



Weekly Briefing

**Poland external relations briefing:
The Polish Prime Minister and President in Washington, the new life
of the Weimar Triangle
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The Polish Prime Minister and President in Washington, the new life of the Weimar Triangle

Summary

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO, Washington DC was visited by Polish President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Tusk at the invitation of US President Joe Biden. The topics of discussion were security and energy. Immediately after the meeting, the Polish Prime Minister convened a Weimar Triangle summit with France and Germany, where support for Ukraine in its war with Russia was discussed. The end of February also saw the long-awaited unfreezing of billions of euros for Poland from the National Recovery Plan by the European Commission. In March, in turn, there was a spat between the Polish government and the Russian ambassador to Poland, who failed to show up for a summons from the Polish Foreign Ministry after a Russian missile crossed Polish airspace.

Introduction

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Poland's presence in the North Atlantic Alliance, a meeting was held in Washington DC between Polish President Andrzej Duda, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk and US President Joe Biden. The Polish leaders also held talks in the US with representatives of the US Congress on continued support for Ukraine.

Defence, Ukraine, energy

- The main purpose of my visit was to confirm unequivocally that America will never hesitate to come to Poland's aid if Poland is ever attacked, that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is unassailable. I wanted to know that the Americans feel obliged, and will always be obliged, to act immediately should we need such help. - said Prime Minister Donald Tusk after his meeting with the US President. - What was impressive was the unity around this table. We had common ground with President Joe Biden and the US side on every point of this conversation, the Prime Minister added. ¹ In turn, President Andrzej Duda said after the meeting that the main topics of discussion were the war in Ukraine, security and Russia. - Russia should

be stopped, contained and punished. - he stressed. The most important outcome of the Polish leaders' visit to Washington was the declaration of the sale of Apache helicopters. The United States announced that it would provide Poland with a 2 billion dollars loan for the purchase of 96 machines. The subject of US military support was also raised.

Andrzej Duda spoke about the results of his meeting with Mike Johnson, speaker of the House of Representatives, on whom the fate of the Ukraine aid bill depends. - We spoke with Mr Johnson, we had a very good conversation. I presented to him in great detail our point of view on the security of our part of Europe, also through the prism of the war in Ukraine and, above all, that Russia must be stopped. Because for us Poles this is the most important thing," said President Duda. As he added, "today it is enough to spend money to give the defenders of Ukraine modern armaments so that they can stop the Russian invasion". "And this needs to be done. And that's what I explained today to the representatives of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and to the Speaker," he added. Andrzej Duda was asked whether the Polish authorities should not "speak up" to the people around Donald Trump and explain to them the importance of support for Ukraine. - We are just getting back to Donald Trump's people. Just today we had conversations with them, with those who are very serious politicians in the Republican Party today and who work and carry out political tasks on a daily basis with the former president and today again the presidential candidate, Donald Trump. We are doing it very calmly and I hope that we will achieve our goals in a wise way, and these goals are first of all the security of the Republic. This is the most important goal as Andrzej Duda said.

In turn, Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced that the Polish government would maintain cooperation with the US also in the area of nuclear energy or technological cooperation. The talks largely concerned a potential American investment in a Polish nuclear power plant. - We also talked about very intensive, increasingly better Polish-American cooperation, including on energy issues. We are after the decision, in terms of three units, of the first nuclear power plant. We are also thinking about continuing cooperation with the Americans in this area," the Polish Prime Minister said in Washington.

