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Perception of the Representatives of the French Political Establishment about the Strategic Potential of Poland in 2015-2021 based on Journalistic Discourse in non-French-Language Sources

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**Perception of the Representatives of the French Political Establishment
about the Strategic Potential of Poland in 2015-2021
based on Journalistic Discourse in non-French-Language Sources**

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

This master thesis answers the research question “what is the French perception of Poland's strategic potential?”, and it is analysed within the period 2015-2021. This master thesis consists of six chapters. The first one is introduction, when the next one is literature review. The third chapter is research methodology. Two next chapters are analytical and based on conducted qualitative content analysis. The first of them (chapter four) is about contemporary Polish-French international relations, and the next one (chapter five) about French perception of the strategic potential of Poland. The last chapter includes conclusions. This thesis is part of a broad academic debate about how Western Europe perceives Eastern, based on the example of Polish-French relations. One of the supporting research questions concerns whether this division is still valid in contemporary European relations. The qualitative content analysis carried out indicates that it is not a decisive factor, similar to ideological differences between the governments of Poland and France. In addition, this master thesis emphasizes the importance of perception in international relations, but also indicates its variability, depending on both external and internal conditions.

Keywords

France; Poland; perception; strategic potential; state power; Weimar Triangle;

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1. Introduction

Poland is the largest country in CEE, located in strategic crucial area of the Baltic-Carpathian isthmus, what is the main crossroads of trade routes in Eurasia and repeatedly the theatre of wars (Bartosiak, 2018b, pp. 513–552). After 1989, Poland reoriented its international policy towards the West, joining NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004. The following years were a dynamic economic development and radical internal reforms, which resulted in the average pace of economic development being the highest in the world (Piątkowski, 2019, pp. 19–24). On 24th of September 2018, Poland joined the developed markets (Bednarz, 2018), being the second country to do it after the collapse of the USSR (PAP, 2018). However, the economic successes were not directly reflected in Poland's growing position in the international arena.

An example of this may be the degradation and removal of Poland from the group of mediators during the initial phase of the Ukrainian crisis (2013-2014). The outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis and the political destabilization of one of Poland's largest neighbours (Youngs, 2017, p. 1), caused a great shock among public opinion in Poland and the keen interest of decision-makers. Stabilizing the situation became a priority for Warsaw created itself as Kiev's representative in the EU (Adamczyk, 2015, p. 157). The initial involvement in the de-escalation of the crisis indicated that Poland could play an important role as a mediator in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict (Adamczyk, 2015, pp. 157–158). In January 2014, Polish President Bronisław Komorowski stated that Poland's main goal is to actively influence to the course of events in Ukraine, also using the EU (Komorowski, 2014). After the bloodshed at the Maidan in the second half of February 2014, Poland became even more involved diplomatically with the US and the EU, becoming an important factor in negotiations with Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich (IAR and PAP, 2014; Tomaszewicz, 2014; US Embassy Warsaw, 2014). As a result, the EU gave a mandate to the foreign ministers of the Weimar Triangle (France, Germany, Poland) to participate as representatives of the entire EU in negotiations between the Ukrainian authorities and the opposition, in the presence of the Russian representative, Vladimir Lukin (Adamczyk, 2015, pp. 158–159). The negotiations ended with a compromise agreement (Adamczyk, 2015, p. 159), what strengthened the international prestige of Poland (Kowalczyk, 2015, p. 4) and was appreciated internationally (Easton, 2014). However, despite the active posture of Poland, both in bilateral and multilateral talks within the EU and NATO (Adamczyk, 2015, pp. 158–164), with the establishment of the Normandy Format on 6th of June 2014, and then the Minsk Format on 5th of September 2014, Poland was excluded from a group of decision-makers in Ukrainian matters (Adamczyk, 2015, pp. 164–167).

There is no clear answer in the literature why Poland was moved away from the negotiating table. One of the possible causes can be “the excessive anti-Russian rhetoric” of the Polish authorities, which created its image in Germany and France as an inflexible negotiating partner (Adamczyk, 2015, p. 167), despite the fact that the German media admitted that Poland did not want a permanent conflict with Russia and that it was Sikorski, not Steinmeier, who sought to meet Lavrov in form of the Kaliningrad Triangle in June 2014 in St. Petersburg (Cöllén, 2014). European media also indicated, that Poland's point of view can be as valuable as more insightful in Ukrainian issue than the rest of the EU (Gotev and Kokoszyński, 2014).

This situation seems to suggest that what mattered more than the actual attitude of Poland was the perception of this from the perspective of Germany and France. This case becomes a contribution to the hypothesis of whether Poland is not achieving its international goals not because of the lack of its strength, but because of the perception of Polish strategic potential by its international partners. For instance, American ranking of The Most Powerful Countries in the World ranked Poland in 2021 at 50th place in the world (for comparison: Ukraine – 33, Belarus - 36), placing Poland in the categories “politically influential” or “a leader” lower points than Ukraine or Belarus (BAVGroup; Wharton School, 2021), even though Poland is an active member of the EU and NATO and is the largest and richest country in CEE (Arak and Flis, 2018). This ranking is “based on a study that surveyed more than 17,000 people from four regions to assess perceptions of 78 countries on 76 different metrics” and the country power is “based on an equally weighted average of scores from five country attributes that related to a country's power: a leader, economically influential, politically influential, strong international alliances and strong military” (BAVGroup; Wharton School, 2021). This ranking suggests that the key to understanding international position of Poland may be an attempt to analyse Poland's international image and the perception of its strategic potential by other countries (and their decision-makers). Moreover, there may be a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism (Houghton, 2009) that ultimately affects the state's potential not through its actual abilities (or their lack), but through foreign perception of its potential.

In this context, the question of what is foreign perception of Poland seems to be crucial for understanding its ability to act on the international arena. The question of the perception of Poland's strategic potential among the strongest countries of the EU is particularly important. The research question of this master thesis is: “what is the French perception of Poland's strategic potential?”. The adopted research framework is the period 2015-2021, which is caused by the formulation of the working research hypothesis that the French perception of Poland may

have deteriorated after 2015, when the elections in Poland won the conservative Law and Justice party. Thus, one of the auxiliary research questions of this master thesis will be whether, in the case of Polish-French relations, significant differences in the ideology of the ruling parties of both countries (conservatism vs. liberalism) have a dominant influence on the perception of foreign decision-makers in the most strategic issues, defined here as “strategic potential”. The study was based on a review of various non-French-language journalistic material, containing statements of decision-makers on the analysed components of Polish strategic potential.

Significance of this thesis is based on being part of a broader academic debate about how the “West” of Europe perceived and perceive the “East”. Although culturally Poland belongs to Western Europe, and geographically lies in Central, for the French, Poland has always belonged to Eastern Europe (Purchla, 2020). Thus, the perception of political leaders is shaped in a specific environment and context, including historical ones. An understanding of the general framework of this context is helpful for a proper reading of decision-makers' perceptions (Hudson and Day, 2020, p. 48). Outlining the general context framework of research is needed for defining problem of perception of Poland, as well as its genesis, conditions and consequences. This framing needed to be based on selection and salience (Entman, 1993, pp. 51–53) those crucial aspects, which are used also by the Western politicians in case of Poland.

The genesis today's common use terms “Eastern Europe” and “Western Europe” and the idea of the exotic, and therefore alien, image of CEE in the West was created by the concept of “Eastern Europe” in opposition to “Western Europe” by philosophers of the Enlightenment, who reoriented the thinking of Europeans introducing the idea of the clear distinction between “the East” and “the West” instead of previous “Northern” and “Southern” (Cichocki, 2018, pp. 12–14). From French perspective, the new division turned out to be extremely useful and they deliberately promoted the concept of the backward East, for building in contrast an image of the cultural and civilizational strength and superiority of “Western Europe” (Wolff, 1994). Diplomacy, cartography and philosophy were used in the Enlightenment Europe to create a false image of CEE (Purchla, 2020, p. 12). They were operated in the triangle of mutual justification, support and strengthening (Wolff, 2020, p. 573). As a result, at the end of the 18th century, “Eastern” and “Western Europe” were established and the geographic data was organized according this way of thinking. The idea of “Eastern Europe” was all the more unstable as border changes constantly redefined its political components within 18th-century international relations, which contributed to the creation of an image of CEE as an problematic area of instability (Dwojnych, 2019, pp. 233–235), moving borders (Wolff, 2020, p. 573) as

well as cultural and geographical chaos (Assmann, 2009, p. 33). This gave Western Europe a moral mandate to “sort out” this chaos by remotely manage the CEE area throughout the 19th century (e.g. Vienna 1815, Paris 1856, Berlin 1878). That was culminated after the First World War in Versailles, where the political geography of Central Europe was revised and completely rebuilt. This was made possible by basing its actions on a fundamental imbalance in the concept of subject and object - who acts towards whom and in what philosophical and geographical perspective. The enlightenment idea of “Eastern Europe” was therefore based on the exclusive right of the West to make decisions about the status and the future of CEE, even against the CEE countries (Wolff, 2020, pp. 576–577). This Western perception of CEE remained valid until the end of the 20th century, because “by virtue of its political system, Central Europe is the East; by virtue of its cultural history, it is the West. But since Europe itself is in the process of losing its own cultural identity, it perceives in Central Europe nothing but a political regime; put another way, it sees in Central Europe only Eastern Europe” (Kundera, 1984, p. 11).

Based on the historical context outlined above, an auxiliary research question is whether the fall of the Iron Curtain and the partial political integration of Central Europe with Western Europe (through the accession of most CEE countries to the EU and NATO) changed the West's perception of “Eastern Europe” or not. According to Jacek Purchla, the history of the “invention of Eastern Europe” confirms that international relations depend to a large extent on people ideas about the others. These are often based on stereotypes, that is, people's well-established beliefs that are not confirmed in reality. Despite this, people are reluctant to get rid of them (Purchla, 2020, p. 12), and thus their perceptions no longer reflect reality. Gordon Allport described stereotyping as “the law of least effort” by which people choose the least labour-intensive methods (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 1997, p. 544). Then they create simple beliefs that harm with their superficiality. They free people from thinking about what the world really looks like. This is especially true of national stereotypes. Once formulated, they are immune to change in terms of new information, even if the situation changes radically. This shows how difficult it is to change once structured human perception (Purchla, 2020, p. 12).

This master thesis remains open the question of the validity of this diagnosis on a macro scale, trying to falsify it only on the example of Polish-French relations in the area of the adopted research framework. The issue of the Western European perception of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc is a not very popular research issue, with sparse literature on the subject, focusing rather on general research on the image of a examined country among representatives of foreign society. The empirical attempt to analyse such perception among politicians and

decision makers is a niche issue in the field of international relations. This research area is traditionally prone to deep-seated stereotypes about what “others think about us” and “what we think about others”, while easily extrapolating one's own likes and dislikes to the attitudes of others. During the review of the literature, no scientific work was found regarding the research question described above, although the published in 2021 monography “Poland's position in the international community, or how to grow on the periphery of Europe?” presents Poland as a country still struggling with its own peripherality within the EU (Woźniak-Szymańska, 2021).

Contribution of this master thesis to the academic debate is in the area of analysing current international position of Poland and its ability to achieve its goals together with foreign partners on the EU forum as well as the debate on the role of the state's perception in international relations. It may also become a starting point for further research on the perception of Poland's strength in the EU, and more broadly Image Theory in international relations (Ametbek, 2017), and even strategic management of perception (Özleblebici and Çetin, 2015). In addition, it can be a contribution to the study of Poland's reputation on the international arena, which has gained particular importance in the public debate in Poland over the last few years (Bednarz, 2014; Kleiber, 2020; Mroczkowski *et al.*, 2020).

