‘The Third Way’ a decade on, in the British and Polish perspective.
A cul-de-sac or an emergency exit?

The concept of ‘The Third Way’ was one of the most significant theoretically and influential politically proposals aimed at a re-definition of the extent and nature of contemporary Social Democracy as an ideological thread and a political force. Over the ten years which have passed since the notion of ‘The Third Way’ was introduced into circulation in politics prove an opportunity to appraise its political ‘feasibility’ on a factual basis. The article points to some of the ideological and theoretical disputes around ‘The Third Way’ and describes, in general terms, the impact of this idea on the politics and public face of the Left. The analysis was carried out based on the example of Great Britain and Poland. Such a selection resulted from the fact that, as far as the debate on the idea of ‘The Third Way’ is concerned, both countries were located at the opposite ends of a ‘centre – periphery axis’. While the idea was born in Britain and was instantly introduced as the doctrine of the ruling Labour Party, it was given a chilly reception in Poland, where it was acknowledged as inappropriate for a state undergoing a transformation of both its social and political system and its economy.

The basis thesis of the essay posits that ‘The Third Way’, though it turned out to be a cul-de-sac for Social Democracy as a doctrine, nevertheless provides, as a political strategy, the contemporary political parties’ rational response to the global changes resulting from the re-defined role and the range of significance of this ideology.