A New ‘Partner in Leadership’? Poland in contemporary international affairs

Dr Stephen Wood
Postdoctoral Fellow, National Europe Centre, ANU

National Europe Centre Paper No: 114

Adapted from a paper presented at The National Europe Centre on Friday, 11 July 2003
In May 1989, President G.H.W. Bush characterised the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany as 'partners in leadership', outlining a cooperative vision for the two countries as cracks in the Warsaw Pact edifice were beginning to widen.¹ Thirteen years later his son, President G.W. Bush, had formed a very different opinion on that bilateral relationship. Concurrently, a more favourable one developed, one that for the US complements the 'special relationship' with the UK in western Europe by providing a central-eastern European focus. For the US, Poland is taking on some of those 'partner in leadership' roles that Germany has not. Since its emancipation from Soviet hegemony Poland has become an actor of growing importance on the European and wider international scene.

Two institutional networks: NATO and the EU; and four states: Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and the United States, predominate in Polish foreign policy considerations. In this context Poland achieved the two major goals that it aimed at since communism collapsed: membership of NATO and accession to the EU. While there was some hesitation about widening NATO, Polish entry to it occurred earlier and involved less of the domestic controversy, exacting negotiations, or display of national rivalries that featured in the EU enlargement process. Poland needs both the US and EU more than they need it. Polish political figures have pronounced that they wish not only to preserve but to strengthen the 'transatlantic community', even as, or because, this has come under strain. In some instances choices have to be made between the preferences of some EU states and those of the US and other EU states. Poland has demonstrated to the US that it is a reliable and valuable ally. Inclinations to remain close to it, combined with recent international developments, have been more responsible for propelling an increase in Poland's profile and prestige than Europe has. Conversely, for the US administration, Poland's EU membership and (historically precarious) geopolitical position lend it strategic weight. The diplomatic fracas that preceded the Iraq conflict saw a Washington-London-Warsaw alignment countering a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis. This new prominence may, however, have disadvantages as well as advantages. Besides a certain estrangement from some neighbours, is the possibility of suffering casualties in Iraq.

Poland has energetically promoted a ‘transatlantic dialogue’² and aims to diversify its international links. It is confronted with linked challenges in foreign and security policy: i)

²For example, through forums like the “TransAtlantic Dialogue”, the third conference of which was hosted at the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw, May 30-June 1, 2003.
acceptance as a 'Partner in Leadership' by both the US and EU; ii) through this develop a constructive, stabilising interaction with an 'Eastern Dimension' that remains a cause of concern.3

Poland’s external outlook: Background characteristics and influences

A strong awareness of history is present in the Polish Foreign Ministry (MSZ), as it is throughout most of the country.4 It permeates thinking about international affairs and is consciously employed as a guide to policy-making. An MSZ official declared 'history is the key to our foreign policy' and 'we must support declarations with action.'5 At the UN, Foreign Minister Cimoszewicz said:

In the very complicated Polish history, my nation experienced several instances of betrayal by our disloyal neighbours and allies and paid the highest price for it. Therefore we understand better than anyone else how priceless and crucial true loyalty and alliance are.6

Poland exemplifies that International Relations approaches privileging either identity, ideas and culture; institutions and norms; or material interests, power, and geopolitical considerations, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Physical security and economic prosperity are the means by which Polish identity and culture (individual and national) can unfold. The perception that these benefits will derive from it underpins the macro-goal of western integration. In IR terms Poland has a 'realist' orientation, in EU terms 'intergovernmental', influenced by history, national identity, and their place in the Polish psyche. There is a strong desire for independence. Multilateral structures are not an end in themselves. Collective security arrangements may require commitment beyond signatures. A balance of power remains important.7

Gradually replacing the Bartoszewski/Skubiszewski/Geremek generation in the foreign policy establishment is a younger cohort, many of whom moved into the field in the post-communist era.

