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CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS: CONTROVERSIES OF GEOPOLITICS AND CULTURE

Abstract

The threat that Central Europe faces nowadays is connected with two sets of causes. The first cause is Russian politics that attempts to establish a new position on a global level. And the second is the crisis within the Union, which has mainly affected Central European countries, their youngest members that still bear the post-communist burden. The paper focuses on geostrategic, ideological and cultural aspects regarding the abovementioned complex threat.

Keywords: Central Europe, crisis, geostrategy, ideology, cultural studies

Introduction

Numerous definitions of the term Central Europe, the phenomenon of not being able to determine its borders, historical paradoxes and its meandering essence only emphasise the circumstances in which Central Europe, as a cultural and geopolitical unit, was hit by internal crisis, but at the same time it faces the crisis in the rest of the world.[1] The crisis is connected to the exhaustion of its literary representation after the Revolutions in 1989, a growing distance between the myths, ideas and symbolic representations of Central Europe and its political circumstances and finally, its passive attitude towards real external dangers.

Various criteria and attitudes, as well as different geopolitical arguments have resulted in a vast variety of the names for this region.[2] Multiple meanings of Central Europe include a great number of terms that are not necessarily specialised: Central Europe, Mitteleuropa,

[1] Compare M. Dobraczyński, J. Stefanowicz, Tożsamość Europy. Warszawa 1979; Europa i co z tego wynika. Red. K. Michalski. Warszawa 1990; Europa państw - Europa narodów. Problemy etniczne Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Under. G. Babińskiego and W. Miodunki. Kraków 1995; K. Pomian, Europa i jej narody. Warszawa 1992.

[2] Compare A. Podraza, Europa Środkowa. Zakres przestrzenny i historia regionu. "Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej PAU", I, 1993, p. 23. I. Paska, Morfologija Srednje Evrope, Nr 0:2000. Nowy Sad, p. 1-34 (online version: www.cmk.org.yu/linkovi/habitus/o/Paska0.pdf). p. 7.

Central-European pool, Danube region, Donauraum, Europe Central, East Central Europe, Zwischeneuropa, Grossmitteleuropa, d'Europe Centrale.[3] It seems that the abundance of the terms expresses the inability of the scientists to use a unified method for describing various aspects of Central Europe: geographical, historical, sociological, political, economic, cultural and aesthetic.[4]

The specificities of Central Europe

The specificities of Central Europe, characterised by its geographical, historical, economic and cultural position between West and East Europe as the richest part of the continent considering the linguistic, ethnic and religious aspect, are based on the fact that for centuries it has been, unlike West Europe, under the influence of German, Russian and even Ottoman Empire expansion. The territory between Moscow, Berlin, Thessaloniki and Istanbul is inhabited by over 100 million people and for centuries it has been a crossroads of the influences of western Christianity, Orthodox Church and Islam. It represents an unbelievable accumulation of national cultures, traditions and languages, generating great capital that has considerably enriched Europe's cultural heritage.

However, none of the empires have ever been able to permanently conquer this region. The Republic of Poland stretched over Zaporožje, Turkey across the Danube, Russia up to Warsaw, Berlin to Königsberg and Vienna to Sarajevo, but none of the super powers have ever ruled over Central Europe. They all strived for hegemony in Central Europe, but each of them was defeated in 1918.

The aim of this paper is to emphasise a distinctive character of Central Europe which is the result of antagonistic circumstances of historical, ethnical, geographical, and above all, political factors that are also reflected in literature creating its cultural representation. The authors are also interested in Central European identity, nowadays threatened by political mayhem and subjected to geostrategic doctrines.

The transformation of Central European idea: from historical turmoil and geopolitics to culture

Oskar Halecki emphasises that the term Central Europe refers to the relative feature of arbitrary and dual division of Europe. This "third part of Europe is considered with regard to or before its two main parts: West and East".[5] Central Europe is – says Miloš Havelka – an empirical, geostrategic and a political problem.[6]

Travniček lists four phases of transformation in Central European taking into account its geopolitical and cultural relation. The introductory phase (from Middle Ages to 1789), the initial phase (1789 – 1918), the "long" 19th century, the real phase (1918 – 1989) and the "short" 20th century, i.e. post-phase (after 1989).

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[3] I. Paska, Morfologija Srednje Evrope, passim.

[4] M. Foucher talks about "Central Europe that cannot be found" (*l'introuvable Europe du Central*), "imaginary" and "invented" Europe (Konarád), Central Europe that is a symbol of "destiny", whose borders are "imaginary" (Kundera), "unspecified, elusive, ephemeral, whose contours change depending on the goals" (Foucher) or even its "ghostly, foggy" essence (Szűcs), "empty" and "debatable" term (Foucher). Geographers of the 19th and 20th centuries emphasised the complexity and ontological contradiction of Central Europe. Himley and Kretschmer talk about "indefinite individuality" and "transition" region, Kjellén even uses "critical area", de Martonne mentions "contrast" and cultural, historical and political "contradictions", while Penck emphasises problems in determining borders.

[5] Oskar Halecki, Historia Europy - jej granice i podziały. Lublin 2000, p. 121.

[6] Miloš Havelka, Střední Evropa: konstrukce – iluze – realita. "Svět literatury" 17, 2007, no. 36, p. 200-201.

The introductory phase (Czech prefáze) is a period of geopolitical influence of German culture and civilisation. This is the time of Christianisation, German chivalry, wars against pagan "barbarians", German colonisation, development of cities, trade and later on Drang nach Osten. During that period Central Europe did not manage to establish a strong unified political unit which could foster the process of European development. The rule of king Vaclav I (1278 – 1305) was the last chance to create a nation of Polish and Czech people. Jirži Podjebradski (1458 – 1471) did not manage to create a secure zone, and the Jagiellonian dynasty's attempts to establish a stable Central European country failed.[7]

The initial phase (Czech protofáze) was a period of polarization between German (Prussian) and Austrian (Habsburg) idea of Central Europe. Central European concepts originated in the 19th century. "In the 19th century the ideal of Central Europe was supported by political argumentation".[8] Napoleon's downfall connected three conservative monarchies: Austria, Prussia and Russia. Metternich reflected on the idea of Central Europe pragmatically, he perceived it as a stable element of European security and order, ruled by a firm hand in order to preserve its autonomy between West and East. As a monarchist, conservative, legitimist and an opponent of nationalism, he submitted the entire Central Europe's politics to the dominance of Vienna. He did not support the idea of Greater Germany which he intended to neutralise by defensive Central European politics. Metternich, a pure pragmatist and realist, treated Central Europe, perceived as unity in variety, as a wall against dangers from East and West. Herder's idea of "happy collective" was replaced by a pragmatic idea of fortification.[9] The supporters of Austro-Slavism did not reduce the significance of Germanic influences in Central Europe.

