive discourse analysis. The values of intermediate variables, their interaction and interaction with the independent and dependent variable were identified while studying Poland's foreign

policymakers' discourses on Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 in primary sources and evaluating the context of these discourses with the use of primary and secondary sources.

Finally, in the last step of systematic process analysis conclusions are made. After having identified which intermediate variable affected Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 these discovered causal relations were tested by analysing Poland's policy towards Russia in 2014-2019, when Poland solely pursued a policy of balancing towards Russia. Following Charles F. Hermann, a program shift took place in Poland's foreign policy: Poland changed its methods and means by which it tried to achieve its goals in relations with Russia. Hence, it is imperative to explore the values of the intermediate variables in 2014-2019. It should show that then neither of them had any effect on Poland's policy towards Russia. If any of the hypothesis would be accepted, then the conclusions on Poland's motives to conduct besides balancing a policy of engagement toward Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 will have to be discarded. Such a step is also dictated by the logic of systematic process analysis.

In 2001-2005, when SLD was in power, Poland was a middle, whereas Russia a major power in the European international multipolar system. At that time Poland functioned in a multipolar European international system, which created an unrestrictive systemic environment with a relatively high degree of systemic clarity: Poland's interests in many instances clashed with Russia, and Poland's *de facto* lower status in NATO, the power asymmetry between Poland and Russia, Russia's attempts to renew its military strength and influence in the post-soviet space suggested that in the long term Russia could threaten Poland's sovereignty. Even if Russia did not pose a threat for Poland in the short term, that could not be said about the medium and long term. From this systemic evaluation systemic imperatives, stemming from the international system, for

Poland could be derived: Poland had to search for way to increase its relative power and balance Russia.

In 2001-2005 Poland pursued a policy simultaneous balancing and engagement towards Russia. On the one hand Poland continued the modernisation of its army, entered the war in Iraq hoping in this way to strengthen its alliance with the USA, intervened against Russia's interests in Ukraine's Orange Revolution. On the other hand, Poland cultivated political contacts with Russia – numerous bilateral visits of high-level politicians, including presidents, took place, developed economic, regional cultural cooperation with Russia. Though after the Orange Revolution, Poland's relations with Russia had deteriorated, but despite that Poland continued its policy of engagement towards Russia. Comparing this information with the hypotheses' approval predictions, it can be stated that in the case of 2001-2005 hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were confirmed.

In 2005-2007, when PiS took control of Poland's foreign policy, Poland continued to be a middle power in the European multipolar international system, where Russia remained a major power. Though Poland pursued the modernisation of its army, but the power asymmetry with Russia remained. In addition, in 2005-2007 Russia due to increased revenues from oil and gas exports started to conduct a more assertive foreign policy, especially in the post-Soviet space, where Poland's and Russia's interests clashed more intensely. So, in 2005-2007 Poland existed in the European international system, which created a strategically non-restrictive environment with a relatively high degree of systemic clarity: there was enough information to claim, that Poland's and Russia's on many issues are incompatible and Russia posed a threat to Poland's interests in the short and medium terms, whereas in the long run – potentially to Poland's political sovereignty. Based on this strategic evaluation, the strategic imperatives for Poland in 2005-2007 could be identified: Poland had to balance Russia's political and military power.

Although PiS was considered to be a rather nationalistic party, but contrary to expectations from the very beginning of its term it

pursued a policy of engagement towards Russia. Similarly, to the case of SLD, it was aimed to maintain regular contacts on the political level, intensify cooperation in the economic, cultural, scientific spheres. For this reason, Poland put a huge amount of effort to organise a meeting between presidents Lech Kaczyński and Vladimir Putin and to refrain from harsh rhetoric towards Russia. However, elements of balancing were also present in Poland policy towards Russia: Poland vetoed the European Commission's mandate to negotiate a new partnership deal with Russia and engaged in projects increasing the region's energy security. Comparing Poland's policy towards Russia in 2005-2007 with the hypotheses' approval and rejection predictions, it can be stated that in this case hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 can be confirmed.

