

# The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

---

Volume 26  
Number 4 *Parameters Winter 1996*

Article 8

---

11-7-1996

## Security in Central and Eastern Europe: A View From Warsaw

Tadeusz Pieciukiewicz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

---

### Recommended Citation

Tadeusz Pieciukiewicz, "Security in Central and Eastern Europe: A View From Warsaw," *Parameters* 26, no. 4 (1996), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1803.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

# Security in Central and Eastern Europe: A View From Warsaw

TADEUSZ PIECIUKIEWICZ

---

From *Parameters*, Winter 1996-97, pp. 122-35.

---

Poland's recent obstinate and sometimes impatient efforts to gain membership in European and Euro-Atlantic political and military structures confuse some Western leaders, particularly those who lack a clear and consistent vision of the future of the international order in Europe. They also irritate Russia, which continues to demonstrate an interest in restoring the former Soviet zone of influence on its borders. But this is nothing new: "No one gave more trouble than the Poles," wrote British Prime Minister David Lloyd George in his memoirs of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, an observation undoubtedly shared by many of his contemporaries.[1]

A dramatic change has taken place in the fundamental ideas of European security. Europe has been given a unique opportunity to create a new international order based on common values: democracy, human rights, and the right of nations to self-determination. The people of Poland want to participate actively in the process of shaping this new international order.

This article examines briefly Poland's historical experiences which form the foundation of its current security policy. It concludes with an analysis of Poland's views of alternative concepts of the European security architecture.

## Historic Origins of Polish Security Policy

Geographically Poland is a bridge spanning two parts of Europe, but since the 10th century Poles have identified themselves as an element of Western European civilization. In 966 the first historical ruler of Poland accepted Western Christianity and established political relations with Rome, the Bohemians, and the German Empire. Poland's conversion to Christianity was a conscious political move which resulted in the consolidation of the Polish state.[2]

Over the centuries, its central geographic location in Europe has made it impossible for Poland to take the position of a neutral state. Without natural frontiers such as major rivers or the mountain ranges that protect Switzerland, Poland has frequently been ravaged by the Germans, Russians, Tartars, Swedes, and Turks. The only way the Poles have been able to improve their military-political situation has been by securing external allies,[3] a principal feature of Polish foreign policy since the Middle Ages. As early as the 14th century a Polish-Lithuanian alliance changed the balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe. It created a force strong enough to defeat the Teutonic Knights, considered at the time the most powerful military and financial organization in Europe. For four centuries the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth integrated itself into Western culture and successfully defended a large part of Europe between the Baltic and the Black Sea.[4]

Starting in the 17th century, however, Poland's power declined.[5] Its neighbors--Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire--systematically promoted its internal troubles and intervened in Polish affairs.[6] Finally, during the period 1792-1795, "the alliance of the three Black Eagles" dismembered Poland, ending efforts by the Poles to put their state in order.[7]

A long series of national uprisings in the 19th century failed to establish an independent Polish state.[8] Two different programs of national policy evolved in Poland during this period. The first advocated military action supported by political-military assistance from France. The second, supported by "political realists," recommended a *modus vivendi* with any powerful neighbor that would support the unification of Polish lands, self-government, and ultimately Poland's independence.

The new political order in Europe after World War I gave Poland its chance. While the Central Powers lost the war, Russia was not among the winners. A temporary vacuum of power in Central-East Europe provided the Polish nation

with an opportunity to achieve independence. The Poles took advantage of the situation; they created their own armed forces and undertook intensive military and diplomatic activity.[9] As a result of these efforts, in November 1918 the Polish Republic came into existence.

Other nations in Central and Eastern Europe sought to create their own states. Warsaw provided political and military support to attempts by Estonia, Latvia, and the Ukraine to gain real independence.[10] All the new states were relatively weak; none was strong enough to face alone the threats of their powerful neighbors, Germany and Soviet Russia. Poland's efforts to foster close cooperation within the region produced disappointing results.[11]

Without an effective system of alliances within the region, Polish leaders were compelled to seek support from Western Europe. The Polish-French alliance of 1921[12] became the cornerstone of Poland's security policy as Poland gradually redirected its relations with Germany and Soviet Russia toward the maintenance of an "equilibrium" or "equal distance" between them. These attempts produced few useful results. France and Britain declined to participate in military operations against German forces in September 1939 and later when Soviet troops attacked Poland. The end of World War II also failed to bring Poland real independence. At another critical moment in its history, Poland was abandoned by the Western Allies when discussions regarding Poland's future took place without Polish participation. At Teheran in 1943, during the first meeting of "The Big Three," the Western powers accepted the Soviet solution of Poland's future. The Curzon Line, which had been rejected by Poland in 1920, became the basis for the Polish eastern frontier, while the division of Europe into zones of postwar influence determined that Poland would fall under Soviet dominance.[13]

The security policy of the new Polish state, the People's Republic, was a modern version of the tradition of "political realism." It was defined largely by the bitter experiences of World War II[14] and by Poland's status as a part of the Soviet empire. Poland's primary goal under such circumstances was to ensure national self-preservation and territorial integrity within its new borders.