The abovementioned categorisation does not contain the second remarkably essential question, namely, German concept and German contribution to the development of the idea of Central Europe in the two phases, initial and real. German interest in Central Europe was of secondary importance with regard to geopolitical and imperialistic aspirations of the Republic. Above all, German Mitteleuropa referred to Germany and Austria, but was expanded with time to territories from the Rhine to the Vistula and from the Baltic Sea to the Balkans.

The genesis of the German concept of Mitteleuropa has been in the focus of numerous in-depth and competent studies so this paper will refer only to a few crucial issues.[10] The predecessors of Mitteleuropa were renowned German geographers, whereas in Poland it was of interest mainly to historians and political scientists. [11]

One of the first forerunners of the term Mitteleuropa was a German geographer Joseph Partsch (1851 – 1925). In 1904 he published an extensive paper Mitteleuropa that deals with issues in regions between West Atlantic Europe to continental Russia as well as the four seas: the Baltic, North, Black and Adriatic Sea.[12] The author concluded that there existed a separate

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[7] Travniček, p. 246.
[8] Emil Brix, The Future of the Central Europe, [in:] Central Europe. A New Dimension of Heritage. Red. Jacek Purchla. Kraków 2003, p. 17.
[9] Compare Rainer Schmidt, *Die Wiedergeburt der Mitte Europas*. Berlin 2001, p. 45.
[10] Compare P. Eberhardt, *Geneza niemieckiej koncepcji "Mitteleuropy", "Przegląd Geograficzny*", 2005, 77, 4, p. 463-483. Also extensive list of references.
[11] P. Eberhardt, *Geneza...*, p. 464.
[12] Before Partsch's book, Piter Eberhardt notices that many German researchers studied Central Europe as a separate region where Germany was supposed to establish complete dominance. We should also mention F. List (1789 – 1864), a predecessor of German geopolitics, who postulated the creation of German-Hungarian union as a Central European core. This was supposed to be the first step in conquering the Balkans. Similar views were presented by P. de Lagarde (1827 – 1891) who perceived the Central Europe's conquests as a foundation for establishing the German empire. C. Frantz (1817 – 1891) conveyed similar views to Partsch, although not as

European geographic region which was physically and culturally different with the dominance of German elements. The integration of this region was a historical necessity.[13] The leading foreign geopoliticians like F. Ratzel and A. Kirchoff were also well familiar with the issue of Central Europe. Ratzel perceived Mitteleuropa as a region between the Alps and the North and the Baltic Sea spreading to the Black Sea. The rivers Rhine and Danube were supposed to be the axes of this area. [14] Before World War I and the period of tension on the Balkans R. Tannenberg created his maximalist concept in which a vast part of the European continent was within the borders of Greater Germany and Habsburg Monarchy.[15] The beginning of the real phase (Czech vlastní fáze) coincides with the popularity of Fridrich Naumann's concept, published during World War I (1915), when German army achieved considerable success in eastern battlefields. Naumann's study, with the same title as Partsch's (Mitteleuropa) played a significant role in scientific and publicistic discourse, but later on it also influenced German aspirations towards their east neighbours. Despite author's endeavours, this concept was a source of inspiration for German nationalistic movement that strived to conquer Central Europe and afterwards the eastern part of the European continent. Naumann believed that, taking into account the West, Belgium and the Netherlands belonged to Mitteleuropa and in south-east all Balkan countries up to Tsargrad. When it comes to countries that officially belonged to Russia, including Poland, his plans were more moderate and had a few versions, but he was also a supporter of independent Poland.[16]

The system after the Treaty of Versailles and the establishment of Soviet Russia brought about a new geopolitical order east and south of Germany. The establishment of independent Poland, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and a great number of new states created conditions for the birth of new ideas on integration, among others also the Polish idea of Intermarium.

The post-phase is the fourth part of Travniček's transformation of Central Europe regarding its geopolitical and cultural relations with the surroundings and it begins with the Revolutions in 1989.

Central Europe as an alternative to Russia and the West

The greatest success of conceptualisation of Central Europe idea was the transfer of its semantic meaning from the field of geography and geopolitics into culture. This was achieved in a remarkable way by Milan Kundera and his famous essay A Kidnapped West or Tragedy of Central Europe.[17] The cultural importance of Europe had also been shaped earlier by writers, thinkers and artists: Kafka, Freud, Wittgenstein, Popper, Cioran, Hayek, Mahler, Chagall, and Ionesco. In the 20th century the inhabitants of Central Europe greatly influenced all creative activities from art to economy, religion and psychology.

After World War II one of the essential themes in Polish literature is a specific Polish view of Central Europe. The first phase of Polish reflection on Central Europe begins

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nationalistic. He was the supporter of Central European confederation and independence of Poland. Ethnic criteria were considered to a greater extent by H. Wagner (1840 – 1929). P. Eberhardt, p. 464.

[13] P. Eberhardt, *Geneza*, p. 465.

[14] Compare Eberhardt, *Geneza*, p. 466.

[15] R. Tannenberg predicted a complete victory of Russia, and France distancing from the Rhine. Greater Germany, besides Germany, included Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands, East France, the entire Belarus and Baltic states as well as Vienna, Prague, Bratislava and Zagreb. The entire Balkan region was within the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (without Greece) and Ukraine up to the Sea of Azov. Compare P. Eberhardt, *Geneza*, p. 467–468.