This master's thesis has been divided into six chapters. The first one is an introduction, presenting the research context, research question with supporting hypotheses, significance of the research question, gap in the literature, contribution the thesis makes, thesis structure and expected conclusions. The second chapter is literature review on the role of perception in the international relations and the strategic potential of the state. The third one is about adopted research methodology with description of perception research and content analysis as well as sources and their selection. The fourth one presents contemporary Polish-French international relations based on prepared content analysis. The fifth chapter is also an output of conducted content analysis and includes an answer for the main research question. The last one is general summary and conclusions. Thus, the next chapter presents main points from the academic debate on the role of perception and the issue of state strategic potential.

2. Literature review

Based on literature review, this chapter provides the theoretical framework for the issues discussed in this master thesis. It consists three main sections. The first one presents the significant role of perception in the international relations as well as in building image of a country. This part presents also limitations of human cognitive process and explain the complexity of the political establishment. The second section discusses the case of the French political establishment and its representatives with their perception's determinants. The third one is about the idea of the strategic potential of the state and its component parts. All these three parts are key to the effective answer to the research question posed in the introduction.

2.1. Perception of the representatives of the political establishment

Generally perception can be defined as “the complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent world view” (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p. 88) as well as “receiving, selecting, acquiring, processing and organizing the information provided by our senses” (Barber and Legge, 1976, p. 7) and refers to feeling, interpreting and appreciating physical and social processes (Young, 1956). In the field of political science, perception is understood as “the totality of messages expressed by a political actor about a specific area of political processes, and during research on it, the researchers' attention is focused on the coexistence of continuity and changes in the perceptions of political actors about various dimensions of political life” (Kasianiuk, 2021, p. 34). Hence, the perception plays an important role in the security research and widely in the whole political science (Paszak, 2019, pp. 58–59). Thus, the core importance of perception in international affairs is due to the essence of international security, which is “inner confidence, peace of mind and certainty, properly or falsely justified under circumstances giving rise to fear” (Kitler, 2011, p. 22). Trust or its lack is determined primarily more by the perception of the partner's strength and credibility, then its real abilities difficult for an external observer to clearly assess (Paszak, 2019, pp. 58–59). Thus, the key role of perception in international relations (Pawłowski, Marczak and Gąsiorek, 2017, pp. 32–33; Plebaniak, 2020) results from the fact that it strongly influences the sum of ideas about a given political entity, creating its image in the political space and its strength, included the strategic potential. Furthermore, it is also widely accepted that bad perception is a mother of bad foreign policy (Rosati, 1984).

According to Kenneth Boulding, international relations between states can be explained by the interdependencies and relations between different perception-based images. Thus, it is rather

the image (the perception of reality) determines human behaviour, because men act according to what reality seems to them (Boulding, 1959, pp. 119–121). Moreover, Robert Jervis emphasised that the image of a country may be the main factor determining whether and how easily it can achieve its goal. He argues that a desired image can often be more useful than a significant increase in military and economic power (Jervis, 1970, pp. 5–8). By analysing the image of one country in another, it is possible to understand attitude of the second one towards the first one. Thus, the main assumption of the Theory of International Images is that international relations depends on the states' images (Boulding, 1969, pp. 6–7), which are one of the main factor determining policy-makers' decisions (Ametbek, 2017). In this way, international relations evolve around the interplay of images created in the different points of view (Fisher, 1988, p. 4) and the perception is a key element in adopting a successful international strategy (Walker, 1977), because acting of people, societies as well as their leaders is influenced by the perception and other factors (Özleblebici and Çetin, 2015, p. 296).

These political leaders have been identified in this master thesis as representatives of the political establishment and are divided into two main groups. The first one are decision-makers and politicians currently in office. The second group consists of various advisors and experts, who form the surroundings of the first group, and partly their everyday work environment as well. In this way, they create formal or non-formal institutions around decision-makers, which can produce inadequate analysis of the situation, because of the lack of objectivity in assessing reality, the enthusiasm obscured the rationality of actions or the applicable organizational culture consisting in the depreciation of criticism and critical rethinking (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014). Moreover, leaders often do not give their environment the opportunity to verbalize a dissent or articulate criticism, stifling open debate and exchanges of thoughts (Tuchman, 2014). However, the main responsibility rests with decision-makers, whose perception is one of the most core variables in foreign-policy (Spiegel, 1985, pp. 380–393). It is also crucial for organisational decision-making, strategy formulation and it has a direct impact on policy-makers decisions and, consequently, their outcome (Anderson and Paine, 1975; Özleblebici and Çetin, 2015, p. 297). Moreover, the adversary image and the perception of the decision-makers affect their political choices and are a part of cognitive background standing behind politicians' operational code (Richard, 1986, p. 841).

Political decision-makers are not free from their own constraints, significantly affecting their perception of the problem and thus their decisions. Firstly, many policy-makers are elderly and they can be more overconfidence or rigid in their thinking as well as “difficulty in dealing with

complexity, and a preference for extreme choices” (Hudson and Day, 2020, p. 55) or they can have troubles with long-term memory and as a result, old memories can seem them fresher than the new one (Carey, 2013). Moreover, their perception is generalized in terms of natural mind limitations – filters (e.g. stereotypes, prejudices, heuristics) that reduce cognitive abilities (Drapikowska, 2020, p. 319; Hudson and Day, 2020, pp. 42–43). Mind filters are often an obstacle, because they are enough strong to prevent from receiving accurate sensory perceptions. Humans perceive what they expect to perceive, even if they contradict their senses. Hence, new information may be assimilated into existing images or be ignored, false filtered, misinterpreted and manipulated to confirm preliminary assumptions (Bartosiak, 2018a, p. 488). Moreover, human capacity to be rational is bounded, because of natural limitations of mind. As a result, it is constructed a simplified mental model of reality, which allow to act fairly rationally within its confines, but it has drawbacks. Mental models are inescapable, hard to change (even if they are aware) and based only on the knowledge already acquired. All those mind filters cocreating mental models are easy to form but hard to transform (Hudson and Day, 2020, pp. 42–44). Therefore, politicians’ perception is significant constrained.

There are also psychological issues, because successful people, included politicians, have unlimited faith in their ability to control the situation and reality, which makes them relatively more inclined to take more risks than other people. Moreover, charismatic leaders often have a tendency to over-rely on their own intuition and experience, because these qualities have raised them so high in the social hierarchy and they are often characterised by arrogance, egotism and unjustified self-confidence (Tuchman, 2014). Research shows that the main reason for bad strategic decisions is misuse of information (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014). These bad processing empirical evidence can be caused by using heuristics even applies to self-interpretation (Hudson and Day, 2020, pp. 47–48). To sum up, all these factors presented above (social, biological, mental and psychological) negatively affect decision-makers’ perception and as a result a significant gap between reality and its perception can occur. Hence, policy-makers are particularly at risk of making strategic mistakes,¹ when “information is ignored, filtered, misconstrued, or manipulated to fit predispositions; excessive reliance is placed on intuition and experience; arrogance, egotism, or hubris causes unwarranted confidence; a rigid but wrong strategic concept or vision prevails; contingencies are not considered; enemy will or

¹ Strictly speaking, a strategic mistake is an exceptionally bad-consequences mistake when better options are available. Strategic mistakes are made regardless of age and place, they are universal and timeless, they are made by democracies as well as tyrannies, individuals, institutions and collective bodies (Tuchman, 2014, pp. 6–9).

capabilities are underestimated; operational difficulty or duration is underestimated; dissent and debate are stifled” (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014, pp. xvii–xviii). Misperception usually leads to a bad assessment of the current situation, and this translates into significant strategic mistakes (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014, p. iii; Bartosiak, 2018a, p. 448), which may result from overconfidence, overestimation of one's strength and position, or a simplified perception of reality (Kennedy, 1988, pp. 317–320). To prevent strategic mistakes, Glen Fisher proposes “paying more attention to the mindset factor”, what should “at least help cut down the damage caused by misperception” (Fisher, 1988, p. 5). Barbara Tuchman stated the leader’s folly (understand as “counter-productive in its own time, not merely by hindsight”) is an inseparable “child of ruling”, because the authority not only “corrupts”, but also causes “loss of clarity of thought”, and “the responsibility of the authority often fades” the longer the authority is exercised. Thus, powerful leaders and the powerful states they lead can also make strategic mistakes. Moreover, the more power one man has, the easier it is to make strategic mistakes, as his temperament and ego may obscure a reliable assessment (Tuchman, 2014, pp. 6–9). Perception consisted with reality and determinants of decisions made by politicians at the strategic level are crucial to avoid strategic mistakes (Bartosiak, 2018a, pp. 449–451).

Summing up, many important decisions were made in institutions can be influenced by the individual cognitive processes of decision-makers (Beyer *et al.*, 1997). Research into the constructive nature of cognition proves that schematic thinking dominates human perception in the way that general beliefs about the world influence and shape information processes (Barlett, 1932). As a rule, leaders and their advisers are too deep in their own cognitive model, causing them to filter and distort information to align it with their wishes, ideas put forward, and intuitive decisions. Thus, they prefer information supported their beliefs, ignoring analyses and opinions provided by supporting government institutions or intelligence (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin, 2014). Glen Fisher pointed out that during analysing the relationship between interactions in the international arena, it is important to understand how decision-makers are “programmed” to perceive the problem and the essence of the matter. Only few actors make decisions guided by logic and rationality, but most of their programming is mostly based not on facts, objectified rankings or analyses, but on their image (Fisher, 1988, p. 4; Pawłowski, Marczak and Gąsiorek, 2017, pp. 32–33). The cognitive models used by leaders are accustomed to in their life practice tend to be simplified, because excessive complexity could overwhelm the decision-making process of leaders. Hence, the more the cognitive models differ from the reality, the more decision-makers are prone to commit strategic mistakes.

To conclude, decision process of representatives of political establishment (included politicians and their advisors and experts) depends on their perception, which is highly limited, because of many different limitations. Moreover, perception has an impact on the international image, which significantly influences on its position in the international arena (Wullweber, 2015) and cocreates social discourse, which describes and names not only the experienced reality, but also co-creates it, being a constitutive element for it as well as for perception. Thus, the significance of the issue of the state's strategic potential in international relations may be mostly dependent on its perception, not real capabilities until they are unequivocally checked (e.g. in case of war).

2.2. The case of the French political establishment

The perception of the representatives of the French political establishment is deeply rooted in mental maps resulting from the national historical experience and its intellectual heritage. The collapse of the bipolar world order in 1991 had a significant impact on France's foreign policy as it faced many challenges such as redefining attitude towards the USA (Parzymies, 2017, chap. 2), Russia (Parzymies, 2017, chap. 7), German reunification (Parzymies, 2017, chap. 3), EU enlargement (Jaworski, 2011, pp. 107–113; Parzymies, 2017, chap. 9) and NATO (Parzymies, 2017, chap. 13), as well as revising its current policy towards the MENA² country (Parzymies, 2017, chaps 5–6). Nowadays, France has sufficient strategic potential to be one of the most important players in international relations (Védrine and Moïsi, 2001; Pachocka, 2011, pp. 163–164; Parzymies, 2016). Its territory includes not only the European part, but also overseas possessions, and its zones of influence and interests extend beyond Europe, for instance MENA (Pachocka, 2011, p. 163; Płaza, 2021) or BRICS³ (Parzymies, 2017, chap. 11). French foreign policy also focus on restraining American influence in France's immediate strategic perimeter. One of the tools to achieve it is the Francophonie based on influencing directly other countries within French culture (Lakomy, 2010; Jaworski, 2011, pp. 98–100; Parzymies, 2017, chap. 14; Smutek-Rusek, 2019). The importance of the cultural factor in French foreign policy is extremely important and it has a significant impact on the process of formulating the doctrine and practice of foreign policy (Lakomy, 2010, pp. 219–220; Smutek-Rusek, 2019), fully supported by the French diplomatic service (Pachocka, 2011, pp. 164–163). Moreover, according to some researchers, such a large influence of culture on foreign policy is an exclusive phenomenon of France (Védrine and Moïsi, 2001, pp. 17–42).