Tusk has called a meeting with Scholz and Macron

Following a visit to Washington, a meeting of the leaders of Poland, Germany and France within the Weimar Triangle was held in Berlin on the initiative of Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The main point of discussion was Ukraine's war with Russia. German Chancellor Olaf

Scholz conveyed that the allies would buy more weapons for Ukraine on 'world markets' and finance this by using Russian assets frozen in Europe. Scholz said that the Weimar Triangle is "a very important sign of our unity". He added that Vladimir Putin must understand that Western support for Ukraine will not be withdrawn and stressed that the allies would also help to increase munitions production in Ukraine itself. The French President stressed that support for Ukraine would continue "for as long as it takes" and that "European security is at stake", and the Polish Prime Minister that the three countries "speak with one voice". - This is a good new start for the Weimar Triangle, he assessed.ⁱⁱ

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that Poland, Germany and France "speak with one voice, especially on security issues". - We are of identical opinion when it comes to assessing who bears full responsibility for the escalation of tension, who bears full responsibility for the tragic events in Ukraine, who is the aggressor and who deserves our absolute help, he added. - We want to spend our money, we want to help in every possible way, here and now, so that the situation of Ukraine improves, not worsens, in the coming weeks and months," he pointed out.

He conveyed that during the meeting, he Scholz and Macron also discussed transatlantic relations.

- I shared with my friends my reflections after my stay in Washington. Here we also have a full convergence of views - Europe and we, as the Weimar Triangle, feel responsible for the best possible future of transatlantic relations and at the same time we are aware, we draw the consequences of this, that no one and nothing can take away from us Europeans the responsibility for our security, for our future, therefore we are also convinced that regardless of different political scenarios, the stronger Europe, the greater the chance for Ukraine and the better the relations today and in the future, including the transatlantic ones,' Prime Minister Tusk stressed. As he said, 'a strong, united Europe is the desirable, best possible partner for everyone in the world without exception, including, of course, the United States'.

The Prime Minister Tusk reported that during the talks the issue of trade with Ukraine, among others, was also raised. - As you know, in Poland we have quite specific problems with this. I would like to thank you very much for understanding my argumentation and for your readiness to support the Polish point of view during our talks in Brussels,' Tusk said. - 'I have informed the President and the Chancellor that cooperation with the (European) Commission on this issue is really good. I am satisfied with the first results, but thank you again for your understanding, because these are difficult issues. Thanks to you they will probably find a better solution from the point of view of Europe, Poland and Ukraine," he noted.

Donald Tusk assessed that there are two formats of interstate cooperation in Europe that are important for Poland and its security - the Weimar Triangle and the so-called Northern Group, bringing together the Baltic States, as well as Norway and the United Kingdom, among others. - Let's not deceive ourselves - it is possible to set the tone for things in Europe if the three capitals get along and act together. That is Warsaw, Berlin and Paris. I think we are on the right track to revitalise the Weimar Triangle so that it has a real, strong influence on all European decisions,' the Prime Minister said. ⁱⁱⁱ

The European Commission unblocks billions of euros for Poland

The European Commission has unblocked funds for Poland from the National Reconstruction Plan (NRP). This was announced in February by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during a visit to Warsaw. ^{iv} Donald Tusk met with the head of the Commission and the Prime Minister of Belgium, which currently holds the EU Presidency, Alexander De Croo. A total of around €137 billion is at stake. 60 billion from the NRP, but also about 76 billion euros of blocked funds from cohesion policy. "We have the rule of law. We have 600 billion (PLN). We have another great civilisational leap ahead of us!" - commented Donald Tusk, who had earlier promised to unblock the NRP within the first 100 days of the government.

Poland has been waiting for billions from the KPO for three years. It submitted its NRP to Brussels in May 2021.^v In 2022, the European Commission finally accepted it. However, Ursula von der Leyen stipulated then that the money would be paid only after Poland reached the so-called "milestones", including: profound changes in the judiciary introduced by the previous government of Mateusz Morawiecki. On February 20, the current Minister of Justice, Adam Bodnar, presented in Brussels a plan to restore the rule of law in Poland. It contains nine acts, including: the act on the National Council of the Judiciary, the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Tribunal and the separation of the offices of the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General. European Commission Deputy Commissioner Vera Jourova said that Minister Bodnar's plan met with a positive response from member states and was considered realistic.

