



POLAND

- 100 YEARS OF SOVEREIGNTY,
100 YEARS OF ACTIVITY

edited by: Kinga Redłowska

Jan Rokita • Waldemar Skrzypczak



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Preface

The 100th anniversary of the Polish restitution, following the First World War and 123 years of forced partition between Poland's three neighbours, is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the country's past years, as well as devise strategies for the future. This volume aims to fulfil such goals. It contains two insightful papers dealing with the most pressing challenges awaiting Poland, as seen through the lens of the centenary of its modern statehood.

In "Independence of Poland: Meanders of the Polish Sovereignty" Waldemar Skrzypczak, former commander of the Polish Land Forces, highlights the fact that Poland has been at the heart of European history for at least 1000 years. "Poland's location on the axis of Paris-Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow is the reason why Poles have always been involved in whatever crucial was going on the continent" he writes, arguing that the Polish fight for an independent state throughout much of the 19th century was a reflection of historical justice, stemming from the significant input of the Polish nation in European values. The 100 years which followed 1918 were, in the eyes of the author, "times of the national collective effort". After the Second World War and decades of communist government "the Polish political and military elites strived to convince Western politicians that Poland deserved a place among political, economic and military leaders in Europe". This culminated in Poland acceding to NATO and the European Union. In the second half of the paper Skrzypczak focuses on the major threats facing these two organisations and Poland as part of them. The crisis in Ukraine, Russian imperialism, wars and humanitarian disasters of the Middle East and Africa, or the Korean political developments are among the key challenges identified by the author as those defining the future of the West. Skrzypczak concludes with a suggestion that Poland and her Allies need to rebuild their military potential, as well as political cooperation in order to deter potential aggressors in the future.

The second paper titled "Poland towards the world. One hundred years after regaining independence (1918-2018)" sees columnist Jan Rokita concluding that "despite internal crises, Polish politics is well known, tested, comprehensible and credible for allies and partners". Throughout the last 100 years several axioms of Polish politics have become apparent and these do not disappear despite internal conflicts. Poland, according to Rokita, is a staunch Atlanticist, relying on its special military alliance with the United States. Following 1989, "Poland acted with the idea that in this way it best invests in the durability of the newly regained self-independence" the author claims. The other priorities of the country include the support for Europeanisation and westernisation of its eastern neighbours, specifically Ukraine. Much of those efforts, according to Rokita, are an attempt to get over the wrongdoings of the Second World War. The exception is Russia, which in the view of Poland turned to authoritarianism after 2000 and remains an existential threat. The author writes that "today in Poland there is a fairly common conviction that Russia under the rule of President Vladimir Putin has become a dangerous country, openly seeking a change in the political order that was created in Europe after the breakup of the USSR". This is of course incompatible with the third axiom identified by Rokita and that is stay-

ing part of the European integration process, whether through keeping faith in common institutions or via intergovernmental agreements.

This volume succeeds in presenting the Polish centenary as a celebration of a certain consequence of Polish politics. Both authors highlight the Polish tradition and various trends which define the modern actions of the Polish nation. We hope that it will be a significant contribution to the further study of subjects revolving around Polish statehood and its mission in the modern World. For the last 100 years and for the 100 years to come.

Kinga Redłowska
Programme Director
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Independence of Poland

Waldemar Skrzypczak

Meanders of the Polish sovereignty

Today's face of Poland, in geographic, ethnic or national sense, has been formed for more than 1,000 years. It is nothing compared to the planet's history, but for a single nation, which was born in tumultuous times, it is an epochal event. In Europe's history, a millennium is a long time, especially that, construed as a group of countries important for the world's history, it is only slightly more than 2,000 years old.

According to some historians, Poland as a separate country has been in existence for more than 1,000 years. Others claim it has been even 500 years longer. But the important thing is that the societies living in the Vistula river basin have come to identify themselves as a national community.

Poland's location on the axis of Paris-Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow is the reason why Poles have always been involved in whatever crucial was going on the continent. It is on this axis that for nearly 1,500 years now the future of the world has been decided. And in the future, nothing will surely happen without a contribution of Europe.

On this trail the world's most important wars and conflicts took place. On this trail, empires, armies and commanders were born and fell. On this trail, the remains of millions of knights and soldiers, who sacrificed their lives on the altar of the homeland, are scattered. On this one and on other European trails, the remains of hundreds of thousands of Polish people "...fighting for our freedom and yours..." are scattered.

