

Chapter 9

The 20th Anniversary of Poland's Accession to NATO

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Geostrategic Location and a Sense of Threat from Russia as the Background for Poland's Bonds with the West

Poland is a middle-rank country located in the heart of Europe. The end of the Cold War and German reunification saw Poland revert to its old worries of being stuck between “two enemies,” Germany and Russia—the feeling of being caught in a grey security zone, or a so-called *Zwischeneuropa*, which might again become the focal point of power political rivalry between these two big neighbors.

Since Poland had been part of the Eastern bloc, Polish political elites feared that Russia, the Soviet successor state, would seek to keep Poland in its sphere of influence. As early as September 1989, Poland decided to pursue the policy of a “return to Europe.” The shortest path would lead through Germany and continuing the reconciliation processes would be at the core of engagement. Consequently, after the Soviet collapse Poland began to see Russia as its main threat.

The process of settling historical differences with Russia only exacerbated these fears and brought further misunderstandings. The most important of these turned out to be the two countries' distinct visions of European security. Having favored pan-European solutions based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for many years, Poland quickly opted for seeking accession to NATO. After all, the CSCE could only provide soft security, just like the EU—whose Eastern enlargement appeared soon even more remote than NATO's potential opening to the East.

Meanwhile, Russia—though going on a charm offensive to NATO itself with Yeltsin speaking of partnership—reinforced its own efforts to build a pan-European security system based on an ever more institu-

tionalized CSCE. Poland thus opted for group security with the West and collective defense provided by NATO, and Russia chose collective security—following the traditions of the USSR.

Changing Priorities: From Accession to the EU to Membership in NATO

Out of concern for its national security, post-communist Poland opted for hard security guarantees, i.e., obtaining the collective defense guarantees offered by the North Atlantic Alliance. There were several reasons, however, why Poland could not obtain those guarantees straight away.

First, in 1989-1991 NATO underwent an identity crisis as a military alliance being gradually deprived of its opponent in the form of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc.

Second, transitional arrangements remained in force due to the fact that forces of the former USSR temporarily remained on the territory of the eastern *Länder* of the united Germany and on the territory of Poland and elsewhere in former Warsaw Pact (and Baltic) states.

Third, the United States and its Allies tried not to irritate Russia with an excessively rapid eastward expansion of their multilateral structures.

Fourth, the ethnic conflicts that broke out in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union destabilized the international situation and called for cooperation between the West and Russia.

Fifth, Western elites were reluctant to perpetuate military blocs, as they believed in the concept of an era of democracy and peace, as put forward by liberal American political scientist Francis Fukuyama.

In this situation, Poland's political elites focused in the first instance on the other fundamental aims of their policy—the country's development. They introduced radical economic reforms (the Balcerowicz Plan) and established close ties with the European Community and the emerging European Union through an Association Agreement in 1991. The policy of "returning to the West," pursued since 1989, also entailed joining the Council of Europe (1991) and establishing contacts with the Western European Union (WEU). Collaboration with Ger-

many and France within the framework of the Weimar Triangle (since 1991) was another important aspect of this course. Poland bound itself to the “institutional West” in order to ensure a continued progression on its development and civilizational advancement free from the Soviet yoke, and to get closer to the West’s security structures, specifically NATO and WEU.

For the political class that emerged out of the democratic opposition from the communist period, focusing on an increasingly institutionalized CSCE was a temporary pan-European solution pending Poland’s accession to NATO. This was the viewpoint of Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, and it was supported by Democratic Union politicians. The strong post-communist Left supported this security policy and saw Poland’s accession to the European Union as its most important international policy aim. This was met with understanding in the West, and American politicians and experts stated outright that Poland should first join the EU and establish itself as a democratic state capable of collaboration; this in turn could pave the way to one day gaining NATO membership.

In such circumstances, during the first years of the democratic transformations, Polish foreign policy prioritized the aim of accession to the European Union. This viewpoint was not that of Jan Olszewski’s nationalist-right government, which was in power briefly (Dec. 1991–June 1992) and took unsuccessful steps, especially in the United States, to obtain at least “partial” security guarantees from NATO. As we know, the North Atlantic Treaty does not provide for any form of association or partial membership. Moreover, the government proved unable to resolve any of the serious problems affecting Poland’s relations with Russia. If anything, it complicated them further by raising contentious historical issues such the Katyń Massacres (1940). In addition, Polish President Lech Wałęsa was impatient with the West’s cautious stance with regard to the efforts of Central European countries to join NATO, and attempted to blackmail the West in the spring of 1992 with his idea of setting up a “NATO-bis” alliance.