As a result of the decisions made by the victorious powers, Poland's eastern and western borders were changed dramatically.[15] After the expulsion of Germans from the Recovered Lands in the west of Poland,[16] the area was repopulated by refugees and by those Poles who had been displaced from the eastern territories that had been annexed by the Soviet Union. And because the Potsdam Conference failed to define Poland's western frontier, the acquisition of the Oder-Neisse territories from Germany seemed provisional and provided a basis for Germany to claim its former lands later. Since the Western Territories constitute a third of postwar Poland, this issue became vital for the nation.[17] The initial refusal of the Federal Republic to officially recognize the Oder-Neisse frontier was the origin of prolonged difficulties in Polish-German relations. It also provided the Polish and Soviet communists many opportunities to remind Poles that only the Soviet Union unequivocally guaranteed their western frontier.

Polish fears were strengthened during the Cold War by an ambiguous "non-commitment" policy of the Western powers toward the border dispute[18] and by some aspects of the Federal Republic's membership in NATO. In 1960 the Federal Chancellor, Conrad Adenauer, reassured Germans who had been expelled from the Recovered Lands in 1945-46 "that their homeland would be assured, if West Germany remained loyal to NATO." [19] In this context, Poland could perceive NATO only as a hostile organization; hence, the necessity of an alliance with the Soviet Union as a cornerstone of Poland's security policy could not be openly questioned.[20]

In the late 1950s Polish leaders identified a relaxation of tensions in Central Europe as the most important of Poland's national interests. Any military conflict between the two opposite blocks would threaten the very existence of the Polish nation. As a result, in spite of limited freedom of political choice, Poland undertook her own political initiatives to create a degree of confidence between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

The most well-known of Poland's initiatives was the so-called "Rapacki Plan," first presented by Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Adam Rapacki in 1956. As a possible first step toward the relaxation of tensions, Rapacki proposed to establish a nuclear-free zone that included Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Holland. Unfortunately, neither the Rapacki Plan nor the 1964 "Gomulka Plan," which proposed to freeze the level of armaments in Central Europe, was discussed seriously.[21] Rapacki later developed a broader theory of "constructive coexistence" to serve as the basis for a new Polish policy toward the West.[22] This policy provided for a gradual growth of mutual

understanding and cooperation between Poland and the West that enabled Poland to enlarge its "area of sovereignty" within the Soviet bloc, culminating in the bloodless Polish revolution of 1989.

Its historical experiences are a permanent part of the political discourse in Poland. The conclusions drawn from these discussions by Polish historians, politicians, and the citizenry at large became the basis for Poland's present security policy.

### **Polish Security Policy: History Repeats . . .**

A durable European peace must rest on military cooperation and the gradual integration of Central and Eastern European nations into existing Western European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Poland would therefore oppose any attempt to reestablish the balance of power principle as the basis for European security. Such an approach is incompatible with democracy and with the principle of national self-determination. Moreover, it would be an invitation to reopen the competition for spheres of influence and the arms race.

Poland's most important geopolitical factor is its location between Germany and Russia. Throughout its history the Polish state has fought unequal battles against them. Deadly dangerous "contracts" between Poland's powerful neighbors twice resulted in partition of the Polish state.[23] In the high-stakes game involving its sovereignty and survival as a free and independent nation, it is obvious that Poland must avoid open confrontation on two fronts.

Ambiguity and indecision have characterized the policies of Western powers toward Central and Eastern European nations for centuries.[24] The West has always been ready to sacrifice the interests of the smaller nations to advance its own interests; the Yalta agreement is only the most recent example of this circumstance. Consequently, "Nothing concerning Poland should be decided without Poland's participation"[25] must be the leading principle of Polish diplomacy.

A temporary weakness among opponents or the decline of a superpower has always created in Central-Eastern Europe a vacuum of power which has provided the Poles, Hungarians, Balts, and others in the region the opportunity to reestablish their national sovereignty. Historically, these conditions have been painfully short-lived; contemporary "big brothers" have always taken decisive action to rebuild their spheres of influence. The relatively weak new states in the region remained independent only briefly. These states can improve their military-political situation only by close regional cooperation and ties to existing, well-established, and effective collective defense alliances.

### **Polish Security Architecture in Post-Cold War Europe**

The first noncommunist Polish government established in 1989 had a unique opportunity to create a new security policy based on national interest. This opportunity arose during the dramatic changes in the military-political situation in Europe, highlighted by the diminution and gradual disintegration of the Soviet bloc, followed by the demise of the Soviet Union itself. The basic aim of Poland's national security policy has always been an independent and safe Poland in a safe Europe. The fundamental precepts of this policy are the permanency of existing borders, peaceful solution of all disputes, and support for the idea of establishing an effective pan-European security system. The most recent attempt to create a security policy that reflected those precepts was greatly complicated by the process of German unification.