[16] Compare P. Eberhardt, *Geneza*, p. 471-472.

[17] M. Kundera, Zachód porwany albo tragedia Europy Środkowej. "Zeszyty Literackie" 1984, no. 5, p. 14-30.

with a classic text by Milan Kundera defining the specificities of that region with regard to Russia and its affiliation to the West. The second phase of Polish reflection on Central Europe started at the beginning of 1990s with the attempts to redefine Central Europe and establish it as an alternative to Russia and the West. Polish national universe, especially in literature of the 90s, is often shown as a component of a heterogeneous structure. The writers of the 90s like Paweł Huelle, Stefan Chwin, Andrzej Stasiuk, Olga Tokarczuk, the authors from diaspora – Janusz Rudnicki or Piotr Siemion, as well as Jacek Kaczmarski describe their own origins and the world that has ethnic roots in more or less bordering cultures or even the global culture. Polish national discourse from the transition period is still bound with the traditional idea of supranational union such as a historic Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. This was the source of a new wave of nostalgic regional literature, border prose and the interest in the exotic. The travel into Central Europe, expanded with the regions east of the Bug and Neman rivers as a world of emigrant reminiscence, had already appeared in memoirs by Czesław Miłosz (Native Realm), Jerzi Stempowski (Essays for Kasandra), etc. This existential, mental, family, patriotic and nostalgic journey is linked with the idea of creating a European identity after Yalta. It encompasses the concept of democratic-federative Central Europe as a region of united Europe. After 1990 Polish literature of "little homelands" remained in the circle of postmodernist inspirations, but it also tried to stand up to them by inspiring readers to reflect on the awareness of Polish culture. The sources of this prose lie in the literature of eastern border regions, migration novels and political-literary discussions of the first phase. This was the period when Kundera's essay, in Polish emigrant and soon afterwards official magazines, sparked a debate on belonging and links to culture and history of Central Europe. In Polish view, it is more a Central-East Europe, which reflects an enormous influence of the tradition of eastern border regions. This indicates that the focus of such prose is on the east vector. In this very broad Polish view, Central-East Europe is not one united region. It is divided into constituents that rarely function as a whole. Polish writers also perceive Podolia, Galicia, Bukovina, border regions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and even the area around Vilnius as parts of Central Europe. Nowadays they also turn to Germany, introducing besides the east vector a new direction of literary searches and explorations. Polish narratives that mythologise Central Europe by including expanded territories east of the Bug and Neman, create the myths of borders, myths of "private homeland", and versions of idea of "my Europe". These myths directed at "Yalta occupied terrain" are aimed at surpassing Soviet dominance in that part of Europe. Fictional Central European federation was supposed to play the role of the former "Habsburg bulwark", i.e. on the one hand, to prevent the unification of Europe under German patronage, and on the other, to stop Soviet imperialism.

The western vector, linked to Polish-German border territory, was initiated by Günter Grass whose The Tin Drum aroused interest in previously cursed Polish-German border region. The works of Paweł Huelle, Stefan Chwin, Artur Liskowacki, Jerzy Sosnowski, Roman Reda-Praszyński, Piotr Siemion, Szczepan Twardoch focus on literary explorations of the essence of "homelands" that had previously been forbidden or undervalued – the "Germanness" and "Polishness" of Gdansk, Szczecin, Wroclaw, Kołobrzeg, generally of Pomerania and Lower Silesia, the regions that had been ignored in literature before. These authors initiated the search for identity far away from the centre of culture, in the sphere of their own personal experience and in the history of local events.

The two concepts of Central Europe, Polish and Czech, differ a lot. Polish tradition of reflection on Central Europe is characterised by the interest in Central-East Europe and the expansion of this macro region, due to Polish historical events, into countries that were in the zone of Polish cultural and historical influence. The controversy over Polish and Czech tradition of Central Europe is actually a dispute over the territory and the centre of this

geocultural region, its function and subjects. The Czech tradition positions the Czech Republic not only in the centre of Central Europe, but perceives the Czech Republic and its culture as a Central Europe's predecessor and compass, since Czech culture is linked to the core and origin of Central European self-awareness. The Polish tradition of Central Europe differs from the Czech due to the east vector directed at Galicia as a "soul" of Central Europe, since Galicia is at the same time the source of Habsburg and Central European myth which creates an ideal version of this region – a man from border regions – an archetypal citizen of Central Europe. The two subjects of Central European motto "maximum variety in minimal space" stand one opposite the other: a "Czech little man" and Polish "man from borders of neighbouring cultures".

After the triumph of the Revolutions in 1989, the ideas of cultural identity only increased the distance between political representations of Central European identity. The third phase of literary myths of Central Europe in Polish literature (from the end of 90s to the beginning of the 21st century and today) mark a meta discourse in that region. The literature is dominated by critical reflection, the awareness of the size of the project and differentiated traditions representing various narratives of Central Europe. One of the dominant features is the significance of the Habsburg myth which expresses the coexistence of nations, religions and cultures and exposes the idea of Habsburg bulwark. In the third phase Polish literature abandons the fascination by Vilnius and Lviv as "stolen Arcadias" in which Polish culture had been exterminated and the attention of the writers takes a different direction – the South (southern vector).

Andrzej Stasiuk in his novel Babadag presents a postmodern vision of Central Europe by setting the narrative between high, middle and low genres; essay, report, diary, philosophical, poetical and trivial style. The motifs of the Habsburgs in his prose do not identify the state with history but with culture: fiction, parody, vagueness, self-parody, the ephemeral, the marginalisation of history, exposure of Austrian decadence. Stasiuk's Central Europe moves, at the expense of Mediterranean myth, towards the Black Sea and Danube. The Habsburg myth is a core, but it does not completely fulfil the content of Central Europe by connecting that category with Danube civilization.