Initially, there was no coherent position on Poland’s integration with Western structures among the Polish political class. Although the post-communist Left tended to favor Poland’s accession to the European Union during the first years of transformation, some voices on

the Left made allowance for Poland's accession to NATO. One such example was President Wojciech Jaruzelski's advisor, Colonel Wiesław Górnicki, who spoke of the need for Poland's accession to NATO as early as 1990 in the daily *Życie Warszawy*. It was an isolated opinion, however, especially as at the time Poland was still a member of the Warsaw Pact. It should also be borne in mind that there were many outstanding security policy experts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Krzysztof Skubiszewski, such as Andrzej Towpik, for whom Poland's membership in NATO was a foreign policy aim. Along with the new officials—mostly from the Democratic Union—appointed by the post-Solidarity forces, they formed a competent team preparing Poland conceptually for the steps leading to NATO membership.

The first important and successful initiative of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chancellery of President Lech Wałęsa was the preparation, along with Czechoslovak and Hungarian diplomats, of a joint declaration by the three countries' leaders. It was issued in Prague on May 6, 1992. The leaders of the Visegrád Triangle countries appealed for further qualitative development of relations between the three countries and the North Atlantic Alliance and stated that their "long-term objective remains their full-fledged membership in NATO."¹

Two days later, on May 8, 1992, while announcing closer ties with NATO in the Polish parliament, Minister Skubiszewski for the first time explicitly declared that Warsaw's aim was to gradually and effectively integrate Poland with the Alliance's security system, with NATO membership in due course.² In his subsequent statements for the press in June 1992, Skubiszewski reiterated Poland's intention to join NATO "step by step,"³ and from that moment on, this was the principal objective of Poland's foreign and security policy.

In July of that year, Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka said in her Sejm *exposé* that her government would strive to accelerate the process leading to Poland's membership in the North Atlantic Alliance. In October 1992, during an interview with the Secretary General of the Alliance and the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, Suchocka stated clearly, and in the presence of Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz, that Poland's aim was to become a NATO member. She did not receive

a positive reply, but was told that the Alliance would focus on cooperation within the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC).

NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, who was very friendly towards Poland, mentioned during talks in a narrower circle that certain Allies were resisting the idea of enlargement, but noted that NATO was open to such an option in the future and gave assurances that Poland was part of the small number of candidates for membership.⁴

On 2 November 1992, President Wałęsa signed two program documents adopted by the National Defense Committee: "The Premises of Polish Foreign Policy" and "The Security Policy and Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland," in which Poland officially announced that its goal was to join NATO.⁵

Not long afterwards, one of the experts connected with the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) voted in favor of a gradual rapprochement with NATO and indicated how this should be achieved. In early 1993, he wrote that "Poland intended to achieve membership in NATO gradually. The way to do this was to establish the closest possible bilateral military cooperation with the members of the North Atlantic Alliance and multilateral cooperation within NATO, which also included involvement in the NACC. The task during this initial period of rapprochement with NATO was for the Polish Armed Forces to gradually attain technical and functional compatibility with Western armies."⁶

Soon Poland's efforts to join NATO were made easier, largely due to political changes at home and on the international stage. In October 1993 the center-left coalition government of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL) was formed; one month earlier the withdrawal of Russian troops from Poland had been completed (and from former East German territory in mid-1994). The Democratic Left Alliance, which initially saw security in terms of pan-European regulations (CSCE), remained fixated on Polish accession to the EU. As they governed the country, Democratic Left Alliance politicians came to appreciate the difficulty of adapting Poland to EU standards, and as they shared government with President Wałęsa, they came to prefer Poland's accession to NATO, not least because this was easier to attain. The center-liberal political circles of the opposition Freedom Union (former Democratic Union) had pronounced them-

selves much earlier in favor of NATO membership. But they only presented their position fully in the *Poland-NATO Report*, which was published in October 1995. Its main authors, Przemysław Grudziński and Henryk Szlajfer, joined by Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Andrzej Olechowski, Andrzej Ananicz and Krzysztof Skubiszewski, publicly called for Poland to first opt for NATO membership, as this was easier than meeting EU membership criteria.⁷

