

# Poland's Foreign Service Faces the Challenges of the Modern World

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## *Raison d'état* in Polish eyes

When Poland regained its independence in 1918, the notions of *raison d'état* and national interest regained prominence in the public space. Essentially, two approaches emerged. The first, based on *raison d'état*, emphasised the interest of the reborn sovereign state. The second invoked national interest, which extended beyond the political borders of country to the Polish community living abroad. Nowadays, Poland's "national interest" and *raison d'état* are not opposed but synonymous.

The contemporary Polish state, after its rebirth in 1918, drew more heavily than in the past on traditions dominant in the Western world. More than 100 years without sovereignty and self-determination in the international arena taught Polish society to differentiate between the interests of 'the state' and those of 'the nation' and individuals. This distinction persists to this day, and it remains an important element of the Polish language and mentality.

National interest, in this sense, refers to the factors that motivate state policy, reflecting the natural tendency of states to guard values and resources in their possession and to acquire new ones. It is an instrument that mobilises, integrates, and consolidates a state's political elites and citizens to serve

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its international activities and influence. In our contemporary understanding, national interest refers to a political community of citizens, in which all individuals are united in their loyalty to the state and are bound by the same rules of equality and freedom, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or language. The greater the involvement of citizens in expressing the national interest and the greater the democratic control over the state, the smaller the difference between the national interest as understood by society and that defined by state policy. National interest, therefore, is a collective term, encompassing various particular or sectoral interests, be they political, economic, military, technological, cultural, or social.

In the period between the two world wars, the notion of *raison d'état* was widely used by Polish journalists and politicians in an attempt to reconcile state and nation, which were considered to be in opposition when Poland was partitioned between foreign powers. This drew attention to issues which were of paramount importance to the survival and development of the state. *Raison d'état* was closely linked to the idea of independence and was considered an essential prerequisite for both individuals and the nation to exercise their liberty in a free and fully sovereign state. Poles who fought for independence developed the idea of their Republic as a community of free citizens.

### Positive understanding of *raison d'état*

In Poland's historical tradition since the 19th century, the idea of *raison d'état* has had a positive connotation, recalling a common public interest that transcends particular interests. It is a helpful concept in civic education and an important factor in political analysis of the international behaviour of various states. As a result, the term came to play a key role in Polish politics, journalism, and political thought.

For the past three decades, ever since Poland regained full sovereignty, we have been searching for the most efficient political and socio-economic system, as well as for desirable models of family life and individual conduct. In this respect, the Polish perception of *raison d'état* can be quite helpful. Even so, extreme caution should be taken when using this term with foreign partners or in public debate, since it can be understood differently.

Analysing how we understand *raison d'état* is indispensable for getting to know and understand Poland's political thinking, along with Poles' aspirations, way of life, and activities in the global arena.

It is imperative for all major political groups in Poland to nurture the idea of a sovereign and independent Republic, assertive in its relations with other states even as it cultivates constructive bilateral and multilateral ties. This creates a space for freedom and development of both citizens and the state. In this context, *raison d'état* serves to inspire and mobilise citizens to act for the country's good. From the republican perspective, dominant in Polish society, *raison d'état* is an immanent trait of democracy, which assumes that citizens will feel responsible for the common good. Nowadays, as the world is undergoing historic changes, this attitude is particularly important.

## Working for an integral and inclusive world

Our rapidly changing world and Poland's growing role in Europe and globally mean that diplomats should be trained differently, and that the role of the Polish Diplomatic Academy should be understood more broadly. Foreign service training requires a comprehensive approach, teaching diplomats how to function in a complex outside world and providing them with skills to protect the interests of the Polish state in relations with foreign countries, international organisations, and other foreign entities.

As the international community faces multiple challenges, our growing involvement in numerous regional and global formats demonstrates Poland's sense of shared responsibility for the common good, Europe, and the world. The contemporary understanding of *raison d'état* as state interest emphasises effective cooperation and actions in internal and external relations to advance the state's own interest. In many aspects, this is the same as regional and global interest — for instance, in such areas as environmental protection, efforts to promote international peace and security, or the protection of human rights.

In this context, from Poland's perspective, regional cooperation in various formats fosters international security, encourages the country's internal

modernisation, and strengthens Central Europe's voice in key fora such as the European Union and NATO, the Three Seas Initiative, the Bucharest Nine, the Lublin Triangle, the Visegrad Group, and the Weimar Triangle.

Poland invested a lot of resources in our region's growth. The success of ambitious cooperation agendas promoted by Poland depends upon a stronger collective awareness of our region's strategic interests and the capacity to represent them successfully in decision-making processes and formats. This calls for a diversified approach. Our region is so large and internally diverse that the functioning of several different cooperation formats focusing on a wide range of challenges is not a handicap, but an opportunity to broaden our ability to make a real impact.