Hence the Revolutions in 1989 were not the end of literary mythological strategies whose subject is an inhabitant of Central European countries. The hero of Central Europe, after the overturn in 1989, faces new challenges and must cope with the pressure of modern times and the burden of history, with traumatic events, changes, disintegration of old and establishment of new socio-political systems, nomadic existence and new forms of life. Modern processes taking place in that region, whose identity is submitted to actualisation and re-evaluation, deprive the hero of a stable, ready-made form in which he could inscribe his existence, his biography. He is nowhere at home. The topos of Atlantis is replaced by the topos of Prometheus, a character of a secular pilgrim, vagrant, gambler, wanderer, tourist, drifter. The literature of Central Europe still has not managed to react to a hybrid war in the east of Ukraine.

Andrzej Stasiuk and Jurij Andruchowycz are the authors of almost programmatic essays Moja Europa. Dwa eseje o Europie zwanej Środkową (My Europe. Two essays on Europe called Central 2000) for a generation of Polish and Ukraine writers of the 90s. Their representations of history are, of course, different, but not conflicting. The on-going Polish-Ukraine literary dialogue has abandoned the vicious circle of memories, idealisation and historical reminiscence. Jurij Andruchowycz describes the contents of the Habsburg myth in a different way. He observes the link with the West, and that is Greece, perceives it as the element of eastern culture in the culture of the West. The author believes that Ukraine needs Central Europe because it links the country with Western Europe. Belarus writer Ihor Babkou

attempts to incorporate the idea of Central Europe into the postmodern vision of the world in which periphery plays an important role. Unlike Kundera, who tried to prove that Central Europe belongs to the centre of European civilisation, Babkou, even in term concepts, uses the word Central-East Europe which is in literary discourse, unlike in geopolitical and political sciences discourse, burdened by negative connotations. According to him, Central Europe is a different Europe, the one which has been in the shadows of western European modernity, Europe which does not exist in common European cultural heritage – Europe of missed chances, forgotten heritage and unrealised ideas.

Central Europe from a condominium to a cordon sanitaire

We live in the world in which order and security have until recently been guaranteed by the EU but now they slide into oblivion. The EU is facing the most serious crisis which is destroying its unity and the politics of Putin's Russia strive to create a rift in Europe's strategic alliance with the USA. When Central-East European countries joined the EU, the EU relations with Russian Federation deteriorated and a long-term crisis began. The abandonment of the principle of nuclear "balance of fear" and a complicated concept of the "zone of influence and interest", which is not obeyed by the countries which gained independence after the Revolutions in 1989, also ignored by the Union and NATO, replaced the quantity of growing problems with quality and none of the sides in conflict have clear and concrete strategic aims which could be brought closer in a negotiation. It is also significant that none of the sides have a vision of Russia's role in the processes of European integration.[18] Neither Moscow nor Brussels are able to clearly define common values and interests.[19]

A famous Putin's speech at a Munich Security Conference in February 2007 announced what was later to become a consequence of bloody Kiev's Maidan (2014). A hybrid war in the east of Ukraine proves that Russia is ready to use force in order to pursue its interests and it can use force to change the borders in its immediate surroundings. Moreover, it is capable of playing games on the verge of provocation and serious international conflicts.[20] After a decade and a half of politics of coexistence, Putin's Russia opted for confrontation with the EU instead of integration. [21]

In today's politics Central Europe is identified with the countries of the Visegrad Group[22], but this is the stagnation after the period in which all the countries from the Group struggled to become NATO members, and later on, through rivalry, strived to join the EU. Today, Central Europe faces a difficult dilemma since it should, by overcoming dualism of two Central Europes (in Halecki's sense), support the participation of Germany and Ukraine. The problem is that, from the view of Polish national interests, German participation in any Central European project can cause marginalisation of Poland, whereas Ukraine's participation, at least from today's perspective, seems unrealistic. Still, Central Europe with

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[18] N. K. Arbatowa, W. A. Ryzkow, Rossija i JeS: sblizenije na fonie razrywa? "Rossija w globalnoj politikie" styczeń-luty 2005, no. 1.

[19] Otnoszenija Rossii i Jewropejskokogo Sojuza: sawriemniejnnaja situacija i pierspektiwy (situacionnyj analiz pod rukowodstwom S.A. Karaganowa). Moscow 2005.

[20] S. Bieleń, Tożswamość europejska Rosji – związki i róznice cywilizacyjno-kulturowe, [in:] Stos Rosji z Unia Europejską, p. 26. See also S. Bieleń, *Deficyt realizmu w polskiej polityce zagranicznej*. "Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations" 2008, t. 38, no. 3-4.

[21] S. Bieleń, ibid, p. 27.

[22] Central Europe did not manage to transfer its identity from a cultural sphere into political and economic institutions. The Visegrad Group was established in 1991 (V3) and since 1993, after the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, the Group was expanded (V4). It should be noted that after 1989 The Visegrad Group was the first definition of Central European countries, and it referred to post-communist countries.

Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, possibly Romania, Bulgaria or Baltic and Balkan countries, will not have relevant political, economic and demographic significance.

The common memory and success of countries of ex-Eastern bloc, which was the result of a successful transformation, have not so far brought about a political union of Central and East European countries which could efficiently articulate common interests regarding energy policies in the EU. The political present of Central and East Europe is determined by political tendencies which put to test poor regional connections affected by oil and gas.

There are numerous factors that pose a threat to Central Europe's existence, first of all, there are some which originate in its weakness as an autonomous subject in international politics, in its economic-resource dependence as well as its periphery statues understood as "no one's country". Many authors have dealt with the connections between politics and energy resources export. They refer to Putin's politics as a knot of co-dependence of geoeconomy and geopolitics.[23]

Ivan N. Tarasov from Social-Economics State University in Saratov, in his article published in magazine "Полис. Политические исследования", states that "objectively a military conflict between Russia and those countries [Central and East Europe] is hindered by the fact that these countries are members of the EU and NATO.[24]

This article presents not only the author's views but also the attitudes of relevant political circles. The article classifies Central European countries into five categories with regard to the nature of their relations with Russia. The Russian Federation politics to Central Europe is characterised by colonial segregation, as an area affected by epidemics, which is evident in the implementation of the system of gradual privileged "passes".