New free trade agreement with Ukraine

A new free trade agreement between the European Union and Ukraine is to include import restrictions that partly take into account Poland's appeals, Agriculture Minister Czesław Siekierski has announced. These are rules that will come into force from June this year for the next 12 months. The final work on them is being carried out today by ambassadors from EU member states. vi

- Bilateral talks with Ukraine on food trade are difficult; the Ukrainians want to maintain the terms of trade liberalisation proposed by the EC, while the Polish side believes that restrictions on imports of products from Ukraine are needed, the Polish Minister of Agriculture said.

The scale of restrictions on imports of given products from Ukraine is to be calculated on the basis of the so-called reference period. The initial proposal was for limits to be set on the basis of 2022 and 2023. Siekierski expects that the second half of 2021, when customs duties and quotas were still in force, will also be included in the period. In Brussels' initial proposal, eggs, poultry and sugar from Ukraine would be capped for the following year. At the request of the Europarliament, maize, oats, groats and honey were added. Poland and France were seeking wheat, but this was not agreed by most countries. In parallel, Warsaw and Kiev are working on a bilateral agreement to limit imports - specifically for the Polish market. Minister Siekierski reported that a "difficult dialogue" is being conducted on this issue. The axis of the dispute is the catalogue of agricultural commodities that would be taken up for limitation.

Joint meeting of the governments of Poland and Ukraine

A joint meeting of the Polish and Ukrainian governments took place. However, there is no shortage of problematic issues in bilateral relations.^{vii} Talks covered such issues as agriculture, transport and also the expansion of the arms industry. The meeting ended with a joint statement by Prime Ministers Denys Shmyhal and Donald Tusk. However, the meeting did not result in a breakthrough. However, the will for further cooperation was emphasised. The meeting was attended by many members of the Polish and Ukrainian governments.

- This meeting, all the talks, confirmed the obvious truth that regardless of the difficult issues we have to solve, even among friends there are conflicts of interest, there is no such force that could undermine our cooperation. - said the Polish Prime Minister. Tusk confirmed Ukraine's support in the war with Russia. -In terms of military support, financial assistance,

assistance for Ukraine as well, in terms of joining NATO - you can count on Poland," he said. The Prime Minister said that "we are about to have Russian and Belarusian products subject to a 50 per cent duty by the EU". However, during the meeting, no concrete solutions to help farmers were mentioned. - Neither I nor Prime Minister Shmyhal will achieve 100 per cent satisfaction. This is what politics is all about. It is necessary to look for solutions that will not affect either Polish or Ukrainian producers. - Tusk concluded.

Conflict with the Russian ambassador

At the end of March, there was a diplomatic spat with the Russian ambassador to Poland, Sergei Andreyev, who failed to attend a summons from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in accordance with diplomatic procedures. The Russian ambassador's summons to the MFA was related to information from the Polish Operational Command of the Armed Forces, which reported that there had been a violation of Polish airspace by one of the cruise missiles fired by the long-range aviation of the Russian Federation. This was in connection with a Russian attack carried out overnight on the Lviv region of Ukraine.

The Russian ambassador's decision was considered unprecedented, and the Polish Foreign Ministry, through the mouth of its spokesperson, admitted that Warsaw "wonders whether the Russian diplomat is following Moscow's instructions and whether he is able to properly represent Russia's interests in Poland". Andreyev himself explained to the RIA Novosti news service that he thought the visit to the Polish ministry was pointless, as Warsaw had not provided any evidence of this, that the missile which violated Polish space actually belonged to the Russians.

The head of Polish diplomacy, Radosław Sikorski, when questioned about the case by journalists, assessed that "Ambassador Andreyev himself gave evidence of his culture and professionalism". "From what I hear he has already left our territory on his own". - he explained. ^{viii} Asked whether Andreyev had been expelled, he replied that "no". As representatives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs later clarified in an interview with journalists, the Russian embassy handed over a note to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that Ambassador Andreyev would be staying outside Poland in the coming days (after the incident - KR). The Russian ambassador has not been expelled from Poland, they stressed.