² Acronym referring to the Middle East and North Africa.

³ Acronym referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Taking into account these natural conditioning and base on the literature review, the perception of the French establishment can be defined as the perception of representatives of a regional power with global interests and strong global aspirations (Brzeziński, 1997, pp. 49–53; Cogan, 2008, p. 274; Pachocka, 2011, pp. 163–164, 197, 199–200). These aspirations were awakened in the mid-twentieth century by the policies of Charles de Gaulle and his successors (Girault, 1992; Pachocka, 2011, pp. 163–164). It is a “policy of greatness and independence” aimed at regaining the lost position of a world power, underpinned by “the conviction of France's historical mission” (Pachocka, 2011, p. 163). Kamil Jaworski indicates nine fundamental aspects of French foreign policy: sovereignty and independence, security, superpower, colonialism, statism and protectionism, universalism, egalitarianism, elitism and European integration (Jaworski, 2011, p. 116), which stem directly from de Gaulle's heritage (Jaworski, 2011, pp. 90–91, 93, 95, 98, 101, 107, 110–111; Pachocka, 2011, pp. 199–200; Parzymies, 2017, chap. 1). The aspect of European unity is probably the most important for France (Jaworski, 2011, pp. 108–113). For France, “Europe is a way to regain its former greatness”, because “the greatness of Europe under the leadership of France would also be the greatness of France itself” (Brzeziński, 1997, pp. 73–78). However, according to Daniel Colard, France in its foreign policy must avoid two dangers: “completely giving up national ambitions and, on the other hand, constantly talking about its greatness and power and teaching others” (Parzymies, 2017). Furthermore, according to Hubert Védrine, French self-perception is that “France is therefore neither a great power nor a middle power, but one of the seven or eight powers with global influence”, and it “is not an average country, but depending on the field, it is in the top three, four or five global powers, right after the American hyperpower” (Pachocka, 2011, pp. 199–200). According to Stanisław Parzymies, the French have come to terms with the fact that their country cannot compare to the USA, China, Russia, however “France has the necessary assets that make it play and will continue to play an important role in international relations” (Parzymies, 2016, p. 72). Similarly, Charles Cogan points out that “France still has the ambition to play a global role”, but “this pursuit does not quite correspond to the real possibilities of the French power on the international stage”, which does not prevent the empire tradition surviving to this day (Cogan, 2008, p. 274). Zbigniew Brzeziński stated directly that the conviction of French political elites that their country is still a world power is an illusion “with something obsessive in it” (Brzeziński, 1997, pp. 49–53).

2.3. Strategic potential of the state

The term of the strategic potential of the state is inextricably linked with the concept of the state, which occupies a central position in international relations (Stirk, 2015). Nevertheless, there is still no commonly accepted definition of strategic potential around which a consensus of researchers and experts would be built, however, this concept seems to be closely related to “agential power”, which is divided into “domestic agential power” and “international agential power” (Hobson, 2000, pp. 5–9). Similarly, the strategic potential of the state includes both aspects of internal and external (international) affairs. Analysing the issue of the strategic potential, it is necessary to start with the concept of the state potential, which Andrzej Zybała defines as the ability of a state “to use instruments of action that give it a high position in the international environment, in the political and economic sense. It also means its ability to create conditions for internal development in line with contemporary trends and expectations of the citizen” (Zybała, 2015, p. 28). The strategic potential of the state determines also “the level of ambition and the state's ability to act in the field of security policy, as well as the state's historical experience, together with its political and systemic achievements, allow to define the basis of all activities in the field of security in the form of a catalogue of national interests and strategic goals in the field of security” (Koziej, 2012, p. 23). Furthermore, it can be divided into four areas in which the strategic state potential may be considered: economic development of the country; efficiency of public administration; international and geopolitical environment as well as relations with neighbouring countries; effectiveness of individual (especially strategic) economic sectors of the country (Więcaszek-Kuczyńska, 2014; Zařko *et al.*, 2017, p. 3).

Another understanding of the state's strategic potential is used by Stanisław Koziej, who defines it as “human (quantitative and qualitative) and material resources (natural and produced) as well as the level of their organization within the state system, taking into account the location and relations with other entities” and identifies the strategic potential of the state in the sphere of security *sensu largo* describing it as the defence potential of the state (Koziej, 2012, pp. 21–23). Thus, the main element of it are the armed forces and “development of their capabilities, training, proper organizational structure and an efficient command system, as well as the appropriate level of financing and the efficiency of the system as a whole” (Koziej, 2012, p. 22), which in turn have a significant impact “on the strategic ambitions of the state, expressed in the interests and strategic goals in the field of security” (Koziej, 2012, p. 22). Moreover, the sphere of national security *sensu stricto* can be divided into the field of external security (usually provided by the armed forces) as well as the area of internal security (usually provided

by the services and guards). In the case of Poland, the strategic task of the armed forces is to maintain constant readiness “to carry out three main missions: to guarantee the defence of the state and to counter aggression as part of allied obligations; participate in the stabilization of the international crisis situation and providing operation response on crisis and humanitarian aid, as well as support internal security and provide aid to the society” (Koziej, 2012, p. 22), whereas the task of services and guards is to maintain an efficient order inside the country, including operation of the rescue and crisis management system, implementation of tasks set by the government and self-government administration and their support as well as preventive measures and the warning and control system (Koziej, 2012, p. 22).

On the other hand, the social and economic potential of the state as the one that establishes the boundary conditions, which are necessary to pursue “national interests in the field of security and the resulting strategic goals” (Koziej, 2012, pp. 22–23). The factor enhancing the economic potential of the state is understood as the continual economic development of the country, often illustrated by the level of GDP growth rate, the condition of public finances, the balance of the financial sector, household wealth, as well as the level of public debt and the deficit of the public finance sector (Piątkowski, 2019). The social potential in the international arena consists mainly demography (McNicoll, 1999). Demographic crisis is currently one of the main challenges for most developed countries, posing a threat to their entire socio-economic system (Gløersen *et al.*, 2016, pp. 55–86; EC Secretariat-General, 2020, pp. 14–25) as well as military power (Toft, 2005; Libicki, Shatz and Taylor, 2011).

Andrew Michta indicates the following attributes of the state as the basic aspects of analysis in matters of international security: economy, social cohesion, armed forces, ability to project strength, ability to control the region of one's own environment (Michta and Bartosiak, 2020, secs 01:35-02:25). Thus, the strategic potential of the state is understood as its ability to obtain and maintain a relatively high international position, actively create its international environment. The strategic potential of the state understood in this way consists of the efficiency and effectiveness of state institutions in ensuring its basic security interest (Lewandowski, 2014, pp. 772–773), which is implemented in the following areas: external security (the armed forces and their effectiveness), internal security (services and guards and their effectiveness to a risk adequacy), energy security (diversification of energy sources and suppliers), information and digital security (including narrative security), public administration and the legal and political system (enjoying the trust of citizens), influencing the strategic directions of its foreign policy, socio-economic system. Summing up, among elements that

make up the strategic potential of the state it can be mentioned four main components, which were analysed in this thesis as a research categories in chapter 5: armed forces and services (5.1.); economy power (5.2.); internal cohesion and state administration (5.3.); projection of power and international influence (5.4.).

This theoretical framework presents the determinants of perception, its role in creating an image of a given country in the international arena, the perception of the French political establishment along with its historical and cultural determinants, as well as the issue of the state's strategic potential. In the light of the above analyses based on the literature review, it can be noted that the perception of the French political establishment as external to Poland influences its international image by co-creating an international political discourse on Poland. In the case of calculations in international politics, one should take into account the issue of perception and, more broadly, the mindset of foreign partners, while in the case of security issues, previously instilled antagonisms, emotions or a particular perception of one's own interests may mean more than the armed forces (Fisher, 1988, p. 5). Hence, the strategic potential of the state can be perceived and analysed both from inside or outside. Thus, its outside view is based on its image, which is the mean of perception. Therefore, examining changes in the image of strategic potential can explain how changed its perception, which is the basis of this image.

3. Research methodology

This chapter presents the selected research methodology and the research techniques used. In the first part of this chapter is a detailed description of the selected research methodology and its application. The complex context of the perception of French establishment towards Poland demands a qualitative approach, in this case a content analysis . The second part of this chapter describes the process of selecting sources and the methodological limitations adopted for them. A full list of sources selected for analysis, along with their coding, is also presented. The results of the conducted content analysis will be presented in chapter four.

3.1. Adopted research methodology

Content analysis, based on the basic communication paradigm, is widely used in media analysis. In accordance with the research question described in the introduction, the content analysis is used to analyse journalistic discourse in non-French-language sources (Polish, English, German), thus examining externally directed communications, instead internal. Content analysis was selected for this study due to its common use in international relations (Larson, 1988; Pashakhanlou, 2017) and its non-invasiveness (Hübner, Mayntz and Holm, 1985, pp. 194–195), which means that only statements of representatives of the political establishment published in the press were examined. The use of content analysis can be divided into three basic areas: drawing conclusions about senders of communication; describing and drawing conclusions about the characteristics of communication; drawing conclusions about the effects of communication (Holsti, 1969, pp. 25–27). Thus, the content analysis is based on identifying and describing the linguistic features of the analysed texts (e.g. documents or articles). This methodology, by examining patterns in communication in a repeatable and systematic way (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019, pp. 511–513), is used to obtain a picture of the content and describe the senders' posture on a given issue or their beliefs, general worldview, or to explain non-linguistic properties of their authors, such as attitudes, judgments, intentions (Larson, 1988; Neuendor and Kumar, 2015). In this thesis, content analysis is used to assess the perceptions of French establishment, which is in line with the general methodology of the content analysis of media messages (Maison, 2021, pp. 14–20).

Content analysis consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis, which can be used separately or together as complementary techniques (Kracauer, 1952, pp. 631–632). In this master thesis, it was decided to use the qualitative content analysis methodology, which focuses, inter alia, on the study of intentionality of the authors of messages as well as its implications, and therefore

it is similar to thematic analysis (Bondas, Turunen and Vaismoradi, 2013), and thus will be useful in the study of perception. Qualitative content analysis is based primarily on the previously adopted research assumptions, thus partially resembling semiology (Maigret, 2012, pp. 117–120). Content analysis therefore uses the categorization and classification of selected forms of communication (e.g. interviews, press articles, etc.), which are subject to systematic textual data analysis, in this case qualitative. Thus, in qualitative analysis, it is important to study the content of media messages previously encoded by the researcher, by interpreting hidden meanings, thanks to the placement of individual media messages in the identified context (Hübner, Mayntz and Holm, 1985, pp. 190–194). This methodology consists of two phases. In the first stage, the content of statements is identified in the context identified earlier. In the second stage, conclusions are drawn about non-linguistic variables, for example: possible reactions reception, environment of conducted communication, that is the properties of the socio-cultural system of the sender and recipient (Hübner, Mayntz and Holm, 1985, pp. 194–196). As a result, qualitative content analysis is a combination of inductive and deductive, and it based on open research questions (White and Marsh, 2006). In the next section (“Sources and their selection”), it is defined in detail exactly what data was analysed; how data was defined; from which population the data were collected; what is the appropriate context; what are the limits of the analysis; what is measured (Krippendorff, 2013, pp. 82–97).