From the very beginning of its history, Poland has been a significant if not key player in the process of shaping Europe's facet throughout history. There was a time when Poland was a European empire and decided the fate of its neighbours. Nothing in Europe could happen without Poland. Twice in Europe's history did Poland save the continent. The first time, against the Ottoman tempest – on Poland's eastern borderlands and in the Battle of Vienna, and the second time, against the march of the Soviets seeking to export the communist revolution to Central and Western Europe – crushing the Red Army in the Battle of Warsaw in a military masterpiece.

The participation of Poland and the Poles in creating the history of contemporary Europe and the world is undisputable. The geographical location of Poland has always been a reason for it to be dragged into its neighbours political games. Poland was an obstacle for the rising powers of Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary. The long-lasting pact of almost 200 years between the three ambitious monarchies left Poland stripped of its statehood. A nation was enslaved and torn apart into three separate parts. Poles were made slaves. Everything that had formed heritage of over a dozen of generations of Poles was destroyed and pillaged. No one of the mighty of the times paid attention to the tragic faith of the Polish nation. We were sentenced for 123 years of oblivion. And there is not a single place in this world where Poles have not fought "for our freedom and yours". They always stood in the name of the right cause. Deeply believing in the mission of bringing liberty to other nations, and with a deep faith that one day Poland will be reborn.

When under partitions Poland was exposed to an unprecedented martyrology. The insurrections were paid for in blood. The nation underwent extermination. Polish people were sent to Siberian "inhuman land". Prisons were filled up. Armed terror was rife.

Despite all this enslavement, the nation survived. It did thanks to the memory of its glorious history cultivated by families, from generation to generation.

It may seem that 123 years was long enough to erase from the map not only the Polish state but also Poles as a nationality. Such was the intention of the partitioners. Poland was supposed to never revive again and Poles were doomed to be germanised or russified. The Polish language was forbidden, and its use in everyday life was punished.

Polish national consciousness has never faltered. It was manifested by uprisings; by building in the free world the conviction that the Polish nation exists and deserves independence; by building faith among the Poles under partitions that the time was coming for the rebirth of the Polish state, with old empires declining as a result of wars and social unrest.

Road to Independence

This was a time for Polish patriots dreaming about Poland. They lived to see Poland reborn. Heroes in soldiers' uniforms, writers and poets, artists, peasants and craftsmen. Many, many known by name and nameless Poles. Their collective effort brought Poland to independence in memorable November 1918.

However, our effort would not have resulted in a rebirth of Poland without the initiative and strong support of the US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson. This great enthusiasm of Americans poured faith in the minds of politicians who were putting up a new world order after World War I. But it was also the efforts of the world-renowned Poles, including especially pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski, that helped change the fate of our oppressed nation in Central Europe. The armed deeds of Poles led by Marshal Piłsudski best testified to the will to fight for Poland's independence.

Poland was reborn on the ruins of post-war Europe. Its territory was damaged to an unprecedented degree, as it had been the theatre of Russia's dramatic battles with Germany and Austria-Hungary took place. Poland was raised from the ruins by the great enthusiasm of its people.

The young state was facing huge challenges right from the beginning: building administration and army from scratch; struggle to incorporate territories inhabited by Poles who longed to unite with their Homeland; dramatic Silesian uprisings, plebiscites in Masuria and Silesia, regaining access to the Baltic Sea. These are the symbolic events in the history of the resurrecting Homeland.

Poles were not given the opportunity to live and rebuild the country in peace. Not all Polish neighbours were happy with the formation of a new state. It was an extremely difficult time. But the worst was yet to come.

Poland's great neighbour that was tsarist Russia was falling apart in a revolution. The leaders of the communist country decided that the revolution had to be exported to Western Europe, which was marred by social unrest after World War I.

Poland, which was born out of a war tragedy, stood on their way.

Only thanks to the unprecedented mobilisation of the Nation and the support of the Allies did Poles defeat the Red Army. The Polish army organised itself in a very short time. The Poles who had served in the partitioners' armies proved to be excellent commanders against the overwhelming Soviet troops.

This victory would not have been possible without foreign support, especially from the US and France. Many Americans and Frenchmen fought in the ranks of the Polish army

- as if paying back what Poles such as Kościuszko, Pułaski, Dąbrowski or Poniatowski had done for their allies and friends when Poland was under Partitions and Americans fought for independence. Tens of thousands of Polish citizens and soldiers gave their lives fighting for their homeland and for whole Europe.

Times of the national collective effort

After the victorious war, the young state began the reconstruction process. It was a time of great hardships and sacrifices. We started to build the country from the scratch, surrounded by the ocean of ruins and fields churned up by bullets. The country was destroyed by four war waves rumbling through the country. The invaders left a plundered land, razed in nearly 60%.

Within 20 years, the Polish industry was redeveloped, one of the greatest successes being the creation of the Central Industrial Region. The seaport of Gdynia was built and the maritime trade was established along with an impressive fleet. The iron and steel industry was growing and the country invested in the coal mine industry and agriculture. The economy was in full and stable development.