Poland's freedom of political choice in 1989 was limited initially by reopening of the issue of its western frontier with Germany. Though Poland had signed treaties with both East and West Germany that recognized existing borders, the expected unification could have changed the situation dramatically. It had the potential to reopen the entire issue of how Poland's post-World War II borders had been established.

Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl's attitude on this issue was initially "ambiguous," as reported by Polish parliamentary president Kozakiewicz on visiting Bonn in December 1989. "On the one hand, Kohl referred to the Warsaw Treaty of 1970 and the inviolability of the borders that had been agreed to in this treaty by the FRG and Poland, and also stressed that there were no aggressive aspirations aimed at changing existing borders. On the other hand, Kohl insisted that juridically, the German Reich continued to exist within the borders of 1937." [26]

The Polish position, presented by Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was clear: "We have no intention of negotiating with anyone over the line of this border. It is an established part of the European order . . . . We cannot enter the new historical stage which is being created by the process of German unification . . . with any ambiguity whatsoever with regard to the border of unified Germany." [27]

With these qualifications, Polish leaders expressed conditional support for the unification of Germany, [28] expecting that the Polish position in the border dispute would be supported by the USSR. From Warsaw's perspective in 1990, Gorbachev's reforms suggested the possibility of a true partnership on the matter of German unification. The Polish government therefore initially presented a concept of European security architecture that anticipated maintaining the status quo through continued presence of Soviet troops on German territory. [29] This concept also proposed the preservation of existing institutions, among them a Warsaw Pact modified to be primarily a political consultative structure. [30] According to this concept an enhanced Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, or CSCE) would become the forum for a future pan-European security system. [31]

New ideas, such as Poland's future membership in European organizations, were expressed very carefully by Polish leaders: "We are interested in initiating at the appropriate time the procedure for associating Poland with the European Community, while respecting our ties with other Central European countries, including the Soviet Union." [32] However, during 1990 Poland's position concerning some of the assumptions of its emerging security policy changed significantly. There were two important reasons for the changes. First, successful Polish-German negotiations resulted in a definitive recognition of Poland's western frontier by both the Bundestag and the Volkskammer, [33] which resulted in the Polish-German Border Treaty on behalf of a united Germany on 14 November 1990. [34] With a resolution to this problem, the primary source of antagonism between Poland and Germany was eliminated.

Second, Polish leaders were disappointed with the position taken by the Soviet Union during the process of German unification, which jeopardized the creation of a real partnership between Poland and the USSR. [35] Additionally, events inside the USSR--the incidents in Baku and the beginning of the Lithuanian crisis--called into question the future of *perestroika* and the Soviet Union's internal stability. Consequently, by the end of 1990 new formulations of Polish national security policy emerged. An influential political group--the Forum of the Democratic Right--published a political manifesto which suggested a policy decisively oriented toward the West, support for the creation of "new sovereign elements" in the European part of the USSR, and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. [36] The manifesto supported the idea of elaborating a new system of European security based on NATO and the presence of American troops as an essential condition for peace in Europe.

Almost immediately these recommendations were incorporated into official Polish policy. Poland's eastern policy changed, accepting parallel-track relations with the Soviet Union and with separate republics which had declared their sovereignty, and then the full recognition of sovereignty of these republics. [37] Poland began negotiations with the USSR on the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Poland, and jointly with Hungary and Czechoslovakia undertook steps toward the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. To replace the Pact, Poland proposed close trilateral cooperation with these two countries that had been the most advanced in their political and economic transformation. [38]

### **The Next Steps . . .**

A new element in Polish policy toward the West arose in 1991: the view of NATO as a vital part of European security and the main stabilizing factor on the continent. [39] Polish officials still emphasized that "Poland does not intend to join NATO in the foreseeable future"; [40] at the same time, they called for cooperation with security organizations such as NATO and the Western European Union.

From the outset of the post-Cold War period, Poland has rejected the idea of establishing a neutral military zone between NATO and Russia, consisting of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. This idea, unofficially presented by Henry Kissinger during his stay in Warsaw at the end of 1990 [41] was rejected by Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski. "The whole of Europe should be treated as a homogeneous area of security. . . . From the point of view of security, Central Europe in particular cannot become a gray, buffer, or neutral zone. The area in such a situation, because of its geographical situation, will easily become the object of rivalry of stronger states." [42] In the same

speech Skubiszewski presented other tenets of contemporary Polish security policy:

- Support for US military presence in Europe and a reduction of nuclear and conventional forces as important elements of peace and stabilization on the continent.
- A proposal to develop a security system within the OSCE by the creation of an effective mechanism of obligatory action in crisis situations and a fusion of the OSCE and NATO.
- Poland's desire to participate in European integration coupled with Central-East European regional cooperation.[43]

After two years of independence Poles were still evaluating opportunities and seeking solutions. The concept of the search was--and remains--that of "opening up to the West, but not closing to the East." [44]

Poland's security policy crystallized by the end of 1992. In November 1992 President Lech Walesa signed a government white paper on the main principles of Polish security policy from 1993 to 2000. This document, which also included the new Polish national security strategy, specified that Poland would strive to become a member of NATO by the year 2000.[45] The new national security strategy is strictly defensive in nature; its primary goal is to defend state security and territorial integrity.