The Foreign Ministry plans to recall 50 ambassadors

Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski decided in March to terminate the missions of more than 50 Polish ambassadors and to withdraw more than a dozen candidates put forward for approval by the ministry's previous leadership, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported.^{ix} According to the ministry, the proposed changes were presented at the Foreign Service Convention, and after their approval by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, practical appeal procedures were launched. "The government, which bears constitutional responsibility for foreign policy, believes that the necessary replacement in the positions of Poland's representatives abroad serves the purpose of better, professional implementation of the difficult challenges facing Polish foreign policy today," - the communiqué stressed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the hope "for concerted cooperation in this matter between the most important authorities in the country."

No Polish ambassador can be either appointed or recalled without the signature of the President of the Republic of Poland, President Andrzej Duda said when asked about the launch of the procedure for recalling 50 ambassadors by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "What is fundamental here is the decision taken by the President of the Republic of Poland". - Duda added. Prime Minister Donald Tusk said that he had decided together with Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski that he would seek the President's approval for changes to most embassies. He stipulated that he would not inform of specific names at this time. "One way or another, we are facing a very massive change in embassies," - he said. "If there is no other option, we will, of course, recall ambassadors to the country and the ambassadors will be diplomats in the capacity of chargé d'affaires until the president's position changes or the president changes. If this solution satisfies the President, difficult. Either way, we need to streamline and build a team loyal to the Polish state that will conduct our affairs, the affairs of the Polish state in all embassies," - the Prime Minister announced.

According to the Polish Foreign Service Act, an ambassador is appointed and dismissed by the President of the Republic of Poland on the proposal of the minister responsible for foreign affairs, approved by the Prime Minister. In turn, according to the Polish Constitution, foreign policy is conducted by the Council of Ministers.

Conclusion

The assumption of power in Poland by Donald Tusk's government has shown that Polish priorities in security policy have remained unchanged. An expression of this policy is the joint visit of the Polish Prime Minister and President to the USA in connection with the 25th anniversary of Poland's presence in NATO. However, there is a clear shift in emphasis in the policy of the Polish government, which is seeking to strengthen dialogue with European partners, as demonstrated by the revival of the Weimar Triangle format with Germany and France. The unfreezing of billions of EU funds from the National Reconstruction Plan is also an expression of improved relations with Brussels. The new government, has also embarked on a process of change at Polish diplomatic missions around the world, with the aim of replacing the diplomatic staff appointed by the previous government in order to be able to pursue its foreign policy priorities more efficiently.

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- i _____ The Portal of the daily newspaper Gazeta Prawna
<https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/9457757,co-przywiezli-z-waszyngtonu-duda-i-tusk.html>
- ii _____ The portal TV TVN 24 <https://tvn24.pl/swiat/trojkat-weimarski-nagly-szczyt-donald-tusk-olaf-scholz-i-emmanuel-macron-rozmowy-st7821957>
- iii _____ Ibidem
- iv _____ The Economic portal Money.pl <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/bruksela-odblokuje-600-mln-zl-dla-polski-sypia-sie-komentarze-6998776264292864a.html>
- v _____ The Economic portal Money.pl <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/kpo-dla-polski-odblokowane-6998741814458880a.html>
- vi _____ The Polish Radio portal <https://polskieradio24.pl/artykul/3355979,nowa-umowa-o-wolnym-handlu-pomiedzy-ue-a-ukraina-beda-ograniczenia-importowe>
- vii _____ The Portal of the daily newspaper Gazeta Prawna
<https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/kraj/artykuly/9474045,wspolne-posiedzenie-rzadow-polski-i-ukrainy-przelomu-nie-bylo.html>
- viii _____ The Radio RMF.fm Portal https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/polska/news-ambasadora-rosji-nie-ma-w-polsce-msz-nie-zostal-wydalony,nld,7415977#crp_state=1
- ix _____ Economic portal Bankier.pl <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/50-ambasadorow-wraca-do-kraju-Minister-Sikorski-podjal-decyzje-8710465.html>