3.2. Sources and their selection

The time period of content analysis is 2015-2021. In 2015 two important things happened. On 12th February 2015 an Minsk II final agreement was signed after the negotiation between Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany. Poland was not invited to the table. This agreement remains formally in force till today. 2015 was also a significant turning point in Polish politics - the Law and Justice party, formerly in the opposition, gained the whole power in Poland winning presidential and parliamentary elections. The end date is the end of April 2021. In March 2021 an important meeting of the leaders of Poland and France was held in Paris, and in April France began to intensify its efforts to establish a strategic partnership in the Polish nuclear power plant development programme. Therefore, it was decided to include in the analysed period also the first four months of 2021. According to the adopted time frame 2015-2021, the largest number of sources analysed within the content analysis comes from this period (57), while three other sources from 2012-2014 were added to capture a broader context of Polish-French relations, which was necessary to properly interpret sources from 2015-2017, as some of them referred to earlier events. To sum up, a total of 60 different sources were used in

this content analysis, mostly press articles containing interviews or journalistic comments, as well as in some cases public administration communications, or records of direct interviews given by decision-makers.

The sources were analysed in accordance with the principles of research techniques used in qualitative content analysis, which include analysis of texts to which unambiguous codes have been assigned, indicating the presence of key fragments of the examined content (Hodder, 1994). The coding of individual texts is presented in Appendix 1 in form of table, which is divided into twelve columns: ordinal number; type of source; date of source creation; mentioned decision-maker in the given source; title of source in English and link to it; general context; category (broken down from A to E). All the sources were arranged in a table according to the date of their creation, and then they were given consecutive numbers according to the chronology of their occurrence (from the oldest to the youngest). The “type of source” column is split into two possible values: “primary” or “secondary”. A given source is classified “primary” if it explicitly quotes a statement or a fragment of a statement by a given decision-maker. On the other hand, if the source does not contain the quoted original statement of the decision-maker, and it contains only a comment to his statement, then it was assigned as “secondary”. The column named “mentioned decision-maker” indicates the specific decision makers that were referenced in the source. In the case of all decision-makers, except for the current heads of state, a short explanation of who they are in the form of footnotes is provided. The next column includes the title of the source in English (in the case of non-English sources, translations were made by the author of this thesis) and a link to the article. The next column “general context”, provides an indication of the situation context of the source by specifying the detailed international event that determines this context. However, several sources were created independently of political events and in those cases the cell was filled with the value 'non applicable'. The last column “category” contains a division into six subcategories, from A to F, which symbolize specific research categories: “contemporary Polish-French international relations” (A); “armed forces and services” (B); “economy power” (C); “internal cohesion and state administration” (D); “projection of power and international influence” (E). Each source was assigned to a subcategory by inserting a number into each cell, indicating the amount of use (citation) of a given source in a given subcategory. Systematic marking of the content of selected texts enables conduct of the qualitative content analysis by introducing previously adopted detailed research categories on the basis of the literature review (chapter 2).

4. Contemporary Polish-French international relations

This chapter delivers the qualitative content analysis, as described in chapter three and it is focused on contemporary Polish-French relations, although it does not directly answer the research question of the French perception of Poland's strategic potential, is a necessary building of the context within which the content analysis was carried out.

After 1989, Polish-French interstate relations are characterized by variable intensity, with periods of growing mutual interest as well as long breaks marked by mutual indifference and even hostility (Bielecki, 2021c). Under the rule of the liberal Civic Platform party in 2007-2015, Poland's geopolitical orientation was towards the European Union, which was led by the Franco-German tandem of Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel in 2007-2012. During his presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy, designing a strong Polish-French economic partnership, outlined Poland's important place in French economic strategy and strong industrial integration of both countries. Sarkozy often called it “the bridge linking Europe with the pillars in Paris and Warsaw” (Mistewicz, 2016), however, his defeat in the 2012 elections held back these plans. His successor, François Hollande, planned to use Poland to balance Germany's growing power, transforming the Weimar Triangle into a true EU decision-making centre (Smoczyński, 2012; Jaranowski, 2013; French Embassy Warsaw, 2014). However, after the won elections in Poland by the conservative Law and Justice party in 2015, Polish international policy was gradually reoriented towards the USA. While in autumn 2015 Andrzej Duda visited Paris at the invitation of Hollande and emphasized the importance of Polish-French strategic relations as well as the importance of the Weimar Triangle (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2015), a year later Polish government resigned from the long-negotiated contract for the purchase of H225M Caracal helicopters produced by French Airbus, which resulted in the cancellation in last minute cancellation of Hollande's visit to Poland (MIH and Look, 2016). As a result, there was a long-term crisis in Polish-French relations (Bartkiewicz, 2017a), which was also continued between them on the EU forum (Cienski, 2017; Bielecki, 2020a; Cichocki, 2020), and the perception of the image of Poland in the main discourse of French public opinion has become very negative (Mistewicz, 2016; AH, 2021b).

After winning the presidential elections in May 2017, Emmanuel Macron announced that he would visit each of the 27 EU countries, but Poland was only on a distant 21st position on the list. Macron began his rule with a strenuous attempt to convince Angela Merkel to build a two-speed Union with a core integrated around the eurozone and to marginalize Poland in the

European arena (Bielecki, 2021f). Macron tried to present his rule in the EU as the only alternative to the conservative governments of Poland and Hungary (Lane and Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2019; Bielecki, 2020d) and he tried to isolate them at the EU level (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2017b). During his visit to Bulgaria in Sofia, Macron stated that „Poland deserves better governance” (Stasik, 2017; Bielecki, 2020d, 2021c). In Polish-French relations, there was also a significant dispute over Polish posted workers in France and the changes in European law proposed by Macron that were to negatively affect the Polish transport industry (Briançon, 2017; LS and RT, 2017; Malinowski, 2017; Mikulski, 2017), which met with a very strong reaction from Poland (Bartkiewicz, 2017b; France24, Reuters and AFP, 2017; Karnowski, 2017; Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2017a; Tsołova and Sobczak, 2017). Macron launched a whole series of media attacks against Poland (Bartkiewicz, 2017a; Malinowski, 2017), not only on an ideological basis, but inter alia climate policy (Lane and Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2019). However, this policy did not bring any expected results, because Germany did not agree to the systemic marginalization of Poland in the EU (Bielecki, 2020d; Reuters; Stas, 2020), and France was disappointed in cooperation with Russia at the same time (Bielecki, 2020d, 2021c, 2021f). Macron's visit to Poland was planned in 2019, but it was abandoned because it could be perceived as media support for the liberal Civic Platform party during the parliamentary elections in Poland at that time. Ultimately, the French strategy of isolating Poland in the EU and attempts to influence its internal policy did not bring the intended goals, and Macron decided to revise his strategy towards Poland (Bielecki, 2020a), because Poland can “best fill the void left by the UK in the EU and help break the paralysis in Brussels” (Bielecki, 2020b).

Macron's first official visit to Poland in early 2020 was planned as a visit to “calm mutual relations” (Bielecki, 2020a). It was the first official visit of the French head of state to Poland in almost six years, and it was also the first foreign visit of Macron not only in 2020 but also after Brexit (Bielecki, 2020a). Macron's visit to Warsaw and Krakow in 2020 was carried out in a good, conciliatory atmosphere (Bielecki, 2020a; Macron, 2020; Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a). Interestingly, according to a study by PEW Research Center, approximately 36% of Poles consider Macron to be a world leader and see him positively (Cichocki, 2020). The French ministers of foreign affairs, economy, finance, defence and climate came to Poland with the President of France (Rzemek and Bielecki, 2020). During the visit, the positions of Poland and France were converged both in terms of migration and climate policy (Bielecki, 2020a), as well as in the field of digital tax on GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) and on external financial transactions as well as the Common Agricultural Policy (Bielecki, 2020b).

As a result, from the beginning of 2020, there had been a significant warming in Polish-French relations, perceived on both sides as “a sincere investment in bilateral relations” (Bielecki, 2020b). This was also noticed by foreign European media (Momtaz, 2020a, 2020b), that “here is a new role for Poland in the post-Brexit EU” (Bielecki, 2020b).

In 2021, Franco-Polish relations continued to intensify thanks to the challenges related to such areas as the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, Brexit, or the change of the president in the USA. Overcoming the economic crisis is possible through the implementation of joint international economic projects, especially as the French economy is highly complementary to the Polish economy (Bielecki, 2021b), and after the UK's withdrawal from the EU, France needs new partners to balance Germany's power, while Poland, after Joe Biden won the US elections, was forced to look for new allies on the international arena (Bielecki, 2021c, 2021d, 2021b). At the beginning of March 2021, Clément Beaune came to Warsaw on a diplomatic visit (French Embassy Warsaw, 2021a; Momtaz, 2021; Waldon, 2021), who, despite the uncompromising criticism of the Polish authorities in ideological matters or the rule of law (French Embassy Warsaw, 2021b; Moszyński, 2021), did not cause a permanent cooling of the relationship. A week later, Mateusz Morawiecki and Jarosław Gowin came to Paris (Bielecki, 2021f). It was the first visit of the Polish Prime Minister to the Elysée Palace in 3.5 years (Bielecki, 2021e). The atmosphere of the meeting was cordial, and both Macron and Morawiecki did not spare themselves nice words (Bielecki, 2021c, 2021f). Morawiecki supported Macron's concept of building a sovereign Europe as a way out of the sanitary, economic and social crisis. The tool to achieve this is to be the European Reconstruction Fund as well as joint purchases of vaccines, and in the longer term also the transfer of the production of key pharmaceuticals to Europe, coordination of the abolition of border controls, but also the development of a coordinated sustainable growth plan consistent with the needs of climate protection through energy transformation. (Bielecki, 2021f). On the other hand, thanks to its rapprochement with France, Poland gains additional leverage in negotiations with the US on military or economic contracts (Bielecki, 2021b). In April 2021, the French concern EDF, with the support of the French government, offered Poland a partnership at every stage of the Polish nuclear energy program (AH, 2021a).

5. French perception of the strategic potential of Poland

This chapter consists of the main results of the content analysis, structured into four research categories: armed forces and services; economy power; internal cohesion and state administration; projection of power and international influence. The final, sixth chapter includes conclusions and summaries concerning the entire master thesis and the conducted research as part of it.

5.1. Armed forces and services

After the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, France sent an armoured unit to Poland for joint military exercises and four fighters for joint air patrols in the Baltic countries (air policing). Poland was also visited by French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (French Embassy Warsaw, 2014). However, in 2016, Le Drian criticized the decision of the Polish authorities to end talks on the delivery of H225M Caracal helicopters⁴ and the statements of the Polish side on the sale of Mistral ships to Russia. Le Drian did not hide his indignation after Warsaw's decision to cancel a large order for helicopters and rumours spread by Antoni Macierewicz, Polish Minister of Defense, about two French ships not delivered to Russia.⁵ As Le Drian assessed, although “the situation is somewhat tense, it will not prevent us from fulfilling our security obligations towards Poland. We are okay with the obligations that apply to us” (MWL, 2016). This situation cooled Polish-French relations in the field of defence for several years.