Some important factors influenced the final shape of Polish security policy. The collapse of the USSR resulted in a certain destabilization on Poland's eastern border. The international community, specifically the UN and the OSCE, had shown itself to be helpless in a number of crises, e.g. Bosnia and Chechnya. Also, a sober analysis of the complexity and interdependence of European and Euro-Atlantic structures pointed out that Polish aspirations expressed earlier to obtain membership in the European Community (now the European Union) had to be complemented by parallel efforts aimed at full membership in NATO.

Polish leaders recognize that European security should be based on existing institutions. Never before in its history has Europe had available a number of institutions for cooperation on security issues. Thus the new architecture of European security does not require more of them; rather, the challenge is to make the best possible use of existing ones.

Within these institutions NATO continues to be the most important for European relations. It is more than just a collective defense alliance. In the post-Cold War era NATO is an effective means for preventing the "re-nationalization" of security issues and the reemergence of political and military rivalry among the largest West European countries. The military-political power of NATO can determine the success of decisions made by the UN and by OSCE. NATO's assumption of the mission in the former Yugoslavia following the UN's decision to withdraw is a case in point. In addition, the new strategic concept adopted by NATO in November 1991, emphasizing crisis management and cooperation with other international organizations, helped to clarify and codify a new role for NATO in the future European security system. Thus NATO remains a decisive factor of stability on the continent; any realistic planning of European security must include NATO as its basic element.

The first component of the Polish vision of a future European security architecture became an expansion of the area of security and stabilization represented by NATO. That area should be expanded by including in the Alliance those countries that share its goals and values, which have the desire to join, and which are capable of contributing effectively to the accomplishment of those goals. Enlargement should be an open-ended, transparent process that would not *a priori* exclude anyone. It should be accompanied by other forms of close relationships between NATO and those countries that would not want or could not yet become members of the Alliance, especially Russia and Ukraine. These relations would cover issues of peace and security as well as economic contacts.

Poland strongly supported the thesis that NATO should preserve its current Euro-Atlantic character. Two world wars, the Cold War, and the Balkan crisis have clearly demonstrated the significance of the active involvement and leadership of the United States for European security and stability. When America decided to withdraw from Europe after World War I, there were only 20 years of peace before a new war broke out. Since the end of World War II, America's presence in Europe has helped the continent to enjoy peace for more than 50 years.

The second component of Poland's concept of European security requires strengthening pan-European institutions, in

particular the OSCE, but also other existing and developing systems of confidence- and security-building measures (CFE Treaty, Open Skies Treaty, and others). The third component of a European security architecture should be bilateral relationships in support of programs for close regional cooperation. Poland fully supports the full sovereignty and independence of the new states that have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states. In the opinion of most Polish political experts, "The independence of those countries is one of the conditions of [Polish] sovereignty and stable development,"[46] because their continuing sovereignty serves as a buffer against the revitalization of Russian hegemony of Eastern and Central Europe.

Thus mature Polish security policy expresses itself in a radical, pro-Western reorientation in international affairs and strives for lasting integration within the European Union and NATO. Membership in the Western European and Euro-Atlantic structures has been an integral element of Polish national security policy since 1992. It enjoys the support of all significant Polish political parties and movements, despite their diversity of views on other issues. Polish politicians and the general population alike have no doubt that Poland should seek links with Western European defense alliances and collective security systems.[47]

Simultaneously Poland has rejected, as extremely vague and unconvincing, other conceptions of European security which have been proposed by those who oppose NATO enlargement. Three such rejected concepts are outlined in their essentials below.

The first is the concept of so-called crisscrossing guarantees for Central and East European countries to be provided by Russia and the West European countries. This concept has been presented on various occasions by Russian leaders and diplomats. In the opinion of Polish analysts this course would:

- Preserve the current division of Europe into parts with unequal security status. Central-Eastern Europe in particular would be kept as a "gray zone" and the object of external rivalry.
- Ensure that Central-Eastern Europe would remain an object and not a sovereign subject of European relations. Moreover, the states guaranteeing its security would also retain the right to decide other issues in this region. In the light of prolonged Polish experiences with Russian "guarantees," this aspect is particularly sensitive.