Consequently, a far-sighted approach to regional policy, founded on understanding and support, coherent, pragmatic, lasting, and mindful of other partners' interests, is even more important in our part of Europe. For Poland, it is imperative that regional cooperation in Central Europe involves comprehensive communication and representation to strengthen the cohesion of Central and Eastern Europe and its North-South infrastructural links with the rest of the continent.

Russia's aggressive policy has forced the European Union and NATO to adjust their roles. This has made close cooperation vital — not just on NATO's eastern flank but through the Three Seas Initiative and joint infrastructural, energy, and climate projects. In the countries formerly under Soviet influence and control, the focus is on the regional dimension of their security policies, with the Bucharest Format (B9) and the Visegrad Group's (V4) active security subdomain at the forefront. We give weight to cooperation between the V4, the Nordic, and the Baltic states. We are developing a three-way dialogue between Poland, Romania, and Turkey and establishing special formats for discussion and cooperation with selected countries in the region, such as 'miniquadrigas'. We have enhanced sectoral and project-oriented development cooperation in the V4 and V4+, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and the Central European Initiative (CEI). We also monitor activity of the European Union macro-regional strategies in our area and maintain contact with regional structures in the Western Balkans, such as the Regional Cooperation Council.

For Poland, the Visegrad Group is a key format for regional cooperation to pursue Polish goals and those of Central Europe as a whole. It is

a recognised platform for debate and cooperation on current issues, particularly concerning the European Union and its neighbourhood. As an integral component of the European facet of Poland's foreign policy, the V4 is seen as an important vehicle for collective representation of Central European interests — especially since our part of the continent historically has often found itself reduced to a pawn on the chessboard of international politics. The need for an active regional policy and tighter links with our partners in the region stems not only from our geographical situation, but also from shared socio-economic challenges. We look for synergies in many spheres of joint interest, always based on consensus and voluntary cooperation. We aspire to boost investments in transport and energy infrastructure, on both the East-West and North-South axes.

As the V4, we have unique strengths, such as our fast-growing economies or the digital sector with its vast potential. The V4's common goal is to make Central Europe's voice heard in the European Union. We have concentrated not just on improving cooperation within the Group, but also on solidarity with our closest partners. Interestingly, Poland's most recent V4 presidency (2020-2021) coincided with the implementation of the V4 East Solidarity Programme's second edition in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries. This programme, financed by the International Visegrad Fund, was targeted at building up local capacities for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The V4 has also put forward many joint declarations and initiatives on Eastern policy (including a proposal to draw up an economic strategy for democratic Belarus, endorsed by the European Council), migration policy, cooperation on digital projects, transport and energy infrastructure, climate and environmental policy, defence cooperation, economic policy, and agriculture.

Close cooperation with V4 partners and promoting other subregional initiatives such as the Three Seas Initiative or the B9 serve as supplements to what are clearly the two international structures of most vital importance for Poland — namely, the European Union and NATO. These groupings are the core focus of Poland's international activities on the continent, along with regional organisations like the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

As Poland's economic strength and international standing have steadily grown, along with an ever-growing array of global challenges

and developments, Polish foreign policy has become more active than in past decades in helping shape the decisions and steps taken by the United Nations and other multilateral international organisations.

## Educating for new challenges

The international setting outlined above makes it both necessary and challenging for the Polish Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy to build an educational and training programme for future diplomats. We attach special importance to cooperation with the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, especially those that have emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union and aspire for European status. The Diplomatic Academy in Warsaw specialises in training on European Union and NATO affairs, contributing to better cooperation in formats such as the Three Seas Initiative, the V4, the B9, the Weimar Triangle, or the Lublin Triangle. To foster a more open, outward-looking model, the Diplomatic Academy has initiated new modes of cooperation with institutions that train diplomats in the European Union and across the globe. We also develop dedicated training programmes for diplomats from other countries. Our aim is to set up a foreign service training centre based on mutual support and experience-sharing with other academies and institutions engaged in educating diplomats worldwide.

Since 2015, under the aegis of the Diplomatic Academy, Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has run what we call the Enlargement Academy. This is a training project addressed to public servants from six Western Balkan countries. The initiative is primarily about sharing Poland's best practice drawn from its period of political transition and European Union accession negotiations. A particular emphasis has been on presenting the role of European Union funds in the development of different parts of our country. The Enlargement Academy offers an interdisciplinary programme encompassing subjects within the remit of various ministries. In practical terms, the programme comprises lectures and presentations, as well as study visits to Polish state institutions. Five rounds of the training have been carried out to date. In 2020-21, unfortunately,

the process was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The next edition of the Enlargement Academy is scheduled for 2022.