Despite this, France continued to try to strengthen European military cooperation, including Poland, by engaging allied forces in the MENA area (Płaza, 2021). Macron stated that Central and Eastern Europe “must be fully involved in this policy”, giving the example of Estonia, because it decided to gain interoperability with French troops out of fear of aggressive Russia (Groupe d'études géopolitiques, 2020). In 2013–2014, the Polish military contingent was stationed in Mali, previously in Chad, and now in the Central African Republic. On the other hand, France's involvement in NATO's eastern flanks (the main area of interest for Poland) is

⁴ In early October 2016, Mateusz Morawiecki, Polish Ministry of Development, who was conducting the offset negotiations, announced the termination of talks with Airbus Helicopters regarding H225M Caracal helicopters, considering further talks to be redundant. According to the Polish government, the Airbus offer did not protect Poland's economic and security interests, and the value of the proposed offset was lower than expected.

⁵ According to the original Franco-Russian plans, two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships were to be delivered to Russia at the end of 2014. Under pressure from the allies, France made the delivery of ships dependent on the resolution of the crisis in eastern Ukraine. In 2015, France and Russia agreed to terminate the contract and compensate it. On October 20, 2016, Antoni Macierewicz, Polish Minister of National Defence, stated that the Mistral-class ships had been sold to Egypt and then de facto transferred to the Russian Federation for one dollar.

not intense and is limited mainly to its presence as part of the NATO's forward battle group in Lithuania. Again in 2020, during his visit to Poland, Emmanuel Macron encouraged Polish government to increase Polish-French cooperation in the field of defence. The issue of cooperation between the Polish and French armaments industries was also discussed (Miłosz, 2020). In 2015-2020, France repeatedly encouraged Poland to become more involved in the EU's common defense policy, which it sees as the second pillar of common European defence, next to NATO. Macron pointed out that the world is facing more and more threats and that in recent years there has been an escalation of arms, and Europe must play an important role in the military and defence field, while being aware of its own limitations in the area of defence and cybersecurity (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a).

During his visit to Paris in March 2021, Morawiecki supported Macron's idea of the “autonomy of Europe” and mentioned twice about the development of European defence policy (Bielecki, 2021f), while Macron had already explained that by building a European defence policy he did not intend to weaken NATO, and even expressed his understanding that Poland buys weapons from the USA (Bielecki, 2020a). Stronger involvement of Poland in the structures of the Eurocorps is also being considered⁶. Poland was to become its “core country” in 2017, but the process was halted (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2017c) and Poland announced that it would begin the process of reducing its involvement under this format. This decision changed in 2019 (Lesiecki, 2019), but to this day Poland has only the status of an “associated country”. According to government sources, intensive talks are underway to obtain the status of a framework country to Poland, concerning, inter alia, financial issues, the number of soldiers involved as well as the role of Poland in the headquarters of the Eurocorps in Strasbourg (Bielecki, 2021e, 2021f).

Another theme of the Polish-French rapprochement in the military sphere is the announcement of Poland's participation in the Franco-German project to build a new generation European tank. The fact that Poland wants to participate in this project was already mentioned in 2016-2017 by Tomasz Szatkowski⁷, but the French and the Germans said then that they would first create the basic version of the tank alone, and other partners would be able to join the project at later stages (Miłosz, 2020) and during his visit to Warsaw in February 2020, Macron invited Poland

⁶ Eurocorps is a military structure established for the needs of both the European Union and NATO, capable of commanding crisis and humanitarian operations involving up to 60,000 soldiers. Currently, the Eurocorps includes fully (framework countries) Germany, France, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg, while Poland has since 2002 the status of an observer (associated country).

⁷ Polish lawyer, Deputy Minister of National defence in 2015-2019 and ambassador to NATO since 2019.

to participate in this project (Bielecki, 2021e). He also started a discussion on the European forum on a joint defence and nuclear strategy, inviting Poland to a dialogue on this subject (Stańko, 2020), along with the Germans. Following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom with its nuclear weapons from the EU and in the face of new geopolitical and geostrategic challenges and threats, France needs to talk about its defence strategy because it is currently the only nuclear power in the EU and does not want to bear this responsibility alone. This issue was also raised during Macron's visit to Poland, indicating that it remains an open question as to whether Europe needs one or more nuclear umbrellas, because France wants to share its responsibility in this regard with other EU countries. The other issue was need of strategy in face of nuclear program of countries such as Iran. Hence the need to define common European interests in this regard (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020d). On the other hand, during his speech at the French Military School of War, Macron did not declare that the EU countries would be covered by French nuclear guarantees, but only invited them to discuss the role that this weapon could play in ensuring the protection of Europe, which suggests that the US must remain in security guarantees for European countries (Bielecki, 2020b).

5.2. Economic power

In the first month of 2021, France took second place after Germany in the ranking of countries to which Poland exports the most. However, with a turnover of around EUR 20 billion a year, Poland's trade with France remains almost six times smaller than with Germany. Nevertheless, Poland achieves a significant surplus of around EUR 5 billion in its balance sheet. French business in Poland consists of over 1,100 companies employing 200,000 directly, and indirectly 500,000 people. Large commercial, automotive and banking groups dominate among them, and there are much fewer medium and small ones, which constitute Germany's economic potential (Bielecki, 2021e). French entrepreneurs are also one of the leaders of investments in Poland, but for the largest of them they need the support of the French government (Bielecki, 2020a, 2021e), such as the construction of Polish nuclear power plants (EDF concern) or the development of super-fast railways in Poland similar to the French SNCF (Bielecki, 2020a). On the other hand, the Polish company InPost announced its intention to take over the French logistics operator Mondial Relay for EUR 565 million, which is the largest investment of a Polish private company abroad (Bielecki, 2021e). In addition to tightening trade, both countries want to put an end to zero-sum competition from American digital companies and coordinate the development of new industries (Rzemek and Bielecki, 2020). Philippe Gautier, initiator of the meeting in Paris for Morawiecki with leading French entrepreneurs, emphasised that he is

aware that the Polish-French economic partnership is a very preliminary stage and that France will have to compete for this with the USA, Japan or even South Korea (Bielecki, 2021f).

Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux, asked about French competitiveness in the context of the fact that in 2021 Poland, ahead of France, became the fourth exporter to Germany worldwide, stated that the Polish economy has made an “extraordinary leap” in qualitative terms and that “there is no longer an economy that only catches up with the West”. Referring to the French economy, he said that France has problems with the competitiveness of its economy, because it has not been able to get rid of a large, structural deficit in foreign trade for years, which is the result of “too high costs, including a very extensive model of social redistribution”. De Bezieux emphasized that it is now much easier to set up the first company in Poland than in France (Bielecki, 2021a). French entrepreneurs who have already invested around EUR 20 billion in Poland admit that they do not encounter any obstacles there (Bielecki, 2021e). The feelings of Polish entrepreneurs operating in France are completely different, as they are not treated as partners there, because the French media campaigns against workers from the East. In addition, in November 2019, French auditors were instructed by Antoine Foucher, director of the Office of the Minister of Labor, to implement a plan of 24,000 inspections for the international provision of services by posted workers (Rzemek and Bielecki, 2020).

De Bezieux pointed out that French business would like to get involved in Poland in three identified strategic areas: energy, large infrastructure projects and IT/ICT. In terms of energy, he means primarily involvement in the Polish nuclear power plant construction program, and in terms of infrastructure - Solidarity Transport Hub⁸ (Bielecki, 2021a, 2021e). The same areas of strategic cooperation were indicated by Morawiecki during his visit to Paris in March 2021 (Bielecki, 2021f). Moreover, de Bezieux pointing to IT/ICT, emphasized that “Europe must regain digital sovereignty, build its own servers and data banks. (...) Poland has many advantages here, however this will not be cooperation according to the old rules. More like a Polish-French partnership, combining our competitive strengths” (Bielecki, 2021a). This statement also referred to Macron's lecture at the Jagiellonian University, when the French president stated that the current obligations of Poland and France are even greater than before Brexit, because they are “great economic and strategic powers in Europe” and that they must see each other in that way and cooperate to move forward (Macron, 2020; Polska Agencja

⁸ Solidarity Transport Hub is the largest investment in the history of Poland, aimed at the construction of a new airport in the centre of Poland, with the entire new railway system in Poland (1,800 km of new railway lines).

Prasowa, 2020a). According to Macron as well as Morawiecki, the Reconstruction Fund may contribute to this, which will additionally strengthen Polish-French economic cooperation in order to build “Europe's autonomy” (Bielecki, 2021f). Moreover, in April 2021, the French concern EDF (Młynarski, 2013, pp. 83–85), with the support of the French government, offered Poland a strategic partnership at every stage of the Polish nuclear energy program (Wiech, 2020; AH, 2021a).

However, as for the very transfer of production from France to Poland, de Bezieux stated that there is a deep misunderstanding on this issue in the French public. He pointed out that “it is not just about the relocation of production, but the way in which it is done”, presenting the example of the Germans who “did it cleverly” (Bielecki, 2021a). This was illustrated by the example of the German automotive industry, which located the production of the necessary components in Poland and, more broadly, throughout Central Europe, but not the final assembly of cars, i.e. the production stage with the greatest added value. He noted that in France it was never thought out in this way, and decisions in this area were often even forced by public opinion. This resulted in a decline in the share of industry in France from 18% to 12% of GDP, while at the same time in Germany it remained unchanged at 23%. He justified by that, the fact that in 2017, during the presidential campaign, Macron did everything to stop the transfer of Whirlpool's factory from his native Amiens to Łódź in Poland (Cienski, 2017; Bielecki, 2021a). De Bezieux noted that “today, therefore, there is a debate in France about re-industrialization. However, this is only possible in the European context, and we cannot disregard the fact that in Poland the lowest salary is EUR 650 per month, and in France - EUR 1,500. And also because of the new shape of globalization that will take shape in the world” after the pandemic (Bielecki, 2021a).

5.3. Internal cohesion and state administration

During his visit to Poland in 2020, Macron expressed his concern about the reforms of the justice system in Poland and emphasized that he would like Poland's dialogue with the European Commission to intensify in the coming weeks. He underlined that he is aware that “in Poland - as its history shows - the values of freedom and justice are deeply rooted, and that Poland is a deeply European state, and Poles are one of the most pro-European nations on the continent” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020e). He also said that all European principles are based on the values, including equality and freedom, which are unique in the world, and that he expects Poland to respect them as well. At the same time, he added that “perhaps in Poland some people

had the impression that European integration was, first of all, adjusting to Western economies, to a certain model of European prosperity. And therefore Poland could distance itself a bit from those values that do not suit it, for example in terms of fundamental values: the rule of law and also the political dimension of Europe. I think this is a really big mistake” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a). Macron emphasized that the issue of the rule of law in Poland is not her individual matter, but an EU-wide one, which will find its final in the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg (Bielecki, 2020b).