A second undesirable concept would relegate Central-East European security to the status of a sub-regional security system. That is not very realistic. The experiences of the interwar period and the negative attitude of some states to the idea of transforming the Visegrad Group into a closer form of political cooperation indicate the extreme difficulty of bringing this concept to reality.[48] Moreover, given the potential of the states in the region, the effectiveness of such a system would be questionable, especially in facing potential external dangers.

The third concept, strongly supported by Russia, rests on the idea of a pan-European security system based on a radical reform of the OSCE. During the period 1989-1991 Poland supported a similar proposal; today, however, this concept seems highly unrealistic from the Polish perspective. It is doubtful whether a radical transformation of this institution, with its membership of more than 50 states, could be possible at all in view of its size and the diverse interests of its members. Moreover there would be great uncertainty as to whether this "modernized OSCE" would be effective and whether the United States would be a member. This does not mean that the notion of developing this institution, which gives European states the sense and right of participation in solving the problems of the continent, should be rejected. However, until a viable OSCE is created that includes the United States, a strong and inclusive NATO remains Europe's best hope.

## **Conclusions**

This article portrays the salient features of the evolution of Polish views on European security since 1989. From an initial careful concept of maintaining some elements of the Cold War status quo, Poland now views NATO as the foundation for the future structure of European security.

It is necessary to underscore that the fundamental assumptions of Poland's national security policy have not changed since the country's transformation in 1989, in spite of frequent changes of governments that represented different political bases. Poland's primary policy goal has remained that of ensuring the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the nation. Polish leaders have always emphasized that the architecture of European security

must be built on the basis of military cooperation and gradual integration of all European states. Between 1989 and 1992 Poland's security policy evolved so that its "center of gravity" came to be defined as improved ties with Western institutions.

Poland's efforts to gain membership in the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance are the result of a careful examination of both the Polish historical experience and the experiences of the West European states in building security through military and economic integration. At present Poland is not directly threatened by any country. This fact has been publicly recognized by Polish political leaders. Poland does not wish to join NATO in order to seek guarantees against any specific present danger. Nevertheless, Poland's central location in Europe underscores the fact that Poland can be safe only in a secure Europe. Because of this Poland cannot remain indifferent to any initiative that touches upon the architecture of European security; the consequences of such initiatives will affect Europe in much the same way as did Yalta's "international order."

Poland's integration with the West would serve not only its own interests but those of West European countries and the United States as well. Among the anticipated candidates for membership in NATO, no other country matches the potential strategic significance of Poland in terms of population, size, and geostrategic location. Moreover, Poles do not consider their membership in the Alliance as a one-sided security guarantee. Throughout history Poland has treated its military alliances as unequivocal obligations; there are numerous examples of Poland's steadfastness in meeting such obligations. At present a Polish battalion is a part of the NATO peacekeeping force in Bosnia. Poland is undertaking this effort primarily in the name of building peace in Europe, but also with a sense of obligation imposed on it as a country aspiring to NATO membership.

Integration with European and Euro-Atlantic structures will be a difficult process requiring consistent and sustained cooperation of the entire Polish society. It will be a challenge of historic proportions, comparable to the conversion to Western Christianity, which a thousand years ago strengthened Poland's position in Europe. During that time, numerous and strong Pomeranian and Polabian tribes remained pagan, excluding themselves from the mainstream of European civilization. As a result they lost their independence and finally disappeared. Similarly, voluntary isolation and missing the chance to join NATO and other vital Euro-Atlantic organizations could diminish Poland's position in Europe and lead ultimately to the loss of Poland's freedom and sovereignty.

---

## NOTES

1. David L. George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (New Haven, Conn.: 1939), I, 201.
2. Boleslaus the Brave, son of Poland's first ruler, extended his rule to the whole region between the Oder and Bug rivers, and from the Carpatian Mountains to the Baltic Sea. He was strong enough to be a partner in the German Emperor Otto III's brief dream of restoring the former Roman Empire. Boleslaus the Brave strongly supported this concept. The premature death of Otto III ended his idea of a "United Europe." Norman Davies, *God's Playground, A History of Poland* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 63, 82.
3. In the Middle Ages, Poland also made an attempt to establish a new kind of relationship between European nations. During the Council of Constance (1415) the Polish delegation openly proclaimed the right of all nations, even should they be pagans, to their land and territorial independence and opposed conversion by the sword.
4. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth existed for four centuries, 1386-1791, longer than any other federation in European history except the Danish-Norwegian Union (1357-1814). M. K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski: A European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1979), p. 23.
5. "From 1648 it became clear that Poland was threatened with catastrophe and disorder. A nation that had been strong and flourishing slipped into poverty and disorder, from which it never recovered till the disaster of the Partitions . . . . Between 1600 and 1700 Poland had only fifteen years without a war, while Britain had seventy-five." Stanislaw Kot, *Five Centuries of Polish Learning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941), pp. 11-12.
6. In 1717, surrounded by Russian troops, the Polish Sejm (Parliament) was forced to underline Poland's dependence

upon Russia and legalize Russia's right to intervene in Polish affairs at will. Officially the Russian Tsar undertook to guarantee stability in Poland and the so-called "golden freedom"--the rights of Polish gentry. Since 1717, for 270 years, the Russian protectorate has been interrupted only for the 24 years between 1915 and 1939.