Much care and investment was put into the Polish army. Along with the development of the Land Troops that held a strong potential, the government initiated the formation of the Navy and the Airborne Troops. In the years 1920-1930, an army was formed that was highly thought of and considered dangerous by Germany and Soviet Russia. A military formation known as the Border Protection Corps was created to defend the country's eastern border with Russia. Russia was, even after the Polish-Soviet war, still conspiring against Poland, staging provocations, sending spies and doing nothing to prevent criminal raids on Polish borderland towns. Polish citizens were trained to secure personnel reserves for the army.

In collaboration with Polish science and military industry, a gradual modernisation of the army started. A number of innovative prototypes of planes, tanks and vehicles of various types were developed. And despite the limited production capacities of the Polish industry, the implementation of the new equipment for the army was in progress. These innovative solutions proved to be effective in 1939.

In spite of the great effort and dedication of the entire nation, the young Polish state was knocked down by the predominance of the German and Soviet aggression in September 1939. Poland, deceived and abandoned by its allies, lost the September Campaign after a heroic defence. But Poles did not give up and continued their fight elsewhere: in the Resistance movement, fighting against Poland's enemies on battlefields worldwide, making a significant contribution to the Allied Victory over the Nazi in World War II. The scale of human loss among the Poles and the extent of damage in Poland had no equal in any other European country affected by the war.

And yet Poland was coming out of the war most humiliated. In Yalta, the Allies surrendered Poland to the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Remembering the right to self-determination, Poles never accepted it. "Solidarity" was born out of dreams of a free and sovereign Poland. And once again, Americans stood up for Poland. The US President Ronald Reagan led the way of freedom. It was largely owing to him that we shook off the yoke of a seemingly omnipotent Soviet Union. This, combined with the underground resistance at home, brought back to Poland the desired independence in 1989. The Iron Curtain fell. A new European order was to come.

New challenges resulting from the new balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe triggered our aspirations to join both NATO and the European Union. The Polish political and military elites strived to convince Western politicians that Poland deserved a place among political, economic and military leaders in Europe. These efforts were successful upon our entering NATO and the European Union. All the more so because NATO gained a credible ally on the most sensitive, eastern flank of the Alliance. The participation of the Polish army in anti-terrorist operations in Iraq, Chad and Afghanistan ever strengthened our position, making us an undisputed leader of the new members of the Alliance.

New facets of war

The belief of European politicians in the inviolable peace was brutally broken by Russia, which conducted a surprising aggression against politically and economically impaired Ukraine, just a few years after invading Georgia in a similar way.

Independence, like peace, is not given once and for all. The lack of political intuition and unstable governance are a straight ticket to weakening a state's defence capability.

A hybrid war or a new strategy for Russia

The war that Central and Western Europe is being victim to remains unnamed

The war has been going on for over a dozen years, and basically since the time Russia and Putin began to seek to rebuild the empire. From the beginning, regardless of the explicitly declared doctrines, they began preparing for a new type of war. Not military, though, as you can see from the equally severe consequences.

Already in the mid-1990s, Russian leaders realised that armed confrontation with any powerful opponent such as NATO would have caused the collapse of Russia. And Russia would never be reborn in its current borders, supposing that any of the winners would agree to its revival at all. It has been generating far too many problems for at least 100 years. They made efforts to rebuild Russia's power, regain its influence, engineering a number of strategies, among which those should primarily be cited that are aimed, directly or indirectly, against Poland and the European Union.

Naturally, they are patiently rebuilding and modernising their armed forces. They are forming new divisions. They are developing new military Technologies: hypersonic and electromagnetic weapons. They possess a sizeable nuclear arsenal. But their true power lies not in their military forces, but in politics, supported by the world's most powerful diplomatic corps. They were capable of selling the "policy of love" at the turn of the century, deceiving both Europe and the US. Russians managed to lull the vigilance of Washington and Brussels with their political games. While arming themselves, they managed to convince Europe that no threats exist. And that no harm can come from Russia. As a result, between 2007 and 2014, everyone, including Poland, reduced the size of their armed forces. The army modernisation budgets were drastically cut. As a matter of fact, Russians have effectively disarmed NATO. They may now conduct their non-invasive strategies unopposed. Russians have mastered a strategy of political and economic destruction. One can see that on the example of the European Union.

So what is it they did exactly? First of all, they gathered detailed information of the countries within their sphere of interest. They focused on the areas in which they can weaken the EU and NATO politically and economically in the short term, both in terms of alliances and individually. They assumed, based on scientific knowledge, that every nation or every