The first group of countries with the most optimal "passes" is made of so-called Trojan horses of Russia in the EU, Greece and Cyprus. The next group are Russian "strategic partners", France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The third group are so-called well-meaning pragmatists, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Luxemburg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, Portugal and Hungary. The fourth group are "cold pragmatists", Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Great Britain. Finally, the fifth group – "new cold war warriors" sentenced to a certain quarantine – Lithuania and Poland that suspect, as the authors of reports write, that Russia is fighting a cold war against the EU.[25] It should also be emphasised that besides the first two groups, Central European countries are in all three other groups. Calling two countries "cold war warriors" means, according to the author, that these countries are the only EU members that have attempted to oppose cold war politics.[26]

On March 19 2004 at an international conference in Bratislava, the deputy Minister of Russian Foreign Affairs Vladimir Čižov warned the EU not to create "cordon sanitaire" of countries subordinate to the EU along Russian borders.[27] He repeated these accusations in a bit milder form in October of the same year, expressing hope that the EU will not interfere with the integration processes in CIS, but it will use them for improving relations with its east neighbours. [28] A month later he advocated the continuation of integration process in the EU

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[23] Czadajew A., Putin: jego idieologia. Moskwa 2006 oraz A. Tsygankov, Vladimir Putin's Vision of Russia as a Normal Great Power. "PostSoviet Affairs" 2005, no. 2, p. 138.
[24] I. N. Tarasow, Politiko-ekonomiczeskaja asimmietrija w otnoszenijach Rossiji so stranami Centralno-Wostocznoj Jewropy, "Polistr. Politiczeskije issliedowanija" 2008, no. 2, p. 138.
[25] M. Leonard, N. Popescu, A power Audit of EU-Russia Relations, The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 07 November, 2007, p. 2.
[26] S. Parzynies, Wpływ państw członkowskich UE z Europy Środkowej na kształt stosunków, [in:] Stosunki Rosji z Unią Euro, p. 279.
[27] See: www.mid.ru, for: *Rocznik Strategiczny 2004/2005. Przegląd…,* p. 216.
[28] See: "Mieżdunarodnja Żizń" 2004, no. 9, for: *Rocznik Strategiczny 2004/2005. Przegląd…,* p. 216.

and CIS and their future harmonisation and synchronisation as well as establishing better connections between the EU and CIS. His argument was that both processes complement each other, and in establishing a united region of CIS the standards and norms of the EU are being implemented.[29] This indicated that Russia had clearly outlined its specific vision of European integrations. It was supposed to be created on two pillars: the EU in the Western part and structure of CIS, especially in Common Economic Space in the East. In that way Russian strategic control would be preserved in the eastern parts of the continent.[30]

The year 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the establishing of this organisation. Yet, it is facing a serious crisis and it keeps postponing the signing of executive agreements within Common Economic Space and Eurasian Economic Union[31], even though Kremlin has been intensifying verbal declarations on the foundations of Eurasian Union. Central Europe in the context of global politics of super powers looks like a small centre and a possible entrance hall for super powers' conflicts because the return of plans of anti-missile shield (in Poland and Czech Republic) is faced with the danger of Russian nuclear attacks on Warsaw and Poland.[32]

From the Triangle of Three Seas to the Triangle of Austerlitz

The idea of Intermarium was shaped between the two wars as resistance to growing German influence from the West and Russian from the East. It was a plan pursued by Pilsudski and his supporters and also close to national programmes, which was crucial for its weakness. Intermarium was supposed to be a federation of countries in ABB triangle (the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Sea). This concept was advocated by Roman Dmowski. The utopia of Intermarium failed when confronted with internal ethnic conflicts of this hypothetical community. Polish-Ukraine, Serbo-Croatian and Hungarian-Romanian conflicts made it impossible to put up resistance to super powers (Turkey, Russia, Prussia).

The idea of Intermarium was reactivated a few times after World War II in the circles of right, national and Christian movements. After gaining independence in 1989 the Leszek Moczulski's Confederation of Independent Poland and Jan Parys' Third Republic Movement adopted the idea of Intermarium as their official geopolitical concept. This attitude was upheld by IV Congress of KPN organised in Warsaw in 1992, but this idea was supported by political parties of six countries: Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine by establishing the organisation the League of Parties of Intermarium in Kiev in July 1994. The League's Congresses were held in Yaroslavl (1995), Minsk (1996) and Kiev (1997). This idea was followed by some non-political social initiatives dealing with issues in Central Europe.

The idea of Intermarium was also dominant in other circles of Polish political activities, but this variety was rather a sign of the weakness of its real significance and paradoxical limitations. Janusz Korwin Mikke thought of the Intermarium concept as having the centre in Budapest and Jacek Bartyzel considered Baltic-Hungarian-Slovene Empire with the capital of Lvov. These projects did not have a significant impact because, on the one hand,

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[29] *Wystąpienie W. Czyżowa na konferencji "Wizja Europy*", Berlin, 19 November, 2004, see: www.mid.ru, for: *Rocznik Strategiczny 2004/2005*. *Przegląd*…, p. 216.
[30] See: *Rocznik Strategiczny 2004/2005. Przegląd…,* p. 216.
[31] *Rocznik Strategiczny 2006/2007. Przegląd sytuacji politycznej, gospodarczej i wojskowej w środowisku międzynarodowym Polski*, under. R. Kuźniara, Warszawa 2007, p. 191-192.
[32] *Kosaczow: Tarcza w Polsce może być naszym celem*, mar, PAP, IAR, according to: www.gazeta.pl (retrieved on: 4 February 2008); *Eksperci IISS: Napięcie rośnie z powodu CFE, a nie tarczy antyrakietowej,* rik, PAP, according to: www.gazeta.pl (retrieved on: 5 February 2008); *Putin: Rozpoczyna się nowy wyścig zbrojeń,* mar, PAP, according to: www.gazeta.pl (retrieved on: 8 February 2008*); Putin: Przekierujemy rakiety na Polskę,* mar, PAP, IAR, according to: www.gazeta.pl (retrieved on 8 February 2008).

they represent the aspirations of small, endangered nations and on the other, the national nature of its genesis ensnares them in a web of opposing national interests and presents their limitations. The National Party's programme documents emphasise the necessity of cooperation between Poland and its brotherly nations the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Balkan states. Marian Piłka even suggested a controversial collaboration with Serbia during Slobodan Milošević's regime, which was not at all recorded by any politically correct media.[33]

Nowadays the idea of Intermarium is realised in the Congress of Gniezno and Lech Kaczynski's east politics, promoted as the idea of Prometheus in Polish foreign politics even though his political surroundings talked more about Jagiellonian politics. They were both inspired by Christianity and reveal anti-European character.

