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The Weimar Triangle and Its Strategic Goals

The Weimar Triangle (WT) arose in response to the new situation in Europe at the beginning of the 1990s. Poland was embarking on the final stage of its reintegration with the dominant world system and required institutional tools suitable to the task. At the same time the Germans had managed to secure for themselves a strong position in relations with Poland; France wanted to have a presence in this new phase of European politics; and there was an unclear but widespread conviction that a new order was arising. In this state of affairs the idea of systematic French-German-Polish contacts suited the contemporary leaders of all three states.

On the eve of the anniversary meeting of the leaders of the WT states, on May 9, 2003 in Wrocław, a newspaper journalist asked me if the WT would continue to exist in the future—as if a meeting resolving the WT's future was at all feasible at that point. Nevertheless the question was typical of a general outlook among the broader public—or perhaps only in the Polish political classes—an outlook marrying indifference with scepticism, often influenced by the circumstances leading to the intervention in Iraq.

It is true that many of the initial declarations of the leaders of the WT states remained on paper only, such as the project for a common institute in Warsaw. Nevertheless the Wrocław agreements have created the possibility of a generation of trilateral co-operation. We may ask, however, what the main goal of such co-operation is.

“The Weimar Triangle can become an initiating force, serving the expanded Union” states the Wrocław communiqué, providing for trilateral consultations, in the domains of a “common European policy”, in particular an agricultural policy, policy of economic

convergence and social policy, transport policy, and foreign and security policy. The communiqué states that France and Germany “invite” Poland to such consultations, and further refers to “the reform of European institutions carried out within the framework of the Convention, specifically insofar as this may concern institutional architecture and the common security policy”, underlining that the Presidents and Chancellor agreed that “[t]his co-operation should be continued and intensified within the framework of the intergovernmental conferences”. They also agreed on the need for an ever more profound exchange of views on the subject of “the perspectives for strengthening partnership relations with Russia and other new neighbours of the expanded Union, in particular the Ukraine”. Furthermore, the Presidents and the Chancellor expressed their satisfaction with the “close dialogue between the ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of defence, with the good tempo of agreements brought about by the finance ministers and the planned first meeting between the ministers of social policy and labour which will take place at the end of May. The broadening of the area of activities of the Weimar Triangle and its spread into other areas, concerning the form of contemporary citizenship, is to take place via the intensification of co-operation between local governments of the three states as well as via exchanges of young people and students”.

The communiqué thus covers an enormous number of matters. However, strikingly, there was a near total omission of a new and strategic key Union institution, which is enhanced co-operation. The Polish and French presidents and the German chancellor did state that the “vocation” of the Weimar Triangle is “future ever closer tightening of co-operation, which will connect nations and states on all fronts and in all areas of life”.

But what is this supposed to mean? Is the TW cooperation to cover the mutual relations between these three states as a whole? This would be much too far-reaching a programme. The WT should not be treated as synonymous with totality of their mutual relations. (The development of bilateral Franco-German relations is not an outcome of the existence of the Weimar Triangle.) If the Weimar Triangle takes on too many detailed problems, it will not be effective and will in the end become something not particularly important in itself. The WT arose for strategic reasons, and it should therefore remain an institution of strategic co-operation. This in turn—given that the great number of initial goals remain up-to-date—requires as the next step the delineation of goals, their

rigorous selection, and an expression of their hierarchical status. Luckily the fluidity in the formulation of the WT allows it to shape conveniently its goals. Of course the point of departure must be the Wrocław agreement. The WT will be particularly useful if in the next few years it manages, above all, to carry out the following program:

1. Consultation on the constitutional form of the EU.
2. Agreement on propositions for EU policy in its foreign, defence and security policy.
3. Signalling of areas for projects of enhanced co-operation with the participation of Poland and at least one other WT member state.
4. Identification of common goals in areas of mutual understanding of French, German and Polish societies to be conceptualised in terms of the Union objectives.

Successful trilateral consultation and the conclusion of trilateral agreements in these areas will simplify common undertakings in all areas involving *bilateral* relations. They will particularly serve Polish-French and Polish-German relations. The influences of the WT on French-German relations is considerably less significant and less necessary. The functioning of the WT does, however, require considerable care given the natural instability of any trilateral relation.

Taking care of the WT is no easy task. The current state of affairs from the point of view of expertise is absolutely unsatisfactory. If we want the WT to develop, it should be supported by the long-projected trilateral institute. I would not insist on the project aiming at the creation of such an institute in Poland. It could be located in Weimar, with the equal participation of representative members selected by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and conferences organised in each of the member countries. Indeed it is possible to conceive of the institute as a *de facto* permanent commission of experts. While the institute need not be large it is, however, entirely necessary. The positions adopted with regard to its creation may henceforth be taken as criteria of the real position of the French, German, and Polish governments with respect to the Weimar Triangle.

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