On the one hand the European international system in 2007-2013 stayed the same: Poland was a middle power, Russia – a major power, and the system itself continued to be multipolar. But the conditions, under which Poland conducted its policy towards Russia, changed. After the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 any prospects of Ukraine or Georgia joining NATO and the EU had faded away. The Western states embarked on a policy of reset with Russia, while the global financial crisis urged also Russia to improve its relations with the West. Thus, it can be stated that in 2007-2013 Poland existed in a multipolar European international system, which created a relatively unrestricted strategic environment with a quite high degree of systemic clarity: there was enough information to say that Poland's interests clashed with Russia's, that Russia posed a threat to Poland's interests in the short and medium term and in the long term to Poland's sovereignty as well. Compared to 2005-2007, the system had become more restrictive due to the diminished Western support for NATO expansion, but the system had also become much clearer – after the 2008 war against Georgia, Russia's threat factor become even more evident for Poland. From this description of Poland strategic situation in 2007-2013, a few systemic pressures, coming from the international system, for Poland can be derived. First, Poland had to balance

Russia's power which threatened Poland's interests. Second, Poland had to search for ways how to once again open the prospect of EU and NATO membership for Eastern neighbourhood countries, especially Ukraine and Georgia. Third, to achieve such goals Poland needed to find additional allies.

Once PO politicians had taken control of Poland's foreign policy in 2007-2013, they immediately began to intensively implement a policy of engagement towards Russia. Apart from bilateral meeting such as the participation of Russia's minister of foreign affairs in the annual summit of Poland's diplomats, new formats of political contacts emerged, for example the Kaliningrad triangle, which gathered Germany's, Poland's and Russia's ministers of foreign affairs. Besides politicians, the Polish-Russian group on difficult matters functioned and one of its labour's fruit was the established of the Centres for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding in Warsaw and Moscow. To add, Poland and Russia implement a visa-free regime between Kaliningrad Oblast and Poland's regions bordering it. However, Poland's policy towards Russia also had elements of balancing: Poland blocked the entry of Russian investments into its market, modernised its army and searched for ways, how to bring Ukraine and Georgia closer to the EU. After comparing Poland's policy towards Russia in 2007-2013 with the hypotheses acceptance predictions, one may state that in this case hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 4 held true.

In 2014-2019 Poland was a middle power in the European international system, which was bipolar. Although Russia's threat towards Poland increased and Western states together with Poland intensified its' policy of balancing Russia on the political level and in terms of military deterrence – the probability of a direct Poland's/NATO's military confrontation with Russia had increased, but stayed low. This meant, that Poland had at least a few years to prepare for such a worst-case scenario and attempt to make it impossible through its foreign policy actions. From this follows, that Poland conducted its policy towards Russia in 2014-2019 in a

strategically permissive environment with clear information and that Poland's policy towards Russia could be affected by the same group of variables, so it was necessary to test in this case the aforementioned hypotheses. On the other hand, compared to 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 it must be admitted that the independent variable – systemic pressures on Poland from the international system – changed in 2014-2019, i.e. it increased: the system became bipolar and Russia's threat to Poland increased.

There were barely few elements of engagement left in Poland's policy towards Russia in 2014-2019, especially after the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula, and it was completely filled with balancing. Poland through its NATO membership and relations with the USA strengthened its military capabilities, NATO renewed its commitment to collective defence and more allies' troops were dislocated to Poland. In addition, Poland supported EU-level sanctions against Russia, intensified attempts to bring Ukraine and Georgia close to NATO and EU membership, increased its energy independence from Russia and initiated the Three Seas Initiative, which ought to assist Central European states to become more integrated among themselves and with Western Europe. This evidence contradicts every hypothesis acceptance prediction, thus all of them must be rejected.

Thus, from a systemic point of view it can be explained why Poland balanced against Russia, especially in the military and energy spheres. However, it is not clear, why Poland also attempted to engage Russia. This conundrum becomes even more interesting once taking into account, that Poland was a middle power, which tried to engage a major power – Russia – although realists predict that in such cases middle powers in such cases either band wagon with stronger powers or balance against them. Such cases, as Poland's policy towards Russia in 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013, are rare and there is no agreement in the academic literature, why middle powers decide to conduct such a policy. To answer this research question this dissertation used neoclassical realist theory, useful to explain why

state do not always respond to systemic pressures emanating from the international system, and the method of systematic process analysis.