Another training format, the Reconciliation and Remembrance Seminar, was established in 2017 by Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Warsaw and the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe. In 2018, the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Wrocław joined in. Held in Poland's Lower Silesia region, the event brings together young people from the six Western Balkan states as well as Poland and Germany. The seminar focuses on the theme of overcoming a difficult past as a prerequisite for countries to grow. Its goal is to inspire measures which help bring Balkan societies together and advance mutual understanding. So far, the project has had three editions. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the seminar in 2020-21. Another is scheduled for 2022.

The unprecedented number and scale of global challenges, but also the sheer volume of global communications, has encouraged closer cooperation between countries and puts a premium on preparing public servants to address problems of international character and reach.

Naturally, this applies especially to diplomats, since their service to their countries involves, among other things, identifying emerging processes and coming up with appropriate responses, often drawn from the experience of other countries or the comprehensive know-how of institutions with global reach. Diplomatic training programmes therefore need to offer their students not only the opportunity to learn foreign languages but also to become acquainted with the viewpoints of many partners.

To achieve this aim, the Diplomatic Academy has signed some thirty partnership agreements in recent years. They concern participation in training courses, exchanges of publications and instructional materials, and study visits. Agreements with selected foreign countries also provide for the exchange of diplomats and opportunities to post staff temporarily to the ministries of foreign governments in order to widen their professional experience. Such close cooperation applies mainly to European Union countries, where it helps strengthen the capacity to develop a common approach to emerging new problems. The Diplomatic Academy's participation in regular seminars conducted by the European Diplomatic Programme makes it possible

to present Poland's views on selected international issues to diplomats from European Union countries.

Poland sees sharing its experience of systemic transformation after the overthrow of communism as a way to show solidarity with countries currently undergoing similar transitions. We offer our know-how as part of the European Union's broader policy of accession negotiations with countries aspiring to European Union membership or located in the European Union's immediate neighbourhood. The European Union's Eastern Partnership, a programme initiated by Poland, has become an integral part of the EU's neighbourhood policy. It helped three countries — Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine — sign association agreements with the European Union and has produced several initiatives integrating the region into European policies. Training foreign diplomats in Poland supports this process and is carried out through bilateral cooperation programmes with selected countries, in particular Ukraine and Moldova, and by offering Polish government scholarships to foreign citizens who wish to study at the College of Europe. One of the College's two campuses is in Warsaw, which allows students to develop further professional and personal links with Poland. Over the past decade, several dozen people have benefited from such scholarships. After completing their studies, these graduates have returned to public service in their home countries. The Diplomatic Academy helps recruit scholarship students and enables them to familiarise themselves with the work of the Polish diplomatic service.

## Dealing with disinformation

Recent years have seen an escalation of disinformation activities, especially from Russia and China. This requires redoubled training to prepare diplomats for action in this field using the potential of digital technologies, including social media. Due to the unique challenge posed by disinformation using modern digital technologies, the Diplomatic Academy offers dedicated training in digital diplomacy, cybersecurity, and combating 'fake news' along with other forms of disinformation. We are also stepping up international cooperation in bilateral relations with the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, Romania, the Netherlands, and the

Czech Republic. The aim is to foster joint reflection and seek appropriate solutions, including through the design of new training modules.

## Knowledge dissemination module

So far, the Polish Diplomatic Academy's activities have focused mainly on training Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff and preparing them for postings abroad. In the process of modernising its foreign service, Poland has implemented changes involving the introduction of a module to promote knowledge of Polish diplomacy and foreign policy among students and opinion leaders in Poland and abroad. Poland has 16 Regional Centres for International Debate tasked with the mission of raising awareness of Polish foreign policy at home. We have made changes to ensure that these actions are addressed to public opinion leaders and to academia at home and abroad.

Existing forms of public dialogue and debate have also changed, as became apparent during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that the shift to the digital space has spurred a broader transformation of communications activities. Classic communications have been replaced by videoconferencing, webinars, vlogs, online debates and workshops. We reckoned it was high time to harness this potential at the Diplomatic Academy to raise awareness of Polish foreign policy and diplomatic activities among academics and opinion leaders. At the same time, we want to create an opportunity to swap ideas and information about the forces shaping the international order, including specific local and regional conditions. We want to ensure that communication about Poland's involvement in various international cooperation formats is transparent and efficient. Clear messaging only reinforces Poland's positive image as a credible ally and partner in NATO, United Nations, and European Union activities. It also offers an opportunity to promote Poland's participation in regional formats such as the Visegrad Group, the Three Seas Initiative, the Lublin Triangle, the Bucharest Format, and the OSCE. Promoting Poland's policies and ideas on Europe, including in their historical and cultural context, should also be an important element of these activities — with a particular focus on European solidarity and security for all European Union members.