The contemporary Congresses of Gniezno are linked to the Congress from the year 1000 which, in short, represented the recognition of Poland's presence in Europe of that time. After that Congress there have been eight such meetings[34] in contemporary times, but only two played an important role in redefining the region of Central Europe.[35]

Before a milestone in 1989 this idea was supported by parties that were not in power, but later the official politics of the Third Republic (1989 – 2004) were characterised by initiatives which clearly reflected Piłsudski's ideas. This was without any doubt fostered by close cooperation of Poland and Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia until July 1991 within the Hexagonale that was supposed to create balance of Germany's growing influence in the region. The Hexagonale was transformed into Central European Initiative in 1992. In addition, Poland collaborated with Hungary and Czechoslovakia within CEFTA, which was also initiated by Poland. Central European Free Trade Agreement was signed on 21 December 1992 and later on more countries from the region joined and spread the organisation from the Baltic and Black Sea to the Adriatic.[36]

According to his supporters of the east politics, Lech Kaczynski was inspired by organisation "Prometheus", established by Piłsudski and his followers, whose task was to form emigrant governments of the states subjugated by the USSR including the Azerbaijani, Ukraine, Georgia and Chechen. In this circle the idea of Prometheus marked a common independent front of leaders and politicians who represent in emigration the nations oppressed by the Russian Empire.[37] Kaczynski believed that the position of Poland in the Union was "marginal" [38] and he redefined the interwar political idea of Prometheism by giving it the dimension of Polish east politics whose crucial elements were relations with Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan, but he also linked it to energy security. A few

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[33] http://archiwum.patriota.pl/197_zapomniane_miedzymorze/. (retrieved on 22 March 2015)

[34] 3 June 1997, 12 March 2000, 15 - 16 March 2003, 12 - 16 March 2004, 16 - 18 September 2005, 15 - 17 June 2007, 12 - 14 March 2010, 16 - 18 March 2012.

[35] Marking the 1000th anniversary of Saint Vojtech [Adalbert of Prague, author's remark] on 3 June 1997 in Gniezno there was a meeting of John Paul II and Presidents of seven European countries: Poland – Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Germany – Roman Herzog, The Czech Republic – Václav Havel, Slovakia – Michal Kovacz, Hungary – Arpad Göncz, Ukraine – Leonid Kučma, Lithuania – Algirdas Brazauskas, and on 12 March 2000 there was a meeting of Presidents of five European countries: Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Poland; Johannes Rau – Germany, Rudolf Schuster – Slovakia, Arpad Göncz – Hungary, Valdas Adamkus – Lithuania. The representatives of the Czech Republic and Ukraine were not present.

[36] http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.pl/trzecia-europa-czyli-idea-mi%C4%99dzymorza. (retrieved on 22 March 2015)

[37] W. Bączkowski, *Prometeizm na tle epoki. Wybrane fragmenty z historii ruchu*. "Niepodległość" 1984, t. XVII, p. 28.

[38] Compare W. Wieczysty, *Idea prometeizmu w polskiej polityce zagranicznej Lecha Kaczyńskiego*. "Arcana", nr 117, maj-czerwiec 2014, p. 214.

summits on energy were organised, the first one in Krakow in 2007 with Presidents of Lithuania, Azerbaijan and Georgia and afterwards in Vilnius, Kiev and Baku.

So far the representation of Intermarium idea has not been subjected to literary reflection since it was overshadowed and sometimes coincided with dominant Central European topos or small homeland's literature. Undoubtedly literary representation of Intermarium idea did not have such a great influence as the idea of Central Europe, but it seems that they also follow different directions. The field of Central Europe idea is literature, and the field of Intermarium idea is history, especially alternative history.

The sources of the idea of Intermarium could be found in works of Stefan Żeromski where it gets the character of an autonomous idea, but is established in Jagiellonian tradition and works of Henryk Sienkiewicz. Jerzy Stempowski in essay Berdyczowski attributes different meaning to the idea of Intermarium.

The consequence of the Battle of Austerlitz, of course only symbolically, can be the establishing of the so called the Slavkov triangle, which is evidently directed both at the idea of Central Europe and Intermarium. On 29 January 2015 in Slavkov (former Austerlitz) the Prime Ministers of three countries, Austria, The Czech Republic and Slovakia signed a declaration on establishing a new platform of cooperation in the field of infrastructure, transport, energy security and cross-border relations. It is important to mention that one of the co-authors of the declaration, Petr Drulak, vice minister of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during bilateral talks with Austria stated that the task of both countries is to improve cooperation with Slovenia and Croatia. Still, present political circumstances exclude Hungary from the declaration, but some analysts believe that Hungary could join later. The political aims of the declaration are also not very clear. It is hard to conceal the attempt to create a pro-Russian platform within the EU, creating local infrastructure, abandoning liberal doctrine in favour of left economic doctrine in the EU. If Polish Intermarium or Jagiellonian politics mark an attempt to re-establish Poland as a European hegemon, isn't the Slavkov triangle, at least from Polish point of view, an attempt to uphold the tradition of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy? Still, if Polish right-wing fantasies do not find politicians who would validate them, the idea of a new Austro-Hungary is verified by the signatures of three Prime Ministers.

Central Europe in the context of Russian geostrategic politics, i.e. in the direction of *political fiction*

The expansion of NATO and the EU in the post-Soviet regions as well as relocation of USA's geostrategic activity in West and South-East Europe, Central Asia and Caucasia regions force Russia to mobilise forces and resources.[39]

In the debate organised by "Gazeta Wyborcza" Sergey Karaganov, with regard to fears of Russian neighbours (Georgia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine) and Russian intentions to them, said: "Russia is not interested and hopefully future Russia will not be interested in your problems; we are fighting for our position in the future world, for the position of a super power.[40] Russia's aim is to strengthen the position of the "independent pole" in the world with multiple poles.[41]

[39] Bieleń, p. 241.
[40] S. Karaganow, *Rosji będziecie się bać*. "Gazeta Wyborcza" z 17 - 18 maja 2008.
[41] S. Bieleń, ibid.