It can therefore be said that the years 1993-1995 saw the emergence of a consensus between Poland's principal political forces, from right to left, about the country's foreign policy priorities. The idea of joining NATO *prior* to gaining membership in the European Union carried the day. This led to a systematic and ongoing deterioration of Poland's relations with Russia, which had been against NATO expansion to the East since the fall of 1993. Indeed, it produced a deepening impasse in Polish-Russian relations that no political force in Poland was able to overcome. Russia was not interested in overcoming this impasse either, and rejected the Partnership for Transformation concept put forward by Polish Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak and Foreign Minister Andrzej Olechowski in 1994.

Polish Cooperation with NATO Prior to Accession

An issue of key importance in convincing Poland's future allies, and especially the United States, to accept it as a NATO member, was the Polish-American cooperation established at a very early stage in the sphere of intelligence. The first significant Polish intelligence operation of this type took place in 1990, during the unfolding of the Persian Gulf crisis. It ended with the spectacular spiriting of CIA agents out of Iraq. This operation has always served to legitimize Poland in the eyes of its NATO allies. A similar motive guided the center-left SLD/PSL government's dispatch of a 51-person contingent of commandos from the GROM unit to Haiti in October 1994, as support for the Multinational Forces, to manage the situation following the overthrow of that country's military junta. Another unequivocally positive role was played by Polish military intelligence services during the wars in former Yugoslavia. The Americans didn't mind that professionally active Polish special services had a communist pedigree and had even conducted successful operations against the United States.⁸ Unfortunately, the effec-

tiveness of these services was hampered by some Polish governments (above all by those of Jan Olszewski and Law and Justice—PiS), guided by the obsession of vetting and eliminating proven, often outstanding, aces of the Polish intelligence services from communist times.⁹

Ever since Poland was interested in membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, it feared that newly emerging institutions like the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) or the Partnership for Peace (PfP) would be substitutes. The pronouncements of President Lech Wałęsa—who warned President Bill Clinton's envoys Madeleine Albright, General John Shalikashvili and Charles Gati in January 1994, prior to the Brussels NATO summit, that Poland would not even join PfP—were especially critical.¹⁰ However, during an official dinner of the heads of the Visegrád Group states with the U.S. president held in Prague on January 12, Wałęsa said of the PfP that it was “a step in the right direction, however too small. I hope that today's talks will define the time horizon and that our progress on the way to NATO will be faster.”¹¹

Poland nevertheless joined the PfP in February 1994, and the following September the first NATO military maneuvers took place in Biedrusko near Poznań. Military cooperation within the PfP framework served to adapt Poland to NATO standards and contributed to bringing Poland closer to membership in the Alliance. The Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), thanks to which partner countries were able to cooperate more closely with NATO forces in order to achieve interoperability objectives, was especially important. In practical terms, Polish military collaboration with NATO took the form of Poland's participation in IFOR, which was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina following the Dayton peace agreements and which put an end to civil war in that country. In February 1996, a 670-person strong Polish contingent joined IFOR and served as part of the Nordic-Polish Brigade. From December of that year, the Polish unit (which had been reduced to about 500 soldiers) was included in the next NATO mission—SFOR.

In the fall of 1994, Poland, along with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, was included in the American military aid program (the so-called Brown amendment), and on December 1, 1994, the North Atlantic Council adopted the breakthrough decision to initiate internal

debate within the Alliance about the manner and principles of its enlargement and the impact that this would have on European security. The option of NATO opening itself to new members was accepted by the Alliance's 16 members.

Poland was impatient and sought, mainly in Washington, to accelerate NATO's enlargement eastward. President Lech Wałęsa's efforts were successfully continued by his successor from SLD, Aleksander Kwaśniewski. However, the United States tried to secure Russia's acquiescence to NATO's historical admission of the former East Bloc countries. This was not made any easier by the pronouncements made in the fall of 1995 by President Wałęsa or Defense Minister Zbigniew Okoński (appointed by Wałęsa), who feared that Poland might become a second-class NATO member and who demanded that Washington deploy nuclear weapons on Polish territory. This led to nervous reactions in Moscow.

A very positive role in the efforts leading to Poland's admission to NATO was that of Jerzy Koźmiński, Poland's ambassador in the United States in 1994-2000. I personally had the opportunity (as a fellow at George Washington University during the 1994-95 academic year), to see how persistent he was in his efforts to persuade political circles in Washington and the U.S. public to expand NATO. I remember that instead of complaining about Poland's abysmal geopolitical situation and the threat from the East, he sought to convince the Americans of how good a deal they would be making by accepting Poland as a NATO member.

Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, National Director of the Polish-American Congress at the time, also played an important role. This is evidenced by his extensive publicity work, published in Poland years later, upon which he embarked during this period.¹² In general, the Polish-American community played a major role in the difficult process of persuading U.S. decision-making circles to expand the North Atlantic Alliance so as to include Poland. The very positive advisory role of Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, associated with the Democratic Party, cannot be overestimated.

One issue hindering Poland's diplomatic efforts to become a NATO member was the worryingly insufficient civilian control over the Polish armed forces. The problem was symbolized by the political activity of

General Tadeusz Wilecki, who was appointed Chief of General Staff of the Polish Army by President Lech Wałęsa in August 1992. This general openly criticized the Sejm and the government, and in autumn 1994, with the support of other generals and President Wałęsa, forced the civilian minister of national defense (Admiral Piotr Kołodziejczyk, retired) to resign. General Wilecki was also a serious problem for the next president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski who, acting in response to Washington's expectations, decided to dismiss this general in March 1997.

Polish authorities faced another very sensitive problem on the way to NATO membership, and this was the issue of the investigation—renewed by Polish prosecutors—of Colonel Ryszard Kukliński. He was a former spy who had worked for the Americans, had informed them in 1981 of General Jaruzelski's preparations for martial law, had fled Poland and had been sentenced in absentia to death for treason. The matter was not taken up by the governments with a Solidarity pedigree or by President Wałęsa, but by the SLD/PSL government, and the main politician who brought about the positive closure of this difficult matter in September 1997 was the SLD leader, Minister of the Interior Leszek Miller, one of the former secretaries of the communist party in Poland. This example shows how Poles, including those from the old system, wanted Poland to join NATO. The Polish authorities, in keeping with regulations, carried out a controversial operation and resolved the last obstacle, which was the fact that Kukliński had until then been officially seen as a traitor in Poland and as a hero in the United States. Before the matter was formally closed, President Bill Clinton thanked the Polish government during his visit to Warsaw in July 1997.

The American political class found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that since 1993 the government in Poland had been formed by two parties who had originated in the communist system, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Polish Peasants' Party (PSL), while in December 1995, the SLD's chairman, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, was elected president of the country. However, they quickly came to terms with this by observing the concrete actions of the post-communists. Although deep divisions persisted in internal politics, the political class at that time was guided by a *raison d'état*, which demanded that it continue its efforts to secure Poland's accession to NATO and the EU. Even Lech Wałęsa—who had rendered great services for the country and was

bitterly disillusioned by his defeat in the 1995 presidential elections—during his visit to the White House in March 1996, spoke telling and wise words to President Clinton:

Mr. President, you need not fear for Poland. Poland is in good hands. Those that govern it, have nothing in common with Russian communists. I do not like them of course, this is natural and you most certainly understand this. But they are intelligent and educated—often in your country and at your cost—who know capitalism and understand it. They have even come to like democracy, they are Westerners and pro-American. More than this, in a sense they have to be better than us, because everyone is now looking over their shoulder. We will win next time, but they won this time.¹³

Meanwhile, Poland was dissatisfied with the cooperation being established at many levels between NATO and the Russian Federation. This so-called Yalta Syndrome (fear of the West coming to an understanding with Russia at Poland's expense) appeared on many occasions, for example NATO's proposal to include Russia to the PfP program, the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation of May 27, 1997 in Paris, the Rome Agreement of May 28, 2002, and the Lisbon Summit's 2010 offer that Russia collaborate in building an anti-missile shield.

This made the development of Poland's relations with Russia difficult and appeared to confirm Poland's alleged Russophobia in the eyes of some European allies. It has to be said that under the nationalist-right governments of the Law and Justice party (2005–2007 and since the fall of 2015), such allegations were not entirely groundless, even if Moscow was and remains uninterested in the normalization of relations with Warsaw. Russia treated Poland through the prism of its relations with the United States, and saw Poland as a U.S. client-state. In recent years Russian political science too has been criticizing Poland and Russia's other Western neighbors increasingly often, and referring to them as "limotrophs" implementing America's anti-Russian strategy.¹⁴

One of the most serious issues connected with Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement was Poland's fear of becoming a second-class member of the Alliance. As a concession to weaken Russia's opposition,

the United States and NATO had pledged in 1990 that, just as with the eastern *Länder* following German reunification, NATO would not expand its infrastructure to the territory of new member states and that no substantial NATO combat troops would be permanently stationed there.¹⁵ This was formalized in May 1997 during the signing of the Founding Act in Paris.

Before the decision to invite new members to the Alliance was formally announced at the NATO summit in Madrid on July 7, 1997, the Polish delegation was asked by Secretary General Javier Solana to sign the so-called “3 x NO declaration”: NO to substantial NATO armed forces on the territory of states joining the Alliance; NO to military installations and bases; and NO to nuclear warheads. A member of the Polish delegation described it years later:

Silence fell. President Aleksander Kwaśniewski was quickest to react: ‘Gentlemen, we wish to join NATO, but at the outset you wish to treat us as second-rank members.’ The NATO side expected this and replied ‘This will not be the case. Should anything bad take place in the East, we will change these provisions immediately.’ It was clear that precedence had been given to Russia and it is with its authorities that NATO had first negotiated. We quickly signed the document, and only then could negotiations begin.¹⁶

Poland first ignored this forced political obligation, and went on to question it in the second decade of the 21st century as it advocated the building of the NATO anti-missile shield in Poland and to reinforce NATO’s eastern flank.

Polish Disputes with Russia about NATO Policy

Upon joining NATO in March 1999, Poland became an important member of the Alliance from a geostrategic point of view. It obtained Allied guarantees in the event of aggression by a third country, an expression widely seen in Poland as synonymous with Russia. To the north, Poland borders on Russia’s Kaliningrad District, and to the east it shares a border with Belarus (bound to Russia by a military alliance since 1994), and with Ukraine—a state that was formally neutral and which was balancing between Russia and the West. Nearly half of Poland’s southern border is with Slovakia, a country which was outside

the Alliance until the spring of 2004. The fundamental concern of the Polish authorities was to secure the country militarily from any possible Russian aggression. For this reason, from the moment Poland joined the Alliance, it pushed for obtaining the same military status as that enjoyed by the “old” members, despite the above-mentioned NATO understandings with Russia. Polish politicians didn’t treat these pledges to Moscow, or the provisions of the Founding Act, as treaty obligations. It has to be said that this latter document was not a legally binding treaty, but its binding force is *de facto* almost equally valid, similarly to the CSCE Final Act of 1975. The Western Allies have respected the original political understanding with Russia as regards the additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces, and for as long as they saw no need to reinforce the Alliance’s eastern flank, there was no problem. Such a need arose toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

It was under the vigorous leadership of Vladimir Putin that Russia eventually embarked on a policy of balancing the influence of the West. This was foreshadowed by Putin’s famous speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy of February 2007. The following year Russia reacted with disproportionate force to Georgia’s attack on its troops, stationed as CIS peacekeepers in South Ossetia. Poland and other countries in the region felt an increased sense of threat, and feared the possibility of Russian armed aggression. In this situation, on August 20, 2008 Poland signed an agreement with the United States to build elements of a U.S. anti-missile shield on Polish territory.

Poland then began to demand that NATO strengthen its collective defense function enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and that it bring its contingency plans from 2001 up to date. This was Poland’s position prior to the Lisbon Summit of November 2010 and in subsequent years. After Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, Poland further demanded a military reinforcement of the Alliance’s eastern flank. All these steps and demands led to protests from Russia, which invoked, among other things, the stipulations of the Founding Act.

Another problem in NATO-Russian relations turned out to be NATO’s “Open Door” policy, which Poland strongly supported and which presupposed further expansion of the Alliance, especially to former Soviet republics, that is, initially Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and, from 2008, also Ukraine and Georgia.

Polish-Russian relations also deteriorated as a result of the two countries' rivalry in the post-Soviet area. Poland took an active part in supporting U.S., NATO and EU policy which sought to promote democracy in Eastern Europe, included support of "color revolutions", and the EU's Eastern Partnership program. These Western initiatives were aimed at supporting democratization as well as a pro-Western orientation in the foreign policy of the former Soviet republics. Russia, on the other hand, saw this as interference in the internal affairs of the countries which lay in what it believed to be its sphere of influence, or what it called its "near abroad."

From the perspective of the theory of political realism, it has to be said that the motives officially put forward by Warsaw, Washington and Brussels, namely "supporting democracy," were just a cover for tensions already unfolding between the West and Russia over the future of the non-Russian post-Soviet states and their geopolitical orientation at stake. Side-by-side with the United States, Poland played a leading role in this contest.¹⁷ Such a policy was due to the concept Warsaw had adopted on the threshold of the post-Cold War period and which called for strengthening the independence of Poland's immediate eastern neighbors as well as Georgia, in order to preclude Russia's reversion to an imperial policy.¹⁸

This was compounded by the strong anti-Russian sentiments, verging at times on outright Russophobia, of most Polish politicians, especially right-wingers. Poland showed its greatest commitment to supporting an anti-Russian political course with regard to Ukraine during the Orange Revolution at the turn of 2004/2005, and the so-called Dignity Revolution which began in November 2013. In the latter case, Poland's eagerness clearly overtook that of NATO and EU partners when it initiated economic sanctions against Russia, proposed that NATO sell weapons to Ukraine and, above all, when it sought to reinforce NATO's eastern flank and have all NATO allies increase military spending. Poland's determined course not only threatened the cohesion of the Alliance when it was accepted with some reservations by a number of European Allies but, above all, it eliminated Poland as one of the mediators in the Ukrainian crisis, a role that it could have played following the initially successful initiative of the Weimar Triangle in February 2014.

The Consequences of Poland's Accession to NATO and of its Pro-American Attitude

Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 had consequences not only for Poland's security, but also for NATO as a whole. The following are accession's most important consequences for the North Atlantic Alliance.

First, it strengthened Poland's security and U.S. involvement in European security issues by extending NATO security guarantees to two other Central European countries in the first instance and seven more in 2004.

Second, it enlarged the Atlanticist (and pro-American) wing within the Alliance. Proponents of an autonomous EU defense policy, France above all, began to refer Poland as an American "Trojan horse" in an integrating Europe, and following Poland's intervention in Iraq, in the German press Poland was referred to as the "Trojan ass" in connection nature of this operation, which had not been legitimized by the United Nations.

Third, it launched the process of an asymmetrical shaping of European security, it strengthened the security of Central Europe but not that of Eastern Europe, as involving Russia on a large scale in this process proved unsuccessful.

Fourth, Poland seeks to set the example in terms of contributing to NATO's defense capabilities. In 2002, it undertook to spend no less than 1.95% of GDP on defense as compared to the previous year. In 2018, it raised this figure to 2.0% of GDP, and on August 15, 2018 President Andrzej Duda announced that he would increase it to 2.5% of GDP in 2024, that is to about \$31 billion annually.¹⁹ This is an enormous effort, and doubts were voiced loudly in Poland about whether the government in Warsaw could really afford it. U.S. President Donald Trump praised Poland for this and singled it out as an example to follow by other allies, 23 of which did not attain the 2.0% of GDP figure recommended at the Newport NATO summit in September 2014. It is a pity that Poland's steadily increasing military budget does not lead to increased security to a degree making it certain that Poland's territory will be defended in the event of a possible war with Russia. On the other hand, the militarization of Polish and NATO security policy is not helping to strengthen international security, it weakens it by

spurring an arms race, as Russia is responding with its own increasingly modern armaments.

Fifth, the reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank during the second decade of the 21st century has only ostensibly increased the security of the Allies, especially that of the Central European members. But it has strengthened Russia's determination to counterbalance NATO expansion. As a result, the militarization of security has begun, and the opportunities for multilateral pan-European negotiations (at the OSCE forum) and bilateral dialogue with Russia are not being used.

Sixth, continuing the process of NATO enlargement so as to include post-Soviet countries, especially when raised in 2008 regarding Ukraine and Georgia, entailed crossing a "red line" with regard to Russia.²⁰ This triggered sharp Russian countermeasures in the form of the Georgian War in 2008 and the Ukraine crisis in 2014. By annexing Crimea and militarily supporting the secession of the Eastern Ukraine's Donbas area, Russia signaled emphatically that it would not hesitate to use force and violate international law in order to protect its great-power interests. All in all, this means that the states making up the Euro-Atlantic security system are potentially heading for a great war in which there would be no winners. Poland was one of the main supporters of politics from a position of force which led to a situation reminiscent of the Cold War during the Ukraine crisis.²¹

A few years after joining NATO, Poland moved toward a clear policy of "bandwagoning" with regard to the United States. The most important signs were Poland's participation in America's invasion of Iraq in March 2003, its subsequent administration of one of the stabilization zones in that country, followed by new arms purchases from the United States once in April 2003 an agreement was signed for the purchase of F-16 multi-purpose planes. In September 2004, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Adam Daniel Rotfeld inaugurated a strategic dialogue between Poland and the United States. It was a low-level dialogue, although bilateral visits took place at the highest level. The bandwagoning policy in the following years, especially during the Law and Justice government, reduced Poland to the role of a U.S. client state and satellite.

The militarization of security policy as pursued by the United States and Poland neither strengthens the North Atlantic Alliance's security,

nor increases Poland's national security. What's more, it hinders NATO's internal cohesion, since the leading Western European allies, Germany and France, are in favor of a cautious Eastern NATO policy and pragmatic cooperation with Russia, not least in security matters. On the other hand, Poland considers its security interests as identical with those of the United States and, therefore, unquestionably supports unilateral U.S. actions (such as the suspension of the INF treaty) and even encourages them, like the proposal to build "Fort Trump" on its territory. The danger is that this course may lead to Poland's strategic isolation, because Trump's America is no longer fully predictable.

Notes

1. Summit of the Visegrád Triangle: Declaration of the Highest Representatives of the Triangle Countries—Prague, May 6, 1992, *Zbiór Dokumentów-Recueil de Documents*, 1992, No. 3, p. 175.

2. The right-wing Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (KPN) party, which was not a member of the government coalition, criticized the idea as it preferred to base Poland's security on the concept of Międzymorze (Intermarium), which Poland had championed unsuccessfully in the 1920s.

3. *Polska Zbrojna*, June 19–21, 1992.

4. R. Zięba, *Polityka zagraniczna w strefie euroatlantyckiej*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, p. 46.

5. *Przegląd Rządowy*, No. 12 (18), December 1992, pp. 73–81.

6. A. Karkoszka, "Polityka bezpieczeństwa Polski," *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, Vol. XLVI, 1993, No. 1, p. 98.

7. A. Ananicz et al., *Poland-NATO Report*, Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs, Euro-Atlantic Association 1995. It was later published in *European Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 141–166.

8. E. Żemła, Gen. Radosław Kujawa: Tajemnice zdradza się tylko raz. Polskie służby tego nie zrobiły, Onet.pl, 12 March 2019, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/20-lat-polski-w-nato-gen-radoslaw-kujawa-o-procesie-akcesyjnym-do-nato/q4s2s5v>, accessed March 26, 2019.

9. It is worthwhile to mention that the few living Polish heroes of the Iraq operation were stripped of their retirement pensions in 2017 under the new "de-ubi-cizing" law (from UB—the Security Agency).

10. T. Lis, *Wielki finał. Kulisy wstępowania Polski do NATO*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak 1999, pp. 91–95.

11. See *Materials and Documents*, Vol. 3, No. 1-2/1994, p. 319.

12. J. Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska droga do NATO: Listy, dokumenty, publikacje / Poland's Road to NATO: Letters, Documents, Publications*, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum 2006.

13. T. Lis, op. cit., pp. 232–233.

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