## Soft power capacity in diplomacy

Apart from traditional diplomacy understood in the classic way, a special role is played by public diplomacy, which fulfils strategic, coordinating, and executive functions. Its overriding objective is to elicit foreign partners' understanding and support for Poland's *raison d'état*. By narrating a wise and convincing story about our country — its history, traditions, heritage, here and now, and economic potential — we can fashion a positive image and create a strong network of durable relations with our important foreign partners. This dimension of diplomacy — targeted at broad foreign audience composed not just of decision makers but of institutions, organisations, and whole societies — is essential for traditional diplomacy to remain effective in the modern world.

Public diplomacy's use of such 'soft power' mechanisms — such as promotion of Polish culture, history, science and innovation, language, education, sports, tourism, and economy — makes it possible for Poland to improve its image abroad and maintain good international relations.

In this context, cultural diplomacy looms large, especially for countries that endured an enforced absence from the global mainstream due to their struggle with the totalitarian Nazi German and Soviet communist systems. This absence deprived them of full-fledged status as independent partners in the eyes of other countries' elites.

Cultural diplomacy is a foreign policy instrument that encompasses many spheres. When done well, it brings political and economic benefits while affecting how a given country and its 'brand' is perceived. Since the object and subject of cultural diplomacy is the human being as a social entity, its goal is to present not just artistic creativity but values. Cultural diplomacy is the channel through which the humanities take on an international dimension and can have a direct impact on shaping world politics. It is where humanism meets pragmatism and cultural values mix with political interests.

It is a constant challenge for Polish diplomats (or those of any other country) to translate the most important elements of the historical, cultural, and religious heritage that formed our national identity into language understandable to a contemporary audience from different cultures and civilizations. Yet adopting such an approach and understanding the role soft power can play in certain dimensions of public diplomacy, especially

cultural diplomacy, can only improve our political and economic position. The multidirectional and systematic use of soft power can only be effective if it is carried out with humility, professional skill, and a willingness for dialogue. In this process, an understanding of and respect for other cultures and traditions is of great significance.

Today's world is one of many possibilities but also high expectations. Successful communication depends on seizing the opportune moment and exploiting the potential of new technologies, including social media. Conducting joint campaigns with partners at home and abroad can amplify their impact. By using these and other methods, we can better position Poland while strengthening perceptions of our country as a professional partner, able to communicate and respectful of others' views.

To be effective, public diplomacy requires a diversified communication language and frequent resort to unconventional methods not traditionally associated with politics. A permanent dialogue with society and strict fidelity to national interests is essential. The standing of a modern state is only increased by its openness to cooperation, ability to make use of what the international environment offers, and capacity to attract others to its culture.

In our cultural diplomacy initiatives, the objective is to create a positive image for Poland by presenting the cultural legacy of centuries as a source of contemporary attitudes and an inspiration for creative activity in various fields. We also hope to use intercultural dialogue as a means of cultivating peaceful relations between nations and societies. Our aim is to talk about Poland as a country that cares about its cultural heritage and is eager to share its experience on ways to preserve it. We want to share the story of country where creative cities and towns successfully reclaimed degraded post-industrial areas, demonstrating how culture and cultural heritage can exercise a revitalising economic function.

The modern world is marked by globalisation which constitutes both a challenge and a communication opportunity. Through modern technologies, we can reach people from different cultures more easily than ever before. However, technological progress and globalisation in ever more spheres of life can, in some societies, provoke countervailing tendencies like xenophobia or hostility towards foreign cultural and social influence. In this context, cultural diplomacy is of key importance to support peace

and stability worldwide. It allows us to see the broader context and cultural background of other societies and countries.

Properly understood and skilfully practised, cultural diplomacy has a unique capacity to influence international public opinion and individual societies. It also provides a platform for dialogue and an opportunity to get to know and understand each other better. In other words, cultural diplomacy has the potential to raise awareness and improve understanding between people of different cultures. It can convey a positive message about diversity, opportunity, individual expression, and freedom of speech. Effective use of cultural diplomacy will allow us to better explicate Poland's cultural code to other societies. Proper understanding of Poland's *raison d'état* will strengthen our efforts to serve our shared national interests, taking inspiration from Polish culture and traditions to build a more cohesive, inclusive world.