Russian writer and political scientist Aleksandr Dugin[42] in his numerous works drafts the geopolitical future of the world, primarily of the Euro-Asian continent.[43] In these plans, Central-East Europe, i.e. the region between Russia and Atlantic Europe, situated between east part of a small European peninsula between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Sea, has great importance for strategic safety of Russia. Geopolitical separation of that region is the consequence of its double role since it represents the west periphery of the Euro-Asian continent and the guard of the Atlantic world dominated by the naval superpower, the USA. Geopolitical disconnectedness of that region is also increased by cultural differences since the ethnic-religious border between Latin civilisation and countries linked to the Byzantine Empire[44] cultural heritage goes through Central-East Europe.

An important geopolitical factor influencing the situation in Central Europe, according to Dugin, is Germany which is historically determined to have the role of a hegemon in Central Europe. Germany can be Russia's faithful partner, even an ally. It can also be an opponent of imperial Russia due to its military collaboration with Atlantic Organisation. Culturally divided Central-East Europe which comprises numerous states and nations is an important geostrategic factor for Russia that forces Russia to monitor this region in order to secure its imperial interests.[45]

The key task of Russian people is the formation of great continental empire. Dugin supports this extremely nationalistic and imperialistic programme, presented as a doctrine, with historical, geographic, ethnic, religious and political arguments. He relies on classics of geopolitics, especially the representatives of integral traditionalism such as philosophers Julius Evola, Rene Gueron and Mircea Eliade, who formed his points of view. At the same time, his ideas are close to the school of geographic determinism, especially to Friedrich Ratzel.[46] Dugin is also inspired by works of Halford Mackinder, the creator of famous term Heartland ("the heart of the continent"). Heartland, "World Island" is made of three continents – Asia, Europe and Africa. Conquering the "World Island" results in ruling over the whole world because, according to Mackinder, "who rules the heartland, commands the World Island, and who rules the World Island, commands the world". Dugin perceives heartland as s territory of Russian Empire, Soviet Union and Russian Federation.

The most important task is a complete political control of the north part of the Euro-Asian continent, i.e. heartland. This control would make it possible to efficiently stand up to superpowers situated on world oceans. The conflict between land and marine civilisation, i.e. between Euro-Asian Russia and Atlantic world, is inevitable. This requires the disintegration of the union between the USA and West Europe, in other words, of NATO. The second step is weakening and disuniting the EU. This would be an appropriate reaction to events from the

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[42] Out of numerous Dugin's works the monumental "Podstawy geopolityki. Przyszłość geopolityczna Rosji" had the greatest impact. Dugin became the supporter of Euro-Asian idea and the great Euro-Asian Empire. The social-political movement "Eurazja" was formed on his initiative.

[43] In this text we present only some of Dugin's ideas that directly refer to Central Europe. They are discussed in more detail by Piotr Eberhard 2008 and D. Madejski 2009, L. Sykulski 2009a, b). Eberhardt, Geneza niemieckiej koncepcji "Mitteleuropy", "Przegląd Geograficzny" 77, 4, p. 463-484; Eberhardt, Rosyjski euroazjatyzm i jego konsekwencje geopolityczne, "Przegląd Geograficzny" 77, 2, p. 171-191; Eberhardt, Koncepcje geopolityczne Karla Haushofera, "Przegląd Geograficzny" 81, 4, p. 527-549. D. Madejski, Pocałunek mongolskiego księcia. Euroazjatyzm Rosji w mysli Aleksandra Dugina, "Geopolityka", 2, 1 (2), Częstochowa, p. 87-100; L. Sykulski, Rola paradygmatu geopolitycznego w rozwoju neoazjatyzmu we współczesnej Rosji, [in:] T. Nodzyński (red), Miedzy historią, literaturą i polityką, Instytut Geopolityki, Częstochowa 2009.

[44] P. Eberhardt, Koncepcje geopolityczne Aleksandra Dugina. "Przegląd Geograficzny" 2010, 82, p. 222.

[45] P. Eberhardt, p. 222.

[46] Some chapters of Ratzel's works were published in conference proceedings Przestrzeń i polityka. Z dziejów niemieckiej mysli politycznej. Wybór i oprac. A. Wolff-Pawęska, E. Schulz, Poznańska Biblioteka Niemiecka, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2000.

end of the 20th century when the Atlantic bloc managed to destroy the Warsaw Pact and state unity of the USSR. Dugin believes that Russia and "Euro-Atlantic world" are in the ideological and cultural opposition. Rivalry and confrontations of such different philosophies and social attitudes are inevitable and determine the future destiny of the world.[47]

The mission of Russian people is not only to conquer the heartland, but, due to further expansion, to form a great continental super empire. This calls for a creation of system of unions which can neutralise Atlantic power led by the USA. Dugin suggests formation of three axes that would strengthen the strategic position of continental Russian empire. The first axis, positioned in Europe is the Moscow – Berlin route, the second, directed at east is Moscow – Tokyo, and the third, meridian axis, is Moscow – Teheran.[48]

Close and stable cooperation on the Moscow – Berlin route should eliminate direct Atlantic influences from Central Europe outside the Rhine and Alps. Eberhardt concludes that Dugin "greatly overestimates the power of Russia and the possibility of its ruling the world. He is unaware that Russia is at present politically, demographically and economically a weak country and cannot realise plans within continental, let alone global reach.[49]

