

Abstract on the PhD “*Polska polityka wschodnia* – The foreign policy of the Polish government since 1989 towards Poland’s Eastern neighbours (Russia, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine)“

Until today, a lot of research has been done in Poland as well as in Western Europe and Northern America on the Polish goals of “security” and “Europe”, mainly by studying adaptation processes to the Council of Europe, NATO and the EU. With regard to Polish *Ostpolitik*, however, both Western as well as Polish research has not advanced sufficiently. From a Western perspective, this may be due to the lack of knowledge of languages and regional expertise among researchers. It seems obvious, however, that Poland’s *Ostpolitik* will remain one of the main topics on the EU’s agenda after enlargement because of Poland’s geographical proximity to Belarus and Ukraine.

From a **theoretical** and **methodological** point of view, the PhD follows a moderate constructivist approach and intentionally focuses on the most important actor in foreign policy – the government. As far as Poland is concerned, it is in particular, apart from the Council of ministers, the Polish president and the Senate, the upper chamber of parliament, that deserve special attention. The PhD concentrates on an analysis of discourse and behaviour (that are not necessarily opposed to each other). The empirical conclusions of the PhD are the result of the author’s two-year stay in Warsaw, combined with field trips to Kaliningrad, Vilnius, Minsk, Grodno, Lemberg und Kiev.

The PhD presents its **results** in **three case studies**: on the Polish minority in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, on Poland’s export promotion policy and on the regulations and the meaning of the Schengen agreement at the Poland’s Eastern border after EU accession. On the discourse level, one could observe a very open debate on **minority questions** until today. As far as the behaviour is concerned, the council of ministers is only playing a weak role and is dominated by the Senate. In matters of **foreign trade promotion**, one could observe a slight predominance of the advocates of “strategic partnerships” with Ukraine and Lithuania who were against the “economisation” of Poland’s bilateral relations with Eastern Europe at all cost. In practice, already at the outset of the 90s, Poland’s hope of prospering markets in the states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was quickly destroyed. The chronic lack of equity of Poland’s companies and a growing insecurity remained a key obstacle to stronger export activities. The case study on the **Schengen agreement** showed that the discourse only slowly widened. With regard to the behaviour, Warsaw proved to be very active and accepted already in 1993 (with Ukraine) and 1997 (with Lithuania) visa-free travel with two of its four Eastern neighbours. It rejected, however, a visa-free system without any readmission agreement, such as demanded by Russia and Belarus. With regard to the EU, Poland managed to bring forward the relevant stipulations of the Schengen agreement in order to avoid or at least to mitigate the “paper curtain” at Poland’s Eastern border.

From a today’s perspective and in contrast to the inter-war period when Poland’s borders were endangered by the Soviet Union and Germany and not internationally recognised and when Poland wanted to put itself into the shoes of a “civilising force” or a “saviour” in Eastern Europe, contemporary Poland is, from a Western point of view, as “European” as it never was in its history.