3Pawel Kowal Ed. The EU’s “Eastern Dimension”: An opportunity for or idée fixe of Poland’s Policy? (Warsaw: Centre for International Relations 2002).
5Interview with the author, Polish Foreign Ministry, Warsaw, April 2003.
7Jerzy M. Nowak, Zdzislaw Lachowski and Adam Kobieracki Between a balance of power and cooperative security in Europe: The adaptation of the CFE regime to the new international environment (Warsaw: CSM 1999).
Without disregarding history they are more future-oriented than their predecessors, adaptive to global influences, have experienced a different relationship with (a different) Germany, and are aware that descriptors like 'traditional', 'catholic' and 'national consciousness' colour views of Poland. Joining NATO and the EU formalises the western identification that (most of) the political class and intelligentsia have promoted. Modernisers in civil society wish to move beyond notions and images of a noble, romantic but also chaotic and tragic Poland. Presentation of a dynamic and modern Poland is directed as much, if not more, to external audiences as it is internally.

Polish foreign policy has been incorporating new techniques in public diplomacy, use of internet and other information technologies, expanding cultural promotion, learning from leaders in use of these tools (US, UK, Germany). After smaller scale centres had been established (including three in Germany), a major cultural institute (AMI) was launched in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture. Another indicator of modernisation in thinking and style was manifested in the creation of a Diplomatic Academy of the MSZ, opened in October 2002. There is no abandoning of more traditional bases (those that survived through and because of Soviet hegemony) and the idea of sovereignty. Skubiszewski, the first post-communist Foreign Minister, defined Polish raison d'etat as 'superior to all domestic divisions.' A consensus on critical principles of foreign policy is maintained. At the Academy's inauguration, Cimoszewicz declared:

The thousand year old state service which supports foreign policy is not only not losing its significance, but on the contrary – it is playing an increasingly important role each day, continuously incorporating further areas within its tasks...In order to face up to this role the diplomatic corps must adapt at a rate that keeps up with the changes in reality, it must be active, creative and must consist of highly qualified allrounders

Grzegorz Weclawowicz wrote of ‘three menaces’ in which security concerns of one form or another were prominent. The old western menace was Germany; that of the mid-1990s was the demands of EU accession and the fear that the west might assign Poland to the sphere of the eastern menace—Russia. Presently the third menace may be the most threatening. Poland’s rise and

---

9 George Sandford Poland: the conquest of history (Amsterdam: Harwood 1999) p84.
performance in foreign, security and defence policy fields contrasts with its domestic condition. After strong growth in 1990s, the economy is in trouble with high deficits and debt and rising unemployment. The party system tends to fragmentation, there is difficulty in reaching consensus over policy, administrative problems and corruption persevere. With some standout exceptions, the political 'elite' is characterised by mediocrity. Polish and foreign commentators complain that no country is so badly governed. These are elements of the 'internal menace' that might constrain Polish capacity for international roles, like the six-year plan to modernize the Polish military that began in 1999.

Poland is reliant on external financial assistance, in the form of debt write-offs, Paris and London Club borrowings, PHARE, and now European Community structural and CAP funds. It has an investment agency, PAIZ (recently fused with another department), to encourage investment in Poland. By 2003, $US 65 billion was attracted, an average 4.2% of GDP p.a. over the past five years. Poland needs much more to stem economic problems and regenerate growth and employment. According to the German-Polish industry and trade chamber 'this country needs a tremendous amount of money' (unheimlich viel Geld). While there might be advantages for certain interest groups or political actors worried about adverse reactions, tendencies that would discourage foreign (and thereby some local) investment are unhelpful.

Poland and the United States

One of the leading potential and hoped for sources of FDI is the US. Poland is traditionally America-friendly, at state-state and inter-societal levels. Americans are regularly #1 in polls of the most liked nations. There is a Polonia of about 10 million in the US, normally Democrat voters, many of whom switched to the Republicans under Reagan in the 1980s. Exactly how much influence they exert on US politics varies but no American politician would be wise to or is likely to alienate them. Affection for and links to their ancestral homeland are manifested in the Polish-American Fund, one of the largest external investors in Poland. Admiration for the US and its international role, image as a land of opportunity and so on, does not mean there is widespread

14Interview with the author, Deutsch-Polnisch Industrie- und Handelskammer, Warsaw, April 2003.
support to import an American style of capitalism in Poland. The form that is developing is less big business, with more social and national-cultural characteristics. To avoid the Polish language being swamped by English (perhaps also directed to German) Poland introduced a law whereby all advertising, product information, and public pronouncements had to be (also) made in Polish.\textsuperscript{15}

