

**Centre for International Relations, Warsaw
in cooperation with Klub Weimarski, Warsaw**

THE WEIMAR TRIANGLE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Report of the seminar

The summit of the Weimar Triangle countries, originally planned for Spring 2009, was an opportunity to consider the meaning and objectives of further advanced cooperation between Poland, Germany and France within the European Union. Current themes, which can be approached within this cooperation, were discussed in a round of representatives of government and independent analysts. The President of the Centre for International Relations (CIR) M. Eugeniusz Smolar, declared in the introduction, that Poland is mostly interested in keeping the current structure of the Weimar Triangle, while the partners are either not interested in the development of the structure in a practical sphere (France and Germany), or they have not developed a clear conception or lack the possibilities of taking advantage of the structure in affecting the EU or their own agendas (Poland).

The objective of the first panel: Weimar Triangle in the diplomatic architecture of the European Union, moderated by Prof. Roman Kuźniar from the University of Warsaw, was to regard the Weimar Triangle as one of many existing coalitions of EU members (strategic constellations, partnerships) and their conversion into European policy making.

Dr. Olaf Osica stated that the creation of the Weimar Triangle was in no case intended to award Poland with the status of an equal partner for France and

Germany. It was rather an attempt to build a *quasi* political alliance with the objective to facilitate Poland in becoming a member of NATO and the European Community – a midterm objective, which was accomplished in 2004. The long-term objective, of which the Weimar Triangle was to be the vehicle, was to change the distribution of power regarding the European policy making process. The relative clogging of the Weimar Triangle after 2004 can be explained by the lack of agreement from Germany and France for this change to happen. These States were rather interested in adding Poland to Western structures, than to move the distribution of power within the EU. The second reason of the relative failure of the Weimar Triangle lies in the enlargement of the European Union, which indeed changed the distribution of power, but in another way than expected. The emergence of many small and medium size countries in the EU has degraded the position of France and Germany. Brussels has become a *quasi*-continental forum for doing politics. Nowadays one can observe the influence of the economic crisis on the community factor. The coming or not into effect of the Treaty of Lisbon became a secondary factor.

Dr. Osica suggested that interesting regional cooperation directions for Poland are: the subregion of the Baltic Sea (in cooperation with Germany and Scandinavia) and the South-Eastern subregion (including the Eastern Partnership countries and the Caucasus). France is, however, much more interested in the Southern direction (Union for the Mediterranean). This divergence of interests demonstrates that the structure of the Weimar Triangle has no basis for existing in the present political European geometry.

Prof. Stanisław Parzymies remarked on the multiplicity of structures affecting the decision making process of the EU and underlined that such a “lobbying” is not contradictory to the treaties. The Maastricht Treaty and the Constitution for Europe were for the most part effects of German and French “lobbying”. An interesting cooperation structure underestimated by Poland is OCCAR, *Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en Matière d’Armement*. The Western European Union can be described as a “silent NATO backup”. It is based on the Treaty of Brussels, and concentrates 10 EU Member States. Worth mentioning is an emerging group, which represented the European Union at the Anti Crisis Forum in Washington. It is almost - but not exactly - identical with the European “Four” of the G8. The Council of Europe, where 27 of 47 countries are members in the EU needs also to be mentioned. An

other fact is that the European Commission is a member of the Council of the Baltic States and the Arctic Region of the Barents Sea. Other structures worth reminding are: the Central European Initiative, the European Economic Area, the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation or the Nordic Council. Organisations like the Union for the Mediterranean or the Council of the Baltic States (including Russia) offer non-EU states the possibility to affect decisions in Brussels. Prof. S. Parzymies suggested to bring out a New Weimar Declaration or to establish a Triangle Élysée Treaty. Meanwhile Poland appears to France as a less attractive partner because of the different standpoints regarding the Treaty of Lisbon, Russia or the USA. Prof. Zdzisław Najder, President of the Weimar Club in Warsaw, brought out the thesis that independently of unaccomplished ambitions for the Weimar Triangle; every meeting of the three states is beneficial as a gathering and dialog among three European cultural spheres. The degradation of the Weimar Triangle to a symbolic and ornamental role after 2004 can be explained by its unofficial status. It is useful to recall that the Weimar Triangle is arguably the most elite club among existing structures of cooperation in Europe. Its effectiveness occurs as – using the NATO slang – “confidence building measures”. Poland’s mistake was to add its own postulates without bothering at the same time to put its weight behind strengthening of the European integration. An example of this behaviour was the generally distrusting relationship of Polish media and ruling elites towards the EU. Poland, France and Germany weren’t investing in their mutual image, which resulted in the loss of the traditional French sympathy for Poland. The prime reason of the asymmetry within the Triangle was in the belief of Prof. Z. Najder the fact, that all important issues for Germany and France were reviewed directly between Germany and France. In the future, controversial themes, like for example in the relations between Poland and Germany, should be discussed among all three states, taking advantage of the informality of the structure. An example is the matter of forced resettlements on which the French have their own perspective. An issue for NGO’s is the topic of history schoolbooks. The role of the Weimar Triangle is to simplify and inspire non-governmental contacts and the development of the so called societal aspect of foreign policy. The field of tri-partite cooperation is well arranged on the regional level, but it has not enough publicity.