On the other hand, Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux stated that with regard to problems in Poland with the protection of the rule of law and democracy, French entrepreneurs did not note any particular problems in their relations with the Polish authorities. He also appealed for keeping a sense of proportion in the phenomena described, because “it can be discussed a lot about the shape of the rule of law, but Poland remains a free country”. He stressed that for French business in Poland, the most important thing is to respect contracts and economic stability, as entrepreneurs are primarily looking for opportunities to do business (Bielecki, 2021a). Clement Beaune spoke in a similar vein, saying in an interview with the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that “differences in the assessment of the condition of the rule of law in Poland should not be forgotten or overlooked, but also not be prevented against bilateral rapprochement” between France and Poland (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c).

5.4. Projection of power and international influence

Traditionally, the attitude towards Russia has been one of the most important issues causing the rift between Poland and France when defining the EU's common foreign policy. While Warsaw sees the main threat to its strategic interests in Russia's aggressive policy, Paris's greatest concern is the political destabilization of the MENA area and the terrorist threat it poses (Groupe d'études géopolitiques, 2020). This was also admitted by Jacek Czaputowicz, expressing hope for dialogue and deepening Polish-French relations, and described Emmanuel Macron's visit to Poland in 2020 as “ground-breaking” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020e). During it, Macron stated that “the arms race is now a reality and we must defend Poland and all of Europe. This means that we need a European dialogue with Russia; we must insist that our common policies - Russia and Europe - lead to peace and that we do not lie to one another. Europe must protect and defend itself” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a). He stressed that “we must not forget what Russia has done and what it is still doing, and we should demand de-escalation of its actions”, adding that “France is neither pro-Russian nor anti-Russian, but pro-

European”, and Europe must rethink your relations with your neighbours (Momtaz, 2020a; Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a). Macron underlined that without dialogue with Russia it would not be possible to solve important problems in the security policy, such as the conclusion of new armaments restricting agreements or the crisis in Ukraine (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c, 2020a). This position was also supported by Clément Beaune, advisor of the President of France on European Affairs, admitting that Macron wanted to clarify his position towards Russia, because “France does not disappoint its partners in the east. On the contrary: we see ourselves as those who provide security” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c). He also added that Macron “is also working to ensure that the threat posed by Iskander short-range nuclear missiles to Poland and the Baltic states is taken into account in possible negotiations on new disarmament agreements” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c). Beaune also pointed out that France immediately sided with Poland when Russian President Vladimir Putin tried to change the history of World War II through a hostile narrative (Bielecki, 2020a; Macron, 2020; Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c). Macron stressed that Europe does not currently have a real neighbourhood policy, because it lacks real thought in relation to Russia, the Middle East or Africa, as Europe has always delegated these powers to someone else (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020a).

The main strategic international field of Poland's influence is the area of the European Union, of which Poland has been a member since 2004. More than 10 years earlier, in 1991, the Weimar Triangle was established, aimed at international cooperation between these three countries (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c) as well as “a form of Polish-German reconciliation after 1990, similar to the Franco-German model” (Stańko, 2020). The intensity of this format was directly proportional to Polish-French international relations. In 2014, during Le Drian's visit to Warsaw, Poland and France decided to propose to Germany that discussing the security issues of NATO's eastern flank and the crisis in Ukraine should take place in the Weimar Triangle format “as often as possible” (French Embassy Warsaw, 2014). In the autumn of 2015, both François Hollande and Andrzej Duda emphasized the importance of the Weimar Triangle for political stability and security in Europe (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2015), but a year later, after Poland resigned from purchasing French helicopters, cooperation within the Weimar Triangle de facto ceased (Bartkiewicz, 2017a; Cienski, 2017). The thaw in Polish-French relations did not come until 2020 (Bielecki, 2020d). During Macron's visit to Warsaw, Morawiecki stated that, together with the President of France, they undertook to renew cooperation within the Weimar Triangle, stressing that “this is a very good format, because

Poland, France and Germany after Brexit are 42% population of the entire European Union” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020b) and that the Weimar Triangle countries think in a similar way in many areas, including strengthening European industries (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c). Krzysztof Szczerski echoed him, saying that “this is a visit by the heavyweight and these are heavyweight issues. The role of Paris, Warsaw, Berlin and other European capitals in the near future will be crucial for the directions of politics on our continent and global politics” (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020e). According to the original plans, Macron, Duda and Merkel were to meet in Paris on July 14, 2020. The French planned to make Poland the main partner during state celebrations on the Champs Elysees, along with the march of the Polish Representative Company under the Arc de Triomphe (Bielecki, 2020c). Polish politicians admitted that “this is a big gesture” on the part of the French (Bielecki, 2020b). However, due to the prevailing pandemic, the summit of the Weimar Triangle was postponed to autumn. As part of the replay rematch, the French were to be invited to Poland a month later to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw, but these celebrations were also postponed (Bielecki, 2020c), although at the same time there were initiatives to establish a tripartite parliamentary assembly (Bielecki, 2020b). On the other hand, the reason for the postponement of the Weimar Triangle summit to summer 2020 was probably the presidential elections taking place in Poland, as well as the insufficient willingness of both parties to change their policy on the hitherto sensitive topics (Zerka, 2020). In addition, the return of Paris to the narrative that the summit would be a reward for softening Poland's position in the negotiations on the EU budget (Nussbaum, 2020), migration or climate policy, Polish political commentators assessed it as a “low-partnership approach” (Bielecki, 2020c, 2021e). Finally, in October 2020, the first time since 2016, the heads of diplomacy of Poland, France and Germany met in Paris. The French confirmed that this meeting was to be an introduction to the Weimar Triangle summit in 2021 at the highest level (Bielecki, 2020d). In addition to the above-mentioned conditions, media also pointed to three key circumstances that triggered the reactivation of the Weimar Triangle in 2020. The first one was the economic crisis caused by the pandemic and the need to introduce EU-wide financial assistance mechanisms (Reconstruction Fund), for which Poland's support turned out to be necessary (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020b). The second one was Merkel's consistent attitude, invariably encouraging the French to break the deadlock in relations with Poland for the good of the EU and return to closer relations (Bielecki, 2020b). The third one would be the creation of conditions for the success of the French presidency in the EU in the first half of 2022 and the strengthening of Macron's domestic position thanks to foreign successes (Bielecki, 2020d).

Another international format important for Poland in the EU is the Visegrad Group (V4) consisting of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. During his term in office, Nicolas Sarkozy had often said that “the numerous meetings of the V4 before each European Council must raise suspicions” (Michelot, 2019). Paris did not take any major steps to improve its relations with the V4 countries, and mutual relations were dominated only by economic cooperation (Michelot, 2019). However, from 2015 to 2019, the French view of the V4 has evolved significantly, moving from disinterest to stronger bilateral contacts (Michelot, 2019), with Paris periodically trying to work much closer with Prague and Bratislava and diplomatic isolating between Warsaw and Budapest (Bartha, Feledy and Michelot, 2018; Michelot, 2019). A significant point of dispute between France and the V4 was the issue of the refugee relocation mechanism, and the attitude of the V4 “was completely incomprehensible in France” (Michelot, 2019; Zachová, 2019). French representations in that region worked unsuccessfully to bring positions closer together, however without any positive results, as the leaders of the V4 countries “took a wait-and-see position towards France's efforts” (Michelot, 2019). The French proactivity towards the V4 also met with a negative reaction from Germany, recognizing that area as its exclusive sphere of influence, which was also partially reflected in the political activity of the V4 countries. As a result, France began to perceive the V4 as “a bloc that privileges Germany in diplomatic relations” (Michelot, 2019). Over time, most European countries began to present similar attitude to refugees issue like V4 (Zachová, 2019), while France tried to reform the EU structural funds at the expense of the interests of the V4 countries, using the issue of the rule of law (Michelot, 2019). However, the perspective presented in the French public debate was often limited only to the issue of the division of structural funds, ignoring the issue of economic benefits that French industry gained on the accession of the V4 to the EU (Michelot, 2019). However, similar to the relations with Poland, the French attitude to the entire V4 warmed over time. At the beginning of 2020 Clément Beaune announced that Macron will regularly meet with the leaders of the Visegrad Group countries ahead of the EU summits (Polska Agencja Prasowa, 2020c). In October 2020, Le Drian visited Bratislava at the Globsec 2020 forum to meet his counterparts from the Visegrad Group, which was interpreted as a signal that “Paris has come to terms with the new role of Central Europe” in the EU (Bielecki, 2020d). In his speech, Le Drian brought to the fore the need for Europe to regain global sovereignty, due to the end of the geopolitical pause caused by the unipolar moment (Le

Drian, 2020). Poland during Globsec 2020 was represented by Szymon Szynkowski vel Sęk⁹, and at the same time Paweł Soloch received Philippe Errera in Warsaw (Bielecki, 2020d).

⁹ Polish politician, member of Parliament since 2015, deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2018.

6. Conclusions

The research question of this master thesis is: “what is the French perception of Poland's strategic potential?”, and it was analysed within period 2015-2021. Moreover, the auxiliary research questions of this thesis was whether, in the case of Polish-French relations, significant differences in the ideology of the ruling parties in both countries (conservatism vs. liberalism) have a dominant influence on the perception of foreign decision-makers in the most strategic issues, defined here as “strategic potential”.

The results of conducted qualitative content analysis are presented in chapters 4 and 5. They argue that in Polish-French relations the ideological differences of the ruling parties in both countries do not play a decisive role. The perception of Poland's strategic potential from the side of the representatives of the French political establishment is not constant and fluctuates with many different factors. One of them is the international situation in the world and in Europe as well as the position of France at a given time. The second one is the situation of Poland and the possibility of locating lucrative business investments of French companies there. Thus, it was noticed that the French perception of Poland is shaped by two main factors: the current international situation and the possibility of concluding business contracts with Poland favourable to the French side. Presumably, another factor, however was not examined in this thesis, is the internal political situation in France, especially during the election campaigns. In the analysed period of 2015-2021, the general attitude of France towards Poland changed twice. In 2015-2016 it was positive, in 2017-2019 negative, and in 2020-2021 positive again. In this thesis it is supposed that the perception of the French political establishment in relation to Poland's strategic potential has changed in a similar way, which was reflected in the course of Polish-French relations described in chapters 4 and 5.

This master thesis contains introduction, four main parts (chapters 2, 3, 4, 5) and conclusions. The second chapter is a literature review discussing three successive issues: the role of perception in international relations and its determinants, the French political establishment, and strategic potential of the state. Chapter three introduces adopted research methodology (qualitative content analysis) as well as sources and their selection. The fourth chapter presents contemporary Polish-French relations and is the first analytical chapter containing the output of the content analysis. Chapter five is another analytical chapter presenting French perception of the strategic potential of Poland in four selected categories. The last chapter is conclusions.

This master thesis addresses an important issue of Poland's perception on the international arena, which has gained particular importance in the public debate in Poland over the last few years (Bednarz, 2014; Kleiber, 2020; Mroczkowski et al., 2020). In addition, Poland, among some researchers, serves as an example representing the fate of all CEE countries. However, based on conducted research, the view on the determination of contemporary international relations through historical mental maps (Purchla, 2020, pp. 10–12; Wolff, 2020, pp. 565–591) cannot be confirmed as a main decision factor. Nevertheless, there are still researchers, like Eric Maurice, who supports this hypothesis, argues that there is a sense of a mutual high level misunderstanding between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe, the beginning of which should be sought in a different approach to geopolitics or social affairs at the beginning of the 21st century, as well as in the shared historical experiences (Zachová, 2019).