In his book Fourth political theory published in 2009, a work on Russian-Georgian conflict, intertwined by extreme dogmatism and xenophobia, Dugin states that the West world is hostile to Russia and does not intend to respect its vital geopolitical interests. Dugin predicts new military clashes and believes that it is necessary to create a new philosophical-political idea/theory in Russia that would be an alternative to ideological reality of Euro-Atlantic world. This fourth way, devoted to tradition and theology, should take advantage of achievements of Euro-Asianism, social-bolshevism, collectiveness, egalitarianism, Orthodox dogmatism and principles of sovereignty and ethnicity. Its most important characteristic should be a hostile attitude towards contemporary liberalism, globalism and postmodernism and criticism of societies of West Europe that advocate consumerism deprived of moral norms.[50]

Geopolitical future of Central Europe according to Aleksandr Dugin's concept

Regarding geopolitical consequences of the strategic axis Moscow – Berlin, Dugin pays a lot of attention to the territory between Russia and Germany. Central Europe, including Germany, is perceived as an inland-continental territory, unlike West Atlantic Europe, positioned on the Rhine. Geopolitical capital of the region is Berlin and only Germany has the power to integrate that region. The opposite of inland Germany is Atlantic England as a naval base of the USA. This state will always be Germany's opponent as well as Russian enemy. This is a common condition of the union between Central Europe, i.e. Germany and Asian Empire, namely Russia which at present embodies the doctrine of global hegemony.[51]
The Moscow – Berlin axis should secure the union of inland part of Europe led by Germany and at the same time guarantee German-Russian alliance. Dugin refers to the ideas of German geopoliticians: Ernst Niekisch and Karl Haushofer, the advocates of German-Russian alliance.[52]

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[47] Eberhardt, p. 224.
[48] Eberhardt, p. 225.
[49] Eberhardt, p. 226.
[50] Eberhardt, p. 227.
[51] Eberhardt, p. 228.
[52] The book dedicated to the development of German political thought contains two articles by K. Haushofer published in Polish: *Geograficzne zasady polityki zewnętrzenej oraz Geopolityczne spełnienie trójkąta* (Przestrzeń..., 2000), p. 350-425 and 493-496.

The formation of Moscow – Berlin axis will stimulate "geopolitical reorganisation" of a considerable part of Europe that could be desirable for Atlantic states, primarily the USA as the organiser of various "cordon sanitaires".[53] Therefore it is necessary to form a border between the parts of Central Europe controlled by Germany and Russia that would restrict the dominance of third countries. Such demarcation should prevent religious conflicts and inhibit the expansion of Catholicism and Protestantism in the regions that traditionally belonged to Orthodox Church[54]. Dugin considers the preferences of Slavs from Central-East Europe to be irrelevant, but this region should be organised in such a way that it does not collide with Moscow's interests in the whole Euro-Asian continent.[55]

He refers to the part of Europe between the Rhine in the West and Belarus and Ukraine in the East as "Srednjaja Jevropa", Central Europe. This region is inhabited by "nations of former Austro-Hungarian state and Germany, Prussia and parts of Polish and West-Ukraine territories" (Dugin 1999, p. 220).[56] In the attached map Dugin divides Central Europe by a meridian line that connects north part of Norway with a point on the Adriatic coast near the border between Montenegro and Albania. The territories east of that border belong to the Russian zone (Euro-Asia) and Central Europe in the West is within German zone. The latter also contains three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia). Transylvania (Erdelj), Bukovina and Vojvodina are excluded from Central European region even though they belonged to Austro-Hungary.

In other words, the border drawn by Dugin goes along the religious border. West of the border are Catholic and Protestant nations, i.e. nations connected to Latin culture, and east of it is the region of Orthodox Church linked to Byzantine tradition and heritage, even though Finland should remain next to Russia.

This border between the zone of influence of Russia and Germany, on purpose or accidentally, is linked to a demarcation line established in September 1939 between Ribbentrop and Molotov. The judgement on the reality of this concept should be left to the future, but its provocative character is perceptible. The aim of the political significance of that concept is to receive Germany's affection by promising it territorial compensation in the East. Finally, the zone of German influence includes Poland, three Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and part of Ukraine where Greek Catholic Church and strong Ukraine nationalism dominate. Dugin believes that this will make it easier to integrate other parts of Ukraine with Russia.[57]

Dugin discusses the destinies of a few European countries between Russia and Germany by nonchalantly depriving them of their sovereignty and putting them into hands of Moscow and Berlin governments. Russian geostrategic scientist generously hands the territories over to Germany , with the exception of Kaliningrad region, which have not been under Moscow authority for years and which, except for parts of Belarus and Ukraine, are in

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[53] Dugin 1999, p. 369 according to: Eberhardt, p. 229.

[54] Russian imperial plans aimed at enslaving, submission or neutralisation of Central-East European countries, have been discussed in a few interesting papers in independent Poland: J. Bratkiewicz 1991, A. Andrusiewicz 1994, A. Lazari 1996, S. Grzybowski 1998, A. Nowak 2004 and R. Paradowski 2003 (A. Andrusiewicz, Mit Rosji. Studia z dziejów filozofii rosyjskich elit, t. I, II, Wydawnictwo WSR, Rzeszów 1994; J. Bratkiewicz, Wielkoruski szowinizm w świetle teorii kontynuacji, Instytut Nauk Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1991; S. Grzybowski (red), Miedzy Europą a Azją. Idea Rosji – Eurazji, Uniwersytet im. M. Kopernika, Toruń 1998; A. Nowak, Od imperium do imperium. Spojrzenie na historię Europy Wschodniej, Wydawnictwo Arcana, Kraków 2004; R. Paradowski, Euroazjatyckie imperium Rosji. Studium idei. Wyższa Szkoła Handlu i Finansów Miedzynarodowych, Warszawa 2003; A. Lazari, Czy Moskwa będzie trzecim Rzymem? Studia o nacjonalizmie rosyjskim, Wydawnictwo Śląsk, Katowice 1996).

[55] Eberhardt, p. 230.

[56] Eberhardt, p. 230.

[57] Eberhardt, p. 231-232.

the EU and NATO. We witness how elements of "geopolitical decomposition" of Ukraine in its eastern parts (Donbas and Crimea) become a fact, but we do not know the extent to which Putin realises Dugin's programme. Poland, along with Lithuania and Latvia, will be given a special status under the condition to leave NATO and create a demilitarised zone.

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