In the final remarks dr O. Osica stated, that in the projection of the external dimension of the EU the institutional phase is over and the project-based cooperation

has began. It finds expression currently in four forms: Northern Dimension, Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and the Union for the Mediterranean. Prof. S. Parzymies characterized the WT as a useful form of cooperation in order to affect the evolution of the EU. He also pointed at the Eastern Partnership as a direction to cooperate for the three WT members. He added that an attempt to overcome the current stagnation would be a return to the cooperation of the Big-6 concept of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Prof. S. Parzymies appealed for a larger “feedback” between governmental and non-governmental activity through organizing for example informational meetings.

The objective of the second panel: Poland in the Weimar Triangle, presented by Dr Kazimierz Wóycicki from the University of Warsaw and the Center for International Relations, was to identify Polish priorities of acting within the Weimar Triangle. It was primarily about naming the fields of cooperation between Poland, France and Germany. An answer to the following two questions had to be found during the discussion: What can Poland offer to Germany and France and what can Poland expect from both countries? At the end the forms and methods of further cooperation were discussed.

Minister Mikołaj Dowgielewicz, responsible for the EU matters, confirmed the thesis about the lost drive for the Weimar Triangle after 2004. At the same time he remarked, that in the triangular meetings not only the administrative tier is of importance, but also the discussed themes and interests. After Civic Platform came into power in 2007, regular consultations are taking place at the level of Foreign Ministry and Ministry for European Union affairs. In the future it would be of value to arrange meetings between Ministries of other sectors, for example of Finance or Environment, taking into consideration that their competencies exceed the prerogatives of the Foreign Ministry. In the Minister’s view the Weimar Triangle strengthens Poland’s role in the region, for example during the EU climate-energy-packet negotiations. The Weimar Triangle can affect in a similar way the forthcoming negotiations on the CAP, the 2014-2020 budget and the wider acceptance of priorities of the Polish EU presidency in 2011. Likewise is the issue, when we look at Polish aspirations to join the Euro-zone, where the political will is decisive. Minister M. Dowgielewicz has outlined the main aspects of the cooperation during the coming months: **Energy Security** (where the Polish and French views on the so called

Energy Mix are convergent); the so called **Copenhagen Package** (where the Polish and German standpoints are similar); **European Neighbourhood Policy** with their two pillars - Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership (Minister Dowgielewicz warned against potentially dramatic consequences of a partial extracting of the European Neighbourhood Policy – especially the Union for the Mediterranean – from the community competencies); and Afghanistan, where a large field for cooperation exists, for example in the form of a triangular Development Aid program, like the American one.

Dr. Andrzej Ananicz, Director of the Diplomatic Academy noticed, that consultations within the Weimar Triangle would open the possibility to remove awkward topics from the agenda of the European Councils and thus allow time for building a fair-minded coalition in case of a disagreement. Speaking about the European Neighbourhood Policy, it is useful to distinguish the European Neighbourhood and the Neighbours of Europe (for example Algeria, which has no membership perspectives). Dr Ananicz recalled that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence are participating in staff exchange programs with Germany and France. In the case of Germany and France, the exchange is so advanced that for example a German diplomat may be a Director at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Ananicz pointed at education as the priority field for the Weimar Triangle

Alexander Smolar, President of the Stefan Batory Foundation recalled that the post World War II European construction was built on three fundamentals: the fear of Russia, the cooperation with the USA and taking advantage of defeated Germany. The actual institutional crisis in the EU can be explained with the re-nationalization of the policy in Germany, which is becoming a “normal country” articulating and defending its interests. With that change the regulative and integration element in the EU is disappearing. In this context one can risk comparing Germany with the USA during the presidency of George W. Bush, who rapidly nationalized the US policy. President A. Smolar suggested looking at the WT as a meeting of two different Europes and three concepts of European integration, in opposition to the vision of a dialog of three cultures offered by Prof. Najder. To act effectively within the Weimar Triangle Poland has to develop a “European instinct” in its initiatives put forward to the European partners. One topic for discussion within the Weimar Triangle could be the liberalization of the European energy market and the nuclear energy, which is

acceptable for France and Poland, but not for Germany, which at least partially would solve the problem with energy assertive Russia.

In the final remarks and connecting with the idea of an extended Weimar Triangle, Minister M. Dowgielewicz reminded that Polish government is conducting advanced consultations with Spain and Italy and intends to start them with Romania. He declared, that strengthening of groups, in essence competing with the Weimar Triangle, like the G4 (European "Four" within the G8), is potentially harmful for Polish interests. The added value of the Weimar Triangle lies in reducing the tension in the EU resulting from decisions of the Franco-German tandem. He also diagnosed an unsatisfactory involvement of Poland in the European arms industry. Dr. K. Wóycicki reminded attendees of the words of the late Foreign Minister Stefan Meller, who saw the sense of Weimar Triangle in the cooperation with Eastern Europe. Inspired by NATO Summits, President E. Smolar proposed to organize Weimar Triangle Summits concurrently with NGO Summits, where problems at stake would be discussed, solutions suggested and the leaders of Poland, Germany and France invited to attend.

Translation: Piotr Tomczyk and Andrzej Lisiecki-Żurowski, Secretary of the Weimar Club