It appeared that Poland pursued a policy of engagement towards Russia for several reasons. In 2001-2005 Poland's foreign policy decision-makers tried to alter Russia's intentions towards Poland. The same could be said about PiS in 2005-2007 and the main decision maker at that time – Lech Kaczyński – sincerely believed that was possible to achieve. Contrary to that, the liberal PO did not have such a view towards Russia in 2007-2013. It tried to demonstrate with its policy of engagement towards Russia, that liberals unlike their opponents on the right are capable of finding a common language with Russia and convince in this way Poland's voters not to vote for “confrontational” L. Kaczyński in Poland's presidential election in 2010. After the Smolensk plane crash Poland's domestic political scene, had dramatically changed, but it still remained an important motive for liberals to continue the policy of engagement towards Russia – it was thought that a stricter policy towards could be perceived by society as a surrender to pressure from the political right for the at least partial culpability of Russia for the Smolensk plane crash.

But most importantly in three cases of 2001-2005, 2005-2006 and 2007-2013 Polish governments sought through a policy of engagement to show Western states, that Poland is not a “russophobic country,” trying to entangle the EU and NATO into its drive to withhold Russia's expansionism. By doing so Poland hoped that, it will succeed in convincing its partners in the EU and NATO, that its policy proposals, especially support for EU and NATO eastward expansion, were motivated by a desire to increase regional stability and bring benefit for the West and Russia. It is worth to pay attention to the case of 2014-2019, when Poland exclusively conducted a policy of balancing Russia. It is important to underscore that in 2014-2019 the value of the independent variable – systemic pressures on Poland's foreign policy – had changed, i.e. these had grown.

The period of 2014-2019 was chosen as a control case. Then the European system shifted from multipolarity to bipolarity and systemic pressures on Poland from Russia significantly increased, which meant an increase in the necessity to balance Russia's power. Furthermore, the need for Poland to improve its reputation among EU and NATO members by pursuing a policy of engagement towards Russia also vanished. All EU and NATO members states started to treat Russia as a threat and began to balance Russia themselves and support Poland's balancing against Russia. It must be underlined, that compared to the earlier cases of 2001-2005, 2005-2007, 2007-2013 the value of the independent variable – systemic pressures on Poland's foreign policy – shifted, i.e. these pressures increased.

After having analysed the cases of 2001-2005, 2005-2007 and 2007-2013 it can be concluded that Polish foreign policymakers' perception of the international balance of power was a necessary condition for Poland to conduct a policy of engagement towards Russia. Only a wish to alter Russia's intentions towards Poland or willingness to gain credit in domestic politics are not sufficient conditions, if a) there is no appropriate situation in the international system b) Polish foreign policymakers do not perceive the need to improve Poland's position in EU and NATO so as to gain these organisations' support for Poland's Eastern policy.

It can be concluded that the engagement policy that Poland pursued towards Russia was essentially designed to strengthen its long-term policy aim of balancing Russia: it aimed to attract Western states' consent and support for Poland Eastern policy, especially EU and NATO expansion into Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova. This dissertation suggests to call such engagement, when middle powers use positive sanctions, comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts to improve its position among allies rather than improve relations with the engagement policy's target state, "instrumental" engagement.

Most importantly, this dissertation has shown that neoclassical realism may be a useful way to solve the problems of the systemic

approach to identifying middle powers, which finds it difficult to predict middle powers' behaviour. Lastly, by studying Poland's foreign policy from a middle power perspective this research has contributed to the development of middle states' studies. Poland is still a rarely studied case in this field, though from a realist perspective Poland fully satisfies the criteria to be treated as a middle power.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Antonovič, M. „Studies in Poland’s Foreign Policy: the case of Poland–Russia Relations.” *Warsaw East European Review*, 8, 2018, 123-133.

Antonovič, M. „A New Perspective on Poland’s Policy towards Russia in 2005–2007: a Middle Power Attempts to Engage a Rising Major Power.” *Politics In Central Europe*, 1/21, 2021 (*the article has been accepted, it is foreseen to publish the journal’s issue in spring 2021*).

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