7. "The Republic of Poland-Lithuania was not destroyed because of its internal anarchy. It was destroyed because it rapidly tried to reform itself." Davies, I, 527.

8. In 1806-10, in 1830-31, in 1846-48, and in 1863-64.

9. The Polish National Committee, which represented Poland on the side of the Western Allies, organized the Polish army that fought under the French on the Western front. The first specific joint guarantee by all the Allies for the "restoration of Poland in its historical and geographical limits" was not made until 2 March 1918, and then in curiously obscure circumstances. It was made at Jassy in Romania where Allied negotiators were trying to persuade Poles "that they should continue the fight against Germany." Davies, II, 388.

10. In 1919, 20,000 Polish troops successfully supported the Latvian army against overwhelming Bolshevik forces. Parallel to the military operations, Poland sponsored a conference for cooperation of the Baltic states in Helsinki. On 21 April 1920 the Polish-Ukrainian treaty was signed. Poland recognized the right of the Ukraine to independent political existence and provided military support for its government. Unfortunately the Polish-Ukrainian military venture into Kiev failed and finally resulted in the Soviet invasion of Poland in the summer of 1920.

11. Immediately after World War I, Jozef Pilsudski, the head of the reborn Polish Republic, "planned a union of all countries menaced by the common German and Russian danger . . . His eyes went from the snows of Sweden and Finland to the mosques of Turkey." Adam Bromke, *Poland's Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 41.

During the period 1938-1939, Central and East European countries refused the Franco-British plan of a security system which included Soviet Russia. Minister Beck "made it clear that he believed the Russian demand to enter Poland was only an attempt to obtain by diplomatic means what it had failed to accomplish by war in 1920." Richard M. Watt, *Bitter Glory, Poland and Its Fate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 407.

12. Completed by the Polish-British alliance in 1939. In March 1933 the French government did not support Pilsudski's "unofficial" proposition to stop Hitler by a preventive war. French leaders also did not respond to Polish readiness to support military action against Germany after its reoccupation of the Rheinland. Watt, pp. 321-22, 372-73.

13. Stalin's views on the "Polish Question" had changed radically after the German invasion of the USSR. Before 1941 the Soviet leader had shown a strong will to destroy "pardon the expression, a state," his favorite term for the Polish Republic. By 1941, however, the Soviets had turned to Poland for assistance, and Stalin went so far as to declare his desire to restore "a strong and independent Poland." His understanding of the terms "strength" and "independence" was not that held by Poles.

14. World War II was a real cataclysm for Poland. Poland's losses were the heaviest among all the Allied nations: 220 of every 1000 Poles were killed (over six million people). Corresponding figures for Yugoslavia were 108; USSR, 40; Czechoslovakia and France, 15; United Kingdom, 8; the United States, 1.4. In material resources Poland lost 38 percent of its national wealth; by comparison France lost 1.5 per cent, Britain 0.8 per cent. *Wydawnictwo Zachodnie, Straty wojenne Polski w latach 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Zachodnie, 1960), pp. 41-42.

15. Poland was moved 250 kilometers (150 miles) to the west. The territory lost to the USSR on the east (178,220 sq. km--70,000 sq. miles) greatly exceeded the territory acquired from Germany (101,200 sq. km--40,000 sq. miles) as compensation. Davies, II, 489.

16. This was an official name for territories acquired from Germany, which referred to the fact that they had been part of the first Polish state and been lost during centuries of German colonization.

17. The possibility that the USSR might ever give back the former Polish lands beyond the Bug river (so-called

Curzon line) was not even seriously considered in Poland.

18. In the 1960s the influential American periodical *Foreign Affairs* urged the United States "to make a formal declaration, together with the NATO countries, that in any future negotiations on a German peace treaty, Poland would not be pressed or compelled to accept any alteration of the present Oder-Neisse frontier which it felt to be contrary to its basic interests . . . . Officially Washington could not bring itself to accept any such conclusions." Hansjakob Stehle, *The Independent Satellite, Society and Politics in Poland Since 1945* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 242.

19. From the speech given by the Federal Chancellor Adenauer during a meeting of East Prussian expellees in Düsseldorf on 10 July 1960. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

20. A vision of a unified Germany, armed with nuclear weapons and supported by NATO, standing on the Oder-Neisse and demanding revision of the frontier, became a "Polish nightmare" in the 1960s. However, as early as the 1960s some Polish nongovernmental political analysts supported Poland's membership in the Warsaw Pact but perceived NATO as a stabilizing factor in the Polish-German dispute. One analyst wrote: "One cannot approach the problem in the way one did in the years 1919-1939 . . . . Germany is not in a position to attack us, for in the first place, we belong to a military bloc whose strength is much greater than the military potential of West Germany, and secondly, the incorporation of the Federal Republic in the Atlantic system transfers the conflict to a much wider plane." Stanislaw Stomma, "Is there a German threat?" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 33, 1962.