In the more conventional foreign policy area, Poland had been representing American diplomatic interests in Iraq from 1991 to the outbreak of war there in March 2003, whereupon it sent in special forces (GROM) of its own. This was controversial domestically, not least because of the secrecy surrounding this deployment. Publication of photographs of Polish personnel posing with an American flag was one means by which the Polish public learned of the involvement.\textsuperscript{16}

There is also some discomfort about being viewed as a ‘vassal’ of the US. Poland had already ratified the establishing of an International Criminal Court in November 2001; later it did not close the Iraqi embassy in Poland during the war despite US requests. In November 2003 there was displeasure when Paul Bremer, head of the ‘Provisional Authority’ in Iraq cancelled a meeting with Polish Prime Minister, Leszek Miller, at short notice and returned to Washington for talks. These differences are, however, overwhelmed by alignments on major issues.

The US administration views Poland as playing a vital role in Iraq, not just through its \textit{in situ} functions but as an ally adding political weight to American objectives. Polish personnel number about 2600. The inclusion of Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians, among others, in an international troop under Polish command is significant when considered in the broader international context.\textsuperscript{17} A US embassy official in Warsaw was open about the Polish government being placed in a difficult position over Iraq. He spoke of a general scepticism in the society towards military adventures but which was not bound with anti-Americanism as seen elsewhere. The Americans were not surprised but very pleased by the Polish response. There was no list of demands, though some expectation of a role in Iraq’s reconstruction—tacitly a share of contracts. Poland also needs a guarantee of oil supplies, one that would ease or free it from dependency on or possible blackmail by Russia. The president of the Polish Senate declared that it was important for Poland to prove its ‘credibility as a reliable ally’, which simultaneously impressed that Poland has a powerful friend and will not be coerced. In ‘official Washington’ there was ‘warmth towards

\textsuperscript{15} Despite its need of foreign money, Poland, including the current government, was considered as not totally open and welcoming of FDI, even for Americans. Interview with the author, US Embassy, Warsaw, April 2003.

\textsuperscript{16}“Kontrowersyjna fotografia” Polska Zbrojna n13 (323) 30 March 2003 p16.

\textsuperscript{17}“Polen: Ablösung im Irak” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 3 July 2003.
Poland'. The US may have to pay for much of the new Polish prominence. The sale of US military aircraft to Poland is accompanied by loans ($US3.5 billion) to pay for it along with increases in US trade and investment. There has been discussion of the US shifting bases and troops from Germany to Poland, viewed as a stimulus for the Polish economy. Poland was the main destination for Bush's 'reconciliation tour' of Europe.

According to the US embassy, the only problem area in the two countries relations had been Poland's engagement with its Jewish history. At a 60-year commemoration in July 2001, Polish President Kwasniewski apologized for the murder of Jews by 'Catholics' at Jedwabne in eastern Poland in 1941. This recognised a past where Poland/Poles are not portrayed solely as victims. Though the related discussion was uncomfortable for the political elite and other sections of society, in general the nation and Kwasniewski emerged in a favourable light.

### Poland and the European Union

Poland's relationship with the US, at least at present, looks more straightforward than that with the EU. Intermittent tensions with institutions and some member states have featured in the accession process. This was a challenge for Poland; conversely Poland represented the biggest challenge to the EU's integrative and financial capacities. Prospective membership for central and eastern European countries was greeted with rhetoric of a 'fulfilment of historical purpose' in western European capitals while generating apprehension about how to pay for their incorporation into community policy instruments and ongoing modernisation. Most of it applied to Poland, which

sceptics in the west say, is too big for the EU, too rural, too catholic, too friendly with America, too nationally conscious, too grassroots-capitalist, its wages are too low...there are real, but mostly irrational fears, with which Polish foreign policy still does not know how to deal.

20“Wir brauchen die Weisheit Europas” Der Spiegel Online 31 May 2003.
Delay in admission was influenced by the political and strategic impossibility of leaving Poland out of the initial intake. The eventual 'big bang' option of taking in ten countries later rather than less and earlier caused some discontent in places like Hungary and Slovenia. A common 'Central European' identity and interests were now not so evident. Having achieved a degree of solidarity among states with common aims of joining the two larger 'western' organisations, the Visegrad regional forum is, to some extent, superseded by EU accession. On the other hand, the Central Europe Initiative, because it includes members further east, may increase in importance.

One of the biggest tasks facing Poland and the EU is the restructuring of Polish agriculture. It currently comprises about 20% of the workforce and produces about 3% of GDP. Polish arguments stressed the community nature of the CAP and that were Polish (and other candidates') farmers to receive less than others, those states would be EU members 'second class'. According to a MSZ source in 2001, when there was anxiety about Poland's progress in meeting the acquis and what might result if it fell too far behind, 'bringing Poland in sooner rather than later would be one indicator that the 'EU can act like a serious international player' and not waste its energies being 'fussy about agricultural policy'. A sardonic humour occasionally appeared in response to the demands of EU regulations and specifications, as if one overbearing bureaucratic regime was thought to be replacing another. One MSZ official said that when they joined in 1995 the Swedes were sometimes merely asked to give answers by phone; Poland always had to present the full hard-copy dossier. The agriculture chapter threatened impasse to the end; a final deal extracted about another €500 million for Poland before the accession treaty was signed. In its Regular Report of October 2002 the Commission said that Poland fulfilled the political criteria and was a functioning market economy, but substantial improvement was needed in administrative and legal capacity. It also noted a weakening consensus on macroeconomic policy. Poland's record on implementation of international commitments was good but there were delays in full liberalisation of capital movements. Corruption remained a huge problem, noted again in a post-treaty 2003 report, along with persisting shortcomings in civil and legal administration. Conscious of the

approaching referendum, Poland's negotiators were determined to obtain an accession outcome that was acceptable domestically. The Catholic Church still exerts a big influence and pressed for the insertion of a declaration on 'moral regulation' into the Treaty:

the Republic of Poland understands that nothing in the provisions of the Treaty on European Union, of the Treaties establishing the European Communities and the provisions of treaties amending or supplementing those treaties prevents the Polish State in regulating questions of moral significance, as well as those related to the protection of human life.28

For these and other reasons there are not many genuine Euro-federalists in Polish politics. Some figures, including Kwasniewski and Geremek, have made reference to federal designs, always balanced by mention of the continued primacy of the national state. Others are more concise:

In response to a newspaper question on whether the Poles could imagine living together in a federal state with the Germans, possibly even under a German government chief, the Polish foreign minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, answered, ‘that is an artificial question...you should live in a federal state of Europe? That will not happen’.29

A major approaching test for the EU is new budgetary arrangements that will be required from 2007. It was one motivation for the Giscard d'Estaing-led Convention and resulting draft constitution. Germany and other net-payers are increasingly thrifty, especially in the current economic climate. France and the Mediterranean countries try to retain as much as possible from Community expenditures. Distribution battles have taken on increased complexity and intensity and a forceful prosecution of Polish interests can be expected. Poland's earlier acquiring of 27 votes in the European Council, with a population of 39 million people, was a good outcome when considered that Germany with 82 million people has only 29 votes. It was also an indicator of where institutional power is seen as residing. There are disinclinations towards any implications of more supranationalism, reductions in Poland's voting weight, or a directoire of bigger states. Conceptions like 'variable geometry', 2 or 3 speed Europe's and 'enhanced cooperation', that might mean the formation of elite cores based on levels of economic development, are distrusted.

29“Der Volksentscheid ware nur ein Vorwand” Süddeutsche Zeitung 8 September 2000 p14, cited in Wood “Apprehensive Partners”.
Another sensitive area is the CFSP. That chapter of the acquis was opened with Poland in 1998, provisionally closed in mid-2000, but not finally until December 2002. Regular Reports have noted Poland's orienting of its foreign policy to the EU and are generally commendatory. In April 2003 Poland began to participate with official observer status in CFSP meetings—coinciding with its engagement in Iraq in the 'coalition of the willing'.

Trade and investment figures show that the EU is imperative to Poland. 60% of its imports come from and 70% of exports go to EU countries. Even with continued economic integration it will be many years before Poland reaches a comparative level of prosperity. If its economy grows at 4% and current EU-15 grow at 2% it will take about 40 years for Poland to reach their average per capita income.\(^\text{30}\) This is a task that is not going to disappear and perceptions that they will have to contribute to new members for some time influenced the recent drop in all current members support for enlargement: an average of minus 6 points. In France and Belgium, sceptical about enlargement since the outset, it fell by 10 and 15 points respectively.\(^\text{31}\) Traditionally close Polish-French relations have changed. The Chirac affair, when he berated central and eastern European states for declaring solidarity with the US, provoked very negative Polish responses. Popular French aversions to enlargement may cause the same. Apart from differences on Iraq and attitudes towards the USA, Poland's purchase of American F-16 fighter planes instead of the French Mirage alternative added to the friction. Polish displeasure at French behaviour was palpable. An MSZ official termed the French the 'Bolsheviks of the West'.\(^\text{32}\) Krzeminski views the mutual insults and discord as part of an intra-familial dispute. While America remains indispensable 'Poland's future will be decided on the Vistula, Spree, Seine, Tiber and Thames, and less so on the Potomac. Iraq is only an episode. After our rather more political than military success at the side of the Americans it is time to start a sympathy-offensive in Europe.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^\text{31}\) Eurobarometer 59 (Brussels: CEC June 2003) p15.
\(^\text{32}\) Interview with the author, Polish Foreign Ministry, April 2003.
Poland and Germany

Substantial diplomatic and financial resources have been invested in the Polish–German relationship over the past 14 years. Germany is Poland's biggest national trade partner with €30 billion two-way trade in 2002. Around a quarter of Poland's imports come from Germany, around a third of its exports go there. On balance, seen in historical context, bilateral affairs are positive, yet a measure of ambivalence (on both sides) remains. There are contradictions and instances of the German expression ‘Jain’ (yes and no simultaneously) in practice. Much impetus derived from Skubiszewski and his coining of a 'community of interests', which signalled a move to a more pragmatic, present and future oriented relationship rather than one fixated with the past or Versöhnungskitsch.\textsuperscript{34} After strains in 1989-90, Helmut Kohl became an outspoken, even over-enthusiastic advocate of Poland, making promises that could not be delivered, like EU entry by 2000. There were doubts about German commitment to exercise its weight on Poland's behalf or, alternatively, dependence on Germany. Weclawowicz noted in 1996 that 'modernisation

conditioned by increased asymmetrical dependency on the European Union is sometimes perceived as dependency on Germany, which detracts from enthusiasm for the process. The Second World War and partition of Poland are still present in the popular consciousness\textsuperscript{35}

This is gradually fading, influenced by German displays of goodwill, economic partnership, youth and scientific exchange, and the realisation that cooperation is a necessity. However

While Germany is somewhat restricted in that it can only do as much as the EU and its other members enable, the situation reflects a tacit perception among Polish elites that if German political actors seriously want to represent a particular position or set of interests within the EU context they can in most cases enforce it.\textsuperscript{36}

The 'Weimar Triangle' was one German initiative that followed a preference for multilateralising its foreign affairs. It was to bring together Germany's immediate large western and eastern

\textsuperscript{34}Klaus Bachmann \textit{Polens Uhren gehen anders} (Stuttgart: Hohenheim 2001).
\textsuperscript{35}Weclawowicz \textit{Contemporary Poland} p188.
\textsuperscript{36}Wood “Apprehensive Partners”.
neighbours, whose interests in certain policy fields could, in the context of EU enlargement and elsewhere, come into conflict. The forum lost impetus, not helped by the fallout over Iraq. At an attempted revitalisation in Wroclaw in May 2003, Chirac claimed that Germany and France had been the first west European states to push for Poland's EU accession.37 But the meeting was accompanied by continuing tension, including among the Polish and German defence ministers. German rejection of an offer to participate in the 'Polish' zone in Iraq along with a Danish contingent was not well received.38 Former Foreign Minister Bartoszewski recommended to the Germans that they show more 'restraint' in their public statements.39

Another area that has posed problems concerns the respective minorities (or persons of Polish heritage in Germany). The end of communism meant that the German minority acquired a role in Polish politics, represented not by a party but rather via a 'list'. On one hand ethnic minorities are exempt from the 5% clause; on the other there is no concluding of a specific minority law though reference to them appears in Article 35 of the Polish constitution. Poland ratified the rather inconclusive European Convention for the Protection of Minorities with a qualifying declaration. This entered into effect in April 2001. It signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in May 2003. 85% of Poles and 77% of German respondents in a survey of elites supported the right of the minority to have German as a language of instruction in schools. Only 37% of Poles, compared to 64% of Germans favoured the introduction of bilingual street names in areas where members of the German minority constituted a majority of the population. 49% of Poles and 53% of Germans supported a lower percentage hurdle for the German minority in parliamentary elections. 40% and 33% respectively opposed this although no such hurdle existed.40 Potential land purchase by Germans, or claims for return of 'expropriated' property is also sensitive. This is too large an issue to expand on here but the apparent course of development whereby all 'European citizens' can have civil claims heard before denationalised 'European' courts could have interesting consequences for German-Polish relations more broadly. It will give some insight into how a 'common European space' is being perceived in different national societies and by political representatives. These are among the contentious issues or domestic sources of

37“Schulterschluss zwischen alten und neuen Europäern” Der Spiegel Online 9 May 2003.
38“Struck stinksauer über polnischen Vorstoß” Der Spiegel Online 6 May 2003; “Polnischer Minister bezichtigt Berlin der Lüge” Der Spiegel Online 7 May 2003.
39Jan Puhl “Triumph der Treue” Der Spiegel 20, 12 May 2003 p120.
international relations that national officials often claim are now overcome. Formally they may have been resolved between state elites, but not at the inter-societal level. An expanded, and in legal terms, more ‘supranational’ Europe may also, ironically, revivify these inter-ethnic problems. A related dispute over the expulsion of Germans from Poland at the end of the Second World War, concerned the proposed construction of a ‘Centre against Expulsion’. An institution of this sort is viewed with some suspicion in Poland, as indirectly assisting German attempts to regain confiscated property and perpetuating ‘animosity among peoples’.41

Another social dimension of bilateral relations is the Polish desire that German officialdom strive to positively influence its own public’s perceptions of and interaction with Poles and Poland. Despite the numerous official, para-public, or state-sponsored links, and, in raw statistical terms, the large cross-border traffic, the bulk of the two populations are not close and many harbour rather negative opinions of each other. The Polish Yearbook of Foreign Affairs 2002, noted a marked asymmetry between resolved political and legal issues and intensive political dialogue and the far from satisfactory state of society-to-society contacts. Polish-German dialogue should, therefore, focus on contacts between the two societies, regional communities, institutions and organisations.42

This is partly motivated by the lukewarm reception to Poland's EU accession among the German public. It took a long time to reach levels in favour of eastern enlargement that were higher than those of opposition to it. Poland plays a big role in these considerations. In the Eurobarometer of June 2003, 42% of Germans were for, down 4%, and 39% against a current enlargement. Not a resounding endorsement.43 Large amounts of German public money and organisational energy have been invested into promoting interest in Poland and other EU members-in-waiting. The problem, in a democracy, is that the state cannot force individuals to become involved with neighbouring populations; wide-ranging and deeper interaction will take some time, despite the inducements on offer. Concurrently, their asymmetric trade relationship means Poland is

---

43 Eurobarometer 59 (Brussels: CEC June 2003) p15.
dependent on Germany's economic health for its own and neither are presently in good condition. In FDI levels Germany is listed as third behind France and the USA. The bulk of French investment came with the purchase of Polish Telecom and the American is also concentrated on fewer but larger investments. There are around 7000 German majority owned firms in Poland, chiefly SME's, many of which are not listed in official figures. If all investment was recorded Germany would be the number one investor.

The Polish elite would like their German counterparts to maintain a special role for Poland, despite public indifference or negative attitudes. Some examples indicate otherwise. The insulation and air-conditioning system in the Bundestag (Reichstag building) was produced and installed by a Polish firm but the label 'Made in Poland' could not be displayed on the equipment. This was partly because of latent concerns about the Polish reputation in technical services and also that it wasn't manufactured by a German firm. Another squabble featured former Polish ambassador to Germany, Janusz Reiter. He claimed he had been defamed as a war-monger in the German public discussion on defence and security affairs for suggesting Germany should spend more money on this and that excessive pacifism had dangerous effects. These might be isolated or minor instances, but they are exacerbated by easily triggered and instrumentalised historical sensitivities.

**Eastern Dimension**

Despite extensive institutional links, Poland has enduring anxieties about western Europe (in particular Germany) bypassing it to reach accommodation with Russia. There is also unease about Russian influence over Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the Baltic states (concerns shared by the US). Poland's transformation, consolidating of democracy, market reforms, integration into NATO and the EU has been presented, for eastern consumption, by Polish political actors and publicists as a good example for its eastern neighbours, including Russia. They would like to use Poland's change as encouragement for more democracy and openness and to impress that it lies in the interests of the EU and US to continue supporting the Polish transformation. The multinational

---

44Interview with the author, Deutsch-Polnische Industrie- und Handelskammer, Warsaw, April 2003.
peacekeeping contingent in Iraq that included Polish and Ukrainian forces demonstrated the current Ukrainian leadership's desire to move closer to 'the west' and distance itself from Russian control. It also shows Poland can play a broker type role.

While a 'strategic partnership' with Ukraine may be in formation, Poland has 'still not developed a strategic partnership with Russia'. Disquiet about possible Russian attempts to re-acquire an empire remains even as Poland's transformation is indicated as a good example for Russia to follow. Polish official and academic sources also regularly state that Russia cannot and will not join the EU (or NATO). At the same time there is, for western business and politics, an emphasis on Poland's position as transit country to Russia; turning its geopolitical position into an advantage in geo-economic terms, though this first this had to be secured by NATO and the EU. Their inclusion of the Baltic states will resolve security concerns for the most part but opens another dimension to the Kaliningrad issue. Russia wants access for its citizens from Russia proper to the Kaliningrad oblast, which means travel through Lithuania and/or Poland. These two states are displeased at the EU's apparent accommodation with Russia which will allow visa-free travel for Russians through their territory. The EU and Poland began cooperation on a program for development in Kaliningrad. In response Maria Przelomiec suggests:

Kaliningrad looks like the best indicator of what Poland's position in the Union's rank-and-file is expected to be: a low-key consultative voice and high-profile compliance with the Union's decisions, at least as far as relations with Moscow are concerned.

It is also not beyond the realm of possibility that Russia might someday reach an agreement with Germany over the Kaliningrad region, the former Ostpreussen. They did for a BMW factory built there and intended to produce, with special concessions, vehicles for the Russian market. This commercial-economic arrangement coincidentally involved the at least partial resolution of Russian-Western differences over Kosovo in 1999.

48Interview with the author, MSZ, April 2003.
49Maria Prezelomiec “Before the “Eastern Dimension” comes to be” in Kowal Ed. The EU’s “Eastern Dimension” p19-21.
Przelomiec suggests that the judicious deployment of NGOs, such as the Stefan Batory Foundation, Centre for International Relations, Centre for Socio-Economic Analyses or the Institute of Public Affairs, to encourage the development of civil society in ex-USSR countries is what is required: ‘The fact that no other European state can boast of so many independent organizations bringing aid to the ex-USSR countries is Poland’s unquestionable trump card that Polish authorities have not been fully playing up.’ Firstly these organisations and most others of this kind have been and are still involved in encouraging civil society in Poland. Secondly, most of them are in receipt of external funding and probably would not be in existence without it. George Soros, within the scope of his Open Society program, is a major benefactor for the Stefan Batory Foundation. Other US and German sources are also providers. German political foundations are among the sponsors of IR centres as they are for the House of German-Polish cooperation in Gliwice. Developing civil society in the USSR is an extension further east of the external assistance and expertise Poland has and is experiencing. A different perspective that also mentions use of NGOs and brings together the important actors in Polish foreign affairs states:

As a member of the EU, Poland will be able to aspire to formulating an eastern policy not only of its own, but also of the EU. Poland’s main competitor to such a role is Germany, which is very sensitive about this competition [as if Poland was not!]. At least for the past year we can hear a criticism on the part of German diplomacy of both Polish NGO activities in Ukraine or Belarus and some moves by Polish diplomacy. Germany wants thereby to emphasise that the shaping of an eastern policy should belong to it. This is an important challenge for Poland……We hold one more trump card for this competition. It is the support of the United States, which has an interest in Poland’s position in this region and in the conduct of a policy by Poland towards, first of all, Belarus and Ukraine. An astute manoeuvring by the Polish foreign ministry to create a balance between American interest and a representation of the EU interest could strengthen our hand in elaborating the eastern strategy for the entire Union.51

Here the cited ‘trump card’ is different to Prezelomiec’s. A little later the author criticises ‘19th century principles of diplomacy practiced among officials.’52 It illustrates the desire to present a

51Pawel Kazanecki “Belarus, Poland and the EU’s “Eastern Dimension” (points for debate) in Kowal Ed. The EU’s “Eastern Dimension ” pp29-32.
52Kazanecki “Belarus, Poland and the EU’s “Eastern Dimension” p32.
more modern, multi-lateralised, interdependent, 'civilian' outlook, but which cannot detach itself from traditional components or influences that persist in foreign policy thinking—because they are deemed imperative: keep Russia in check; Germany (with or without France) cannot be allowed to dominate the EU or reach its own accommodations with Russia. The way to ensure this is to maintain a strong Atlantic alliance, whatever it takes. Polish foreign policy aims to convince both the EU and US to adopt a policy towards 'the east' that is, in effect, what Poland would implement if it had their resources: financial, political and military. It appears to be having more success aligning positions with the US. Poles seem more confident about working with the Americans than with (at least some of) the other Europeans.

Conclusion

In 1996 Weclawowicz wrote that 'There is no real choice for Poland: a dependency relationship with East or West is inevitable'. There was, however, a choice between them and that has clearly been for the West, while trying to diffuse dependency by building varied links where possible. The basic goals of NATO and EU, many political and intellectual commentators have said, are underpinned by shared values. Many states are members in both. Their functions are ostensibly different but are converging as NATO shifts to incorporate more political tasks and the EU creeps towards more military-security responsibility. As the eastern frontier of both, Poland can appeal to and has reason to expect that it will receive the assistance necessary to pursue policies that are not only in Polish but also other EU and NATO members’ interests. While Polish involvements have diversified, some basic alignments and priorities remain. History and power relations are never discounted. The EU offers a wider spectrum of instruments and opportunities for Poland to modernise and become prosperous, but not without a cost. Strengthening its alliance with the US is as prominent in its international behaviour at present. Its role in Iraq is a test of international political and military potential—and of the administrative capacities in an external context of a state that has shortcomings in this field at home. Closeness with US may provoke friction within the EU but also give Poland leverage. One commentator claimed that given Poland’s less than buoyant internal condition and the low esteem in which the political class is held, the foreign policy success of being awarded a protection zone in Iraq obviated a possible negative outcome in
the EU referendum. Indirectly then the US had lead Poland into the EU.\textsuperscript{53} Marek Siwiec, chief of the Polish National Security Office, stressed communication failures among western states during the initial phases of the Iraq crisis. He presented Polish diplomacy as a force urging a more multilateral approach on the part of the US. On the other hand, disappointment at French and German actions, prominently their eagerness to align with Russia, motivated him to say that:

As a country, we can now draw a simple conclusion from all this. First we should definitely be guided by the priorities of our own national security. If we don't know how we should act, let's take a course which will be fair to our own nation and our own duties.\textsuperscript{54}

Looking back to the pre-NATO/pre-EU days, Włodzimierz Borodziej reflected: 'That Poland would soon have to make a choice between the USA and the old core of EU member states is a scenario that in 1999 hardly anyone considered.'\textsuperscript{55} Poland’s political class would rather not contemplate any further worsening of transatlantic relations. The foreign policy establishment seem almost united in the belief that ‘just as there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church, there is no possibility of a united Europe without the United States’.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53}“Puhl “Triumph der Treue”
\textsuperscript{56}Interview with the author, MSZ, Warsaw, April 2003.