Contribution of this master thesis to the academic debate is in the area of analysing the role of perception in international relations. Additional fields of contribution to the academic debate can be examining of Poland's reputation on the international arena, current international position of Poland and its ability to achieve its goals together with foreign partners in the EU. However, the perception of Poland from Western Europe has still a potential for the future further in-depth scientific research, as well as the issue of strength of the impact on the Polish strategic potential of French perception through its co-created image of Poland and the resulting discourse in France about the strategic potential of Poland. The other aspect of further research can be German perception of Polish strategic potential, which would result in a full coverage of both of Poland's international partners within the Weimar Triangle.

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Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Coding sources for qualitative content analysis (table)

№	Type of source	Date	Representatives of the political establishment	Source (title in English and link to the source)	General situation context	Category				
						A	B	C	D	E
1	secondary	2012-11-13	François Hollande	“President Hollande's visit to Poland” (https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1532543,1,wizyta-prezydenta-hollande-w-polsce.read)	Hollande's visit to Poland	1	0	0	0	0
2	secondary	2013-03-06	François Hollande	“In search of the golden key. The "4 + 2" summit in Warsaw” (https://www.dw.com/pl/w-poszukiwaniu-z%C5%82otego-klucza-szczyt-42-w-warszawie/a-16654102)	Warsaw Summit of “4+2” Format (V4, France, Germany)	1	0	0	0	0
3	secondary	2014-11-25	Jean-Yves Le Drian ¹⁰ , Tomasz Siemoniak ¹¹	“Visit to Poland of Minister of Defence Jean-Yves Le Drian” (https://pl.ambafrance.org/Wizyta-w-Polsce-ministra-Obrony-Jean-Yves-a-Le-Driana)	Jean-Yves Le Drian’s visit to Poland	1	1	0	0	1
4	primary	2015-10-28	François Hollande, Andrzej Duda	“In Paris on Polish-French relations and the Weimar Triangle” (https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wizyty-zagraniczne/art,22,wizyta-prezydenta-rp-we-francji.html)	Duda’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	1
5	secondary	2016-10-08	François Hollande, Mariusz Błaszczak ¹²	“President Hollande cancels his visit to Poland because of Caracal. Błaszczak: We care about Polish interests, not French ones” (https://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,20807862,prezydent-hollande-odwoluje-wizyte-w-polsce-waszcykowski.html)	Cancellation of the Caracal contract	1	0	0	0	0
6	primary	2016-11-03	Jean-Yves Le Drian	“France: Defence Minister on Poland's decision on Caracal and statements about Mistrals” (https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/szef-mon-francji-jean-yves-le-drian-o-decyzji-polakow-ws-caracali/4sd285)	Cancellation of the Caracal contract	0	1	0	0	0

¹⁰ French Minister of Defence in 2012-2017, and Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2017.

¹¹ Polish politician, deputy Prime Minister in 2014-2015 and Minister of National Defence in 2011-2015, as well as vice-chairman of the Polish liberal Civic Platform party since 2016.

¹² Polish Minister of Interior and Administration in 2015-2018, and Minister of National Defence since 2018.

7	secondary	2016-11-24	Eryk Mistewicz ¹³	“Eryk Mistewicz on Polish-French relations” (https://www.rp.pl/Publicystyka/311249890-Eryk-Mistewicz-o-stosunkach-polsko-francuskich.html)	Cancellation of the Caracal contract	2	0	0	0	0
8	primary	2017-03-29	Polish Ministry of National Defence	“Poland is reducing its involvement in the Eurocorps. What is this formation?” (https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1031171,polska-redukuje-zaan-gazowanie-w-eurokorpusie-czym-jest-ta-formacja.html)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	1	0	0	0
9	primary	2017-08-17	French Government Official	“Macron to show Eastern Europe how much he cares” (https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-eastern-europe-posted-workers/)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
10	primary	2017-08-24	Jean Quatremer ¹⁴ , Elisabeth Morin-Chartier ¹⁵ , Hanna Goutierre ¹⁶	“Media: Macron wants to isolate Hungary and Poland regarding the posting of workers” (https://www.rp.pl/Biznes/170829555-Media-Macron-chce-odizolowac-Wegry-i-Polske-ws-delegowania-pracownikow.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
11	primary	2017-08-24	Emmanuel Macron, Marcin Zaborowski ¹⁷ , Konrad Szymański ¹⁸ , Witold Waszczykowski ¹⁹ , Pieyre-Alexandre Anglade ²⁰ , Andrzej Duda	“Macron tries to isolate Poland in French regional offensive” (https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-isolated-by-emmanuel-macron-central-european-offensive-posted-workers/)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	1	0	1
12	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron	“Macron: ‘Poles deserve more’” (https://www.dw.com/pl/macron-polacy-zas%C5%82uguj%C4%85-na-wi%C4%99cej/a-40242786)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0

¹³ Polish political advisor, journalist, columnist, founder and president of the Institute of New Media.

¹⁴ French journalist specializing in European issues. He works for the French daily “Libération” since 1984.

¹⁵ French politician, teacher, member of the European Parliament (2007-2019).

¹⁶ International business lawyer, Honorary President of the Polish Chamber of Commerce in France and Honorary President of the Federation of Polish Chambers of Commerce Abroad.

¹⁷ Polish political scientist, senior associate with Visegrad Insight, former vice president of the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (2010-2015).

¹⁸ Polish politician, lawyer, publicist, former member of the European Parliament (2015-2019) and deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (2015-2019), Minister for European Affairs since 2020.

¹⁹ Polish politician, diplomat, historian, Minister of Foreign Affairs (2015-2018).

²⁰ French politician, member of the Defence Committee (2017-2019) and elected Chairman of the French Parliament's Commission of European Affairs in 2019.

13	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron	“Emmanuel Macron: Poland isolates itself in Europe. Poles deserve better” (https://www.rp.pl/Unia-Europejska/170829404-Emmanuel-Macron-Polska-sama-izoluje-sie-w-Europie-Polacy-zasluguja-na-cos-lepszego.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
14	primary	2017-08-25	Beata Szydło ²¹ , Witold Waszczykowski	“Poland hits back after Macron warns Warsaw of being 'marginalised' on labour reform” (https://www.france24.com/en/20170825-poland-Szydlo-hits-back-macron-EU-labour-reform-comments-bulgaria)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
15	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron, Beata Szydło	“Macron crushes the Law and Justice government. "Poles deserve more". There is Szydło's answer” (https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1066485,macron-miazdzy-rzad-pis-polacy-zasluguja-na-wiecej-odpowiedz-szydlo.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
16	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron, Arkadiusz Mularczyk ²²	“Law and Justice MP Arkadiusz Mularczyk is threatening to boycott French goods” (https://www.rp.pl/Prawo-i-Sprawiedliwosc/170829357-Posel-PiS-Arkadiusz-Mularczyk-grozi-bojkotem-francuskich-towarow.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
17	primary	2017-08-25	Michał Karnowski ²³	“Nobody has the right to talk about Poland as Macron says. And no one has said that since World War II” (https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/354793-nikt-nie-ma-prawo-mowic-o-polsce-tak-jak-mowi-macron-i-nikt-tak-nie-mowil-od-ii-wojny-swiatowej)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
18	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron, Beata Szydło	“In stinging attack, France's Macron says Poland isolating itself in Europe” (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-centraleurope-idUSKCN1B5128)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	1	0	0	0	0
19	primary	2017-08-25	Emmanuel Macron, Beata Szydło	“Poland slams France's Macron over 'arrogant' remarks”	Macron's legislative proposal on	1	0	0	0	0

²¹ Polish politician, ethnographer, local government official, member of Parliament (2005-2019), former Prime Minister (2015-2017), member of the European Parliament since 2019.

²² Polish politician, lawyer, member of Parliament since 2005, vice-chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe since 2021.

²³ Polish journalist, publicist, political commentator.

				(https://www.dw.com/en/poland-slams-frances-macron-over-arrogant-remarks/a-40244599)	posted employees					
20	secondary	2017-08-26	Emmanuel Macron	“Bartkiewicz: Maybe France is also getting up from its knees?” (https://www.rp.pl/Opinie/170829302-Bartkiewicz-A-moze-Francja-tez-wstaje-z-kolan.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	2	0	0	0	1
21	secondary	2017-08-28	Emmanuel Macron, Thomas Schmid ²⁴	“Die Welt criticizes Macron: he behaved like a nationalist” (https://www.rp.pl/Polityka/308289947-Die-Welt-ostro-o-Macronie-zachowal-sie-jak-nacjonalista.html)	Macron's legislative proposal on posted employees	2	0	0	0	0
22	secondary	2018-03	Emmanuel Macron	“Macron’s New Europe: How do the Visegrad Countries fit in?” (https://www.ceid.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/V4-France-relations.pdf)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	0	0	0	1
23	primary	2019-02-19	Paweł Soloch ²⁵	“Poland will most likely not reduce its involvement in the Eurocorps” (https://www.defence24.pl/polska-najpewniej-nie-zredukuje-zaangazowania-w-eurokorpucie)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	1	0	0	0
24	secondary	2019-05-08	Nicolas Sarkozy ²⁶ , Emmanuel Macron, Nathalie Loiseau ²⁷ , Martin Michelot ²⁸	“Can France find a common language with the Visegrad Group?” (https://www.euractiv.pl/section/grupa-wyszehradzka/opinion/czy-francja-moze-znalezc-wspolny-jezyk-z-grupa-wyszehradzka/)	Informal EU summit in Sibiu	0	0	0	0	9
25	primary	2019-05-09	Eric Maurice ²⁹	“French analyst: The Visegrad Group must present its vision of Europe” (https://www.euractiv.pl/section/grupa-wyszehradzka/opinion/francuski-analitik-grupa-wyszehradzka-musi-przedstawic-swoja-wizje-euroopy/)	Informal EU summit in Sibiu	0	0	0	0	2
26	secondary	2019-09-25	Emmanuel Macron,	“Macron severely criticized in France for his words	Climate youth strike in France	2	0	0	0	0

²⁴ Lecturer, freelance author, journalist, editor-in-chief and publisher of the “Welt” group in Berlin.

²⁵ Polish government official, head of the National Security Bureau since 2015.

²⁶ French politician, president of France in 2007–2012. He retired from public life in 2016.

²⁷ French diplomat and civil servant, director of École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in 2012-2017, minister for European affairs in 2017-2019, member of the European Parliament since 2019.

²⁸ French researcher, international analyst specialized in French foreign policy. Former fellow at the EUROPEUM Institute, the Institut Jacques Delors, the German Marshall Fund and former assistant at the French parliament.

²⁹ French researcher, international analyst, journalist. Head of the Brussels branch of the Robert Schuman and former editor-in-chief of EUObserver.

			Jean-Luc Mélenchon ³⁰ , Ian Brossat ³¹ , Raphaël Glucksmann ³² , Karima Delli ³³ , Gaël Giraud ³⁴	about Poland. ‘The king of contempt has spoken’” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/608629,macron-krytyka-polska-mlodziezowy-strajk-klimatyczny.html)						
27	primary	2020-02-02	The Élysée Palace Official	“Poland-France: There is no more love with Paris” (https://www.rp.pl/article/20200202/SWIAT/302029970)	Macron’s visit to Poland	6	1	2	0	2
28	secondary	2020-02-02	Emmanuel Macron	“Cichocki: Macron in Poland: A visit after two years” (https://www.rp.pl/article/20200203/OPINION/200209925)	Macron’s visit to Poland	2	0	0	0	0
29	primary	2020-02-03	Mateusz Morawiecki	“Morawiecki: Poland is more important as a trade partner for France than Russia or Japan” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/6431717,morawiecki-macron-gospodarka-budzet-ue.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	0	0	0	0	2
30	primary	2020-02-03	The Élysée Palace Official, Emmanuel Macron	“Macron in Poland: France wants to ‘calm down’ relations with Warsaw” (https://www.rp.pl/Dyplomacja/200209924-Macron-w-Polsce-Francja-chce-uspokoić-relacje-z-Warszawa.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	1	0	2	0	0
31	primary	2020-02-03	Krzysztof Szczerski ³⁵ , Emmanuel Macron; Jacek Czaputowicz ³⁶	“Macron's first visit to Poland” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/6431534,macron-polska-wizyta.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	0	0	0	1	2
32	primary	2020-02-03	Clément Beaune ³⁷	“German daily: Macron in Poland wants to revive the Weimar Triangle” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/6431505,wizyta-macrona-w-polsce-trojkat-weimarski.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	0	0	0	1	6

³⁰ French politician, national parliamentarian, MEP, candidate in the presidential elections in 2012 and 2017.