21. Both Polish plans have never been seriously discussed for different reasons. In 1957, the Bundestag election had been won by the Adenauer government which presented a program that included equipping the Bundeswehr with nuclear weapons. Other Western leaders argued that the Rapacki Plan left out of account the "superior strength of Soviet conventional forces." Also, the first Soviet reaction for the Polish proposal was cool. "Only after months of quiet persuasion did the Poles succeed in getting the Soviet Union's agreement to take the first concrete step." Stehle, p. 222.

22. In Rapacki's opinion constructive coexistence should finally lead to the end of Cold War: "Only sincere coexistence can lead to relaxation of tension and to confidence and end the division of the world into two opposing camps." *Ibid.*, p. 223.

23. Starting in the 18th century, and continuing through the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement of 1939, there were many German-Russian attempts to isolate Poland and then reach agreements against it. As an example, documents found in the German archives after World War II revealed that in 1919 and 1920 the Soviet government had unofficially offered to cooperate with Germany in destroying the Versailles settlement and then reestablishing the pre-1914 boundaries without the Polish state. M. K. Dziewanowski, *Joseph Pilsudski A European Federalist, 1918-1922* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1979), p. 199.

24. The West viewed this region as a political no-man's-land, a chaotic ethnic conglomeration which, for its own good, should be a part of well-established empires. The Western Powers encouraged and supported national self-determination movements in this region in order to use them as tools against deadly dangerous enemies--the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, the Central Powers during World War I, the Third Reich during World War II, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Western leaders also have often failed to recognize the complexity and interdependence of issues of European security. In the late 1930s, "In the minds of French politicians . . . the destruction of the Polish state was not strictly equivalent to the downfall of France." Stanislaw Mackiewicz, *Colonel Beck and His Policy* (London: 1944), p. 77.

25. This is an adaptation of a historical Polish slogan. Starting in 1505, when the Sejm passed the constitution, called *Nihil Novi*, the nobility controlled all legislation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The earlier slogan "Nothing concerning us without us" has been adopted to reprise the basic concept of contemporary Polish "noble democracy."

26. Report by "C.G.": "Kohl's Stance On Border Issue `Ambiguous,'" *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, in German, 14 December 1989. English translation: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report Eastern Europe*, FBIS-EEU-89-240, p. 59 (hereafter FBIS).

27. From news conference with Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Warsaw Domestic Service in Polish 21 February 1990. See also FBIS-EEU-90-036, p. 62.
28. "The start of the process whereby the German people acquire state unity is possible only with fullest respect for and nonquestioning of the borders existing today between both German states and their neighbors." Speech by Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki at Sejm session in Warsaw, 18 January 1990. FBIS-EEU-90-013, p. 56.
29. In February 1990 Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski visited the FRG, and during a press conference he said: "We would like to avoid a move of NATO to the east . . . . One must not forget that the Soviet troops, however reduced, will remain on the GDR's territory." FBIS-EEU-90-027, p. 51.
30. From a one-day meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Committee of Defence Ministers in Berlin, 15 June 1990. Polish National Defence Minister General Florian Siwicki: "The still existing feeling of common interests is the foundation for the further existence of the Warsaw Treaty. The point is that together we can have greater influence on the process of building European security than alone. Nonetheless, it is necessary to adjust the pact to contemporary needs so that it can function as NATO's partner." FBIS-EEU-90-116, p. 38.
31. On 18 January 1990, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, in his first speech as Polish Premier at a Sejm Session in Warsaw, proposed to create a pan-European political structure, a permanent council for European Cooperation: "Its task would be to maintain permanent political dialogue among all participating states and, above all, to pave the way for pan-European forms of integration." FBIS-EEU-90-013, p. 57.
32. From the speech by Polish Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki at the European Parliament in Brussels on 1 February 1990. FBIS-EEU-90-027, p. 55.
33. East Germany's parliament.
34. These important events have been completed by Germany's promise of "full support to the Polish desire to associate with the European Community." From the speech by FRG Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher at the signing of the Polish-German Border Treaty in Warsaw, 14 November 1990. FBIS-EEU-90-221, p. 41.
35. Some Polish proposals forwarded during the course of preparation for the "Two-plus-Four" (two German states plus the four powers that guaranteed the Potsdam Treaty) conference met with apparent understanding from the Soviet delegation. But the conference was not a genuine forum. The USSR ensured its strategic interests through bilateral negotiations with Bonn. In July 1990, during the Gorbachev-Kohl talks, the Soviet Union agreed to a united Germany's full sovereignty and membership in NATO in exchange for economic and financial aid. It has never been clearly explained whether the Soviet authorities at least informed Polish leaders (or leaders of any Warsaw Pact state) of their plans concerning this vital issue for Poland.
36. Krzysztof Gottesman report "The FPD Plays its Cards," *Rzeczpospolita*, in Polish, 2 October 1990, p. 2.
37. In Polish Foreign Minister Skubiszewski's opinion, a question of recognition of the Baltic republics did not exist because: "The government of independent Poland never recognized the Annexation Act of 1940." Report on news conference by Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Warsaw Domestic Service, in Polish, 1800 GMT 14 January 1991. FBIS-EEU-91-010, p. 36.
38. On 22 January 1991, during a press conference, Polish Foreign Minister Skubiszewski stated: "We agreed with the foreign ministers of Hungary and Czechoslovakia that the military structures of the Warsaw Pact should be dissolved in mid-1991. My proposal concerning new alliance agreements with former socialist states met a big interest." Report on news conference by Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Warsaw PAP, in English, 2220 GMT 22 January 1991. FBIS-EEU-91-015, p. 28.
39. On 30 November 1990, Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, invited to take a part in the North Assembly, said in part: "I am of the opinion that the North Atlantic Treaty, as a vital part of European security, cannot

