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Research outline

The Polish policy towards Germany in the era Lech Wałęsa 1990-1995. Politics of continuity or of change?

The dissolution of the Eastern Bloc, the eastward enlargement of both the EU and NATO as well as the respective transition of Central and Eastern European states towards democratic, free-market economies had an essential influence on the the development and acceleration of German-Polish relations. The thesis centers around the political relations between Poland and Germany during the period from 1990 to 1995 under the presidency of Lech Wałęsa. The subject matter owes its significance to the simultaneous transformation processes within Poland and Europe during this period. This analysis of Poland's policy towards Germany during the presidency of Lech Wałęsa uses a primarily empirical-analytical mode of research. The focus of the study is on the constellation of the relevant politicians' decision-makers, the relevant structure of interests and structure of power at that period of time as well as the new concept of values, their effects and dynamics. This empirical-analytical analysis relies on the evaluation of available archived materials but also includes interviews and first hand accounts of contemporary witnesses. Two central aspects of the study, which is a part of a dissertation project, are the Polish foreign and security policies and the country's policies towards Europe and the Polish-German relations since the end of the East-West Conflict. The period which the study is focused on, is relevant for Poland's policies towards Germany as well as for the German-Polish relationship in two different ways:

Firstly, the focus on the era Wałęsa is important because its effects in shaping the new democratic system in Poland and its influence on the Polish foreign politics before, during and after the change is considerable. As the former chairman of Solidarność, fighting for democratic values and human rights, Wałęsa became the first democratically elected post-communist president of Poland – at a time of significant change within the European structure. The contribution of Lech Wałęsa with regard to these changes should not be underestimated and requires unbiased critical and scientific reflection.

Secondly, the period between 1990 and 1995 is very important for the reorganisation and reorientation of the Polish foreign and security policy as well as for the Polish relations with Europe, the European Union and NATO. The widening and deepening of the Polish-German relationship played a decisive role in changing the political, economical and social structures of Poland. Further, the Polish policy towards Germany was instrumentalized for the membership in the EU and NATO, especially after the political change of 1989/1990.

But this new cooperation did not only mean cooperation on a political level but also cooperation of parties, labour unions and other non-political organisations which had a major influence on the political, social and economic reorganization of Poland. These relations were essential for Poland's "return" towards Europe. Thus the cooperation with Germany can be considered as the central task of the Polish policy of this period.

This study pursues three objectives:

1. The *empirical - analytical* objective as the first part of the research sets the following priorities:
 - a) A differentiated fact- and source-orientated description of the beginning, the development and progress and the consequences of the Polish policies towards Germany in the focused period,
 - b) analysis of the structures and dynamics of the internal, external and regional conditions as well as their effects on those policies,
 - c) analysis of the process of decision-making including the criteria and pattern used and the role of Lech Wałęsa within that process.
2. The *conceptual* objective puts the focus on the following aspects:
 - a) The conceptual, strategic and tactical integration of the Polish policies towards Germany into the Polish foreign and security policies in general, and in particular into the Polish policies towards the EU and the efforts to become a member of the EU and NATO,
 - b) the importance of the Polish policies towards Germany regarding the concepts, strategy and tactics of the political and social-economic transformation of Poland,
 - c) and - as basis for that - the understanding of the Polish leadership regarding legitimation and stabilisation of power as well as the consolidation of the external and internal acceptance of the new political order and its political “dynamic” towards Western Europe and Germany.
3. The *theoretical - systematic* objective focuses on the following questions:
 - a) Are actor-orientated, decision-process-orientated as well as condition-related approaches able to explain the Polish policy towards Germany and where are their methodological and conceptual limitations?
 - b) How can the relations between the political actor Lech Wałęsa on one hand and the political structures of Poland, the relationship to Germany and the regional and international surroundings at that time on the other hand be analysed?
 - c) What are the influences of history, of political values and of political, economical and social interests on the formation of Poland’s new policy towards Germany and how did they work together?

Considering the historical context and Poland’s policy towards Germany during the period of socialism, it is possible to focus on how the new guidelines of Poland’s policy dealt with the new political challenges at that time. It has to be clarified, how these changes influenced the official foreign policy towards Germany, the EU and NATO. The whole dynamic of that policy is related to a specific behavioural pattern and its development which helps to better understand the current policy towards Germany as well as its future perspectives. General questions for this study are:

- a) Which aspects of the Polish policy towards Germany can be regarded as *continuity*, which as *change*?
- b) What is the relationship between continuity and change specifically?
- c) How influential are the changes of Poland’s policy towards Germany within a changing European structure and what brought about these changes?
- d) Was the policy more continuous at that time or were there serious changes in specific political issues of Poland’s policy towards Germany? What are the results in comparison with Poland’s policy towards Germany during the socialist period?
- e) Finally, what are the future perspectives for continuity versus change in Poland’s relations towards Germany?