³¹ French politician, member of the Paris council since 2008 and the deputy mayor of Paris since 2014.

³² French journalist, essayist, politician and Member of the European Parliament since 2019.

³³ French politician and Member of the European Parliament since 2009.

³⁴ French mathematical economist and chief economist of the French Development Agency (2015-2019).

³⁵ Head of the Cabinet of the President of Poland in 2017-2021.

³⁶ Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2018-2020.

³⁷ French Secretary of State for European Affairs since July 26, 2020.

33	primary	2020-02-03	Emmanuel Macron, Mateusz Morawiecki, Andrzej Duda	“Macron plays it pragmatic with Poland” (https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-plays-it-pragmatic-with-poland/)	Macron’s visit to Poland	1	0	0	0	1
34	primary	2020-02-04	Emmanuel Macron	“Macron torn between Poland and Putin” (https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-poland-and-russia-moscow-policy/)	Macron’s visit to Poland	1	0	0	0	0
35	primary	2020-02-04	Emmanuel Macron	“Macron: We have to defend Poland. We cannot forget what Russia has done” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/6432215,prezydent-macron-polska-krakow-francja.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	1	1	1	1	4
36	primary	2020-02-06	Emmanuel Macron	Lecture: “La Pologne et la France en Europe” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quV2cWDyXcY)	Macron’s visit to Poland	1	0	1	0	1
37	primary	2020-02-06	The Élysée Palace Official	“Paris wants to talk about a European nuclear strategy. ‘We also invite Poland to participate in the discussion’” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/6437392,bron-jadrowa-emmanuel-macron-andrzej-duda-francja-unia-europejska.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	0	1	0	0	0
38	secondary	2020-02-06	The Presidential Palace Official, Sławomir Dębski ³⁸	“Military cooperation between Poland and France. More a misfire than fireworks” (https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/6436331,wojsko-polska-francja-niewypal.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	0	2	0	0	0
39	primary	2020-02-09	Polish Government Official, German Government Official, Frederic Petit ³⁹ , Bernardo de Miguel ⁴⁰	“A pass to the center of Europe” (https://www.rp.pl/Polityka/302099967-Przepustka-do-centrum-Europy.html)	Macron’s visit to Poland	4	1	0	1	3
40	primary	2020-06-06	Paul Maurice ⁴¹	“French expert: The French felt dominated by the Germans, thanks to Macron’s	<i>non applicable</i>	0	1	0	0	1

³⁸ Head of the Polish Institute of International Affairs since February 25, 2016.

³⁹ Deputy of the French expats, who came up with the initiative to establish a tripartite parliamentary assembly that would support the development of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle.

⁴⁰ Brussels correspondent for the Spanish daily “El País”.

⁴¹ Expert of the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI) based in Paris, member of the Committee for the Study of Franco-German Relations.

				policy these relations are more balanced” (https://forsal.pl/artykuly/1481727,francuski-ekspert-francuzi-czuli-sie-zdominowani-przez-niemcow-dzieki-polityce-macrona-te-relacje-sa-bardziej-zrownowazone.html)						
41	secondary	2020-07-03	François Hollande, Emmanuel Macron	“The Weimar Triangle: The New Victim of the Pandemic” (https://www.rp.pl/Polityka/307029905-Trojkat-Weimarski-nowa-ofiara-pandemii.html)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	0	0	0	3
42	secondary	2020-08-23	Jacek Czaputowicz	“United in distrust: How France and Poland can repair their broken relations” (https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_united_in_distrust_how_france_and_poland_can_repair_their_broken/)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	0	0	0	1
43	primary	2020-10-08	Jean-Yves Le Drian	“Speech by Jean-Yves Le Drian in Bratislava - "GLOBSEC 2020 Bratislava Forum”” (https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/our-ministers/jean-yves-le-drian/speeches/article/speech-by-jean-yves-le-drian-in-bratislava-globsec-2020-bratislava-forum-08-oct)	Jean-Yves Le Drian’s visit to Slovakia	0	0	0	0	1
44	secondary	2020-10-11	Jean-Yves Le Drian, Philippe Errera ⁴²	“The Weimar Triangle: Reactivation” (https://www.rp.pl/Polityka/310119971-Trojkat-Weimarski-reaktywacja.html)	Summit of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Weimar Triangle in Paris					
45	primary	2020-11-18	The Élysée Palace Official	“France Says EU Could Cut Hungary and Poland Out of Recovery Fund” (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-18/france-says-eu-could-cut-hungary-and-poland-out-of-recovery-fund)	Poland’s and Hungary’s veto in negotiation under Recovery Fund	4	0	0	0	5
46	primary	2020-11-20	Frédéric Billet ⁴³	“French ambassador for E24: France could finance the Polish nuclear power plant. We will present the plan soon [INTERVIEW]” (https://www.energetyka24.com/ambasador-francji-dla-e24-francja-moglaby-sfinansowac-polski-atom-wkrotce-przedstawimy-plan-wywiad)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	0	1	0	0

⁴² Director of Political and Security Affairs at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs since 2019.

⁴³ The ambassador of the Republic of France in Poland since October 18, 2019.

47	primary	2021-03-07	Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux ⁴⁴	“Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux, head of Medef: Without Trump, French business will be easier in Poland” (https://www.rp.pl/article/20210307/EKO/303079923)	Beaune’s visit to France	0	0	6	1	0
48	primary	2021-03-08	Clément Beaune	“A three-day visit of the French delegation to Poland. ‘There are common topics, but there are also important problems. Rule of law, women's rights...’” (https://wyborcza.pl/7,75399,26858466,trzydniowa-wizyta-francuskiej-delegacji-w-polsce-sa-tematy.html)	Beaune’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0
49	secondary	2021-03-10	Mateusz Morawiecki	“Morawiecki is flying to visit Macron” (https://www.rp.pl/article/20210309/SWIAT/303099906)	Morawiecki’s and Gowin’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0
50	primary	2021-03-10	Clément Beaune, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official	“Polish authorities pressured the French minister not to visit ‘LGBT free zones’” (https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/clement-beaune-nie-odwiedzil-miast-wolnych-od-lgbt-naciski-polskich-wladz/1j7dw6x)	Beaune’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0
51	secondary	2021-03-10	Emmanuel Macron, Jarosław Gowin ⁴⁵	“Jędrzej Bielecki: Macron invites to showrooms” (https://www.rp.pl/Komentarze/303099910-Jedrzej-Bielecki-Macron-zapraszana-salony.html)	Visit of Morawiecki and Gowin to France	3	0	0	0	0
52	primary	2021-03-11	Clément Beaune	“Polish authorities threatened to withhold meetings over ‘LGBT-free’ zone visit, French minister says” (https://www.politico.eu/article/clement-beaune-polish-authorities-wanted-to-withhold-meetings-over-lgbt-free-zone-visit/)	Beaune’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0
53	secondary	2021-03-17	Clément Beaune	“Visit of Minister Clément Beaune in Warsaw and Gdańsk (8-9 March 2021)” (https://pl.ambafrance.org/Wizyta-ministra-Clement-Beaune-w-Warszawie-i-Gdansk-8-9-marca-2021-r)	Beaune’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0
54	primary	2021-03-17	Clément Beaune	“Interview by Clément Beaune, Secretary of State	Beaune’s visit to France	1	0	0	0	0

⁴⁴ President of the influential confederation of French industry “Medef”. He founded the l’Oreal branch in Poland, as well as Virgin France. He was the vice president of Peugeot and the founder of many companies, such as The Phone House. He also supported Emmanuel Macron’s market reforms.

⁴⁵ Polish conservative politician, deputy Prime Minister since 2015 and Minister of Development, Labour and Technology since 2020.

				for European Affairs for ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’” (https://pl.ambafrance.org/Wywiad-Clement-Beaune-Sekretarza-stanu-ds-europejskich-dla-Gazety-Wyborczej)						
55	primary	2021-03-17	Tomasz Siemoniak, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official, Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux	“Morawiecki in Paris: Getting closer to France at low cost” (https://www.rp.pl/Dyplomacja/303169920-Morawiecki-w-Paryżu-Zbliżenie-z-Francją-malym-kosztom.html)	Visit of Morawiecki and Gowin to France	1	2	5	0	1
56	primary	2021-03-17	Romain Le Quiniou ⁴⁶	“Political scientist: Polish-French relations are used for internal political games” (https://polskifr.fr/polska-we-francji/politolog-relacje-polsko-francuskie-sa-wykorzystywane-do-wewnetrznych-rozgrywek-politycznych/)	<i>non applicable</i>	1	0	0	0	0
57	secondary	2021-03-18	Emmanuel Macron	“Jędrzej Bielecki: With the French for longer” (https://www.rp.pl/Komentarze/303179901-Jedrzej-Bielecki-Z-Francuzami-na-dluzej.html)	Visit of Morawiecki and Gowin to France	5	0	0	0	0
58	primary	2021-03-18	Emmanuel Macron, Dominique Moisi ⁴⁷ , Mateusz Morawiecki, Philippe Gautier ⁴⁸ , Clément Beaune	“Attachment to the EU connected Morawiecki and Macron” (https://www.rp.pl/article/20210317/SWIAT/303179894)	Visit of Morawiecki and Gowin to France	5	2	3	0	0
59	secondary	2021-03-22	Emmanuel Macron, Luigi di Maio ⁴⁹	“France does not break with colonialism in Africa” (https://klubjagiellonski.pl/2021/03/22/francja-nie-zrywa-z-kolonializmem-w-afryce/)	<i>non applicable</i>	0	1	0	0	0
60	primary	2021-04-28	Vakis Ramany ⁵⁰	“EDF will propose a partnership to Poland at every stage of the nuclear program” (https://polskifr.fr/polska-we-francji/edf-zaproponuje-	<i>non applicable</i>	1	0	1	0	0

⁴⁶ Co-Founder and Managing Director of Euro Creative (the first think tank in France focusing specifically on Central and Eastern Europe) and an Analyst in Foreign Policy and International Affairs at WiseEuropa since 2018.

⁴⁷ French political scientist and writer, co-founder of the Institut Français des Relations Internationales.

⁴⁸ Director for international affairs of the influential confederation of French business “Medef,” which organised a meeting for Morawiecki with leading French entrepreneurs in Paris in March 2021.

⁴⁹ Italian politician, deputy Prime Minister in 2018-2019 and Minister of Foreign Affairs since September 5, 2019.

⁵⁰ Vice-president of the French concern EDF.

				polsce-partnerstwo-na- kazdym-etapie-programu- jadrowego/)						
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