remain indifferent towards Central and Eastern Europe, where unrest or tension and conflict may take place." Warsaw PAP, in English, 2142 GMT, 30 November 1990. FBIS-EEU-90-223, p. 27.

40. From a statement by spokesman for the Polish Foreign Ministry Wladyslaw Klaczynski, Warsaw PAP, in English, 1656 GMT 18 February 1991. FBIS-EEU-91-033, p. 35.

41. Initially some Polish officials supported an idea of "armed neutrality." Finally another concept prevailed--that of the necessity of seeking close cooperation with NATO. The concept of military neutrality has been treated as a temporary phenomenon, a natural result of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. See interview with Minister of National Defense Vice Admiral Piotr Kolodziejczyk, "The Army of a Neutral Country," *Zycie Warszawy*, in Polish, Warsaw, 6 February 1991, pp. 1, 3, and interview with Polish Premier Jan K. Bielecki for *Die Welt*, in German, 4 March 1991, p. 11. FBIS-EEU-91-044, p. 42.

42. From an address to the Sejm on security issues by Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski. Warsaw Domestic Service, in Polish, 0833 GMT 14 February 1991. FBIS-EEU-91-032, p. 27.

43. Poland developed close regional cooperation with Hungary and Czechoslovakia within the so-called Visegrad Triangle (Visegrad Group), and has been an active member of the Council of the Baltic States, as well as the Central European Initiative (the Heksagonale).

44. The quotation is from an interview with Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Warsaw *Rzeczpospolita*, in Polish, 26 March 1991, p. 7.

45. Also on 2 November 1992, Polish President Lech Walesa gave a speech, "Tenets of the Polish Security Policy," which included a clear statement of the main assumptions of Polish security policy: future membership in the European Community and NATO as its fundamental aim, support for the US military presence in Europe, and a desire to establish close regional cooperation within the Visegrad Group and with new independent states that emerged after collapse of the Soviet Union. PAI-Press, *Material and Documents*, No. 11-12/92.

46. See comments concerning the current Polish-Russian relationships by Jerzy Nowakowski, *Rzeczpospolita*, in Polish, Warsaw, 20-21 May 1995.

47. "The government I head is striving for full-fledged integration with the NATO defense system and is ready to undertake the accompanying commitment." Interview with Polish Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy, Warsaw *Polska Zbrojna*, in Polish, 25 September 1995, pp. 1-2. FBIS, *Daily Report Eastern Europe*, 27 September 1995, p. 47.

"A firm majority (71 per cent) of Poles would declare in favor of Poland's accession to the European Union and NATO if a referendum were held on that issue tomorrow." Poll conducted 5-7 August 1995 by Wroclaw Demoskop, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, in Polish, 23 August 1995, p. 3. FBIS, *Daily Report Eastern Europe*, 31 August 1995, p.55.

48. Launched in 1991, the Visegrad Group is a loose form of regional cooperation which included the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The Czech Republic strongly opposed any attempts by Poland and Hungary to transform the Visegrad Group into an institutionalized structure for political cooperation. In the Czech leaders' opinion it can be an obstacle for efforts to obtain membership in Euro-Atlantic structures by the Czech Republic.

---

Colonel Tadeusz Pieciukiewicz (Polish Air Force), is currently assigned as Chief of the Tactical Aviation Department at Headquarters, Polish Air and Defense Forces, in Warsaw. He holds a Ph.D. degree and is a 1996 graduate of the US Army War College.

---

Reviewed 6 November 1996. Please send comments or corrections to [carl\\_Parameters@conus.army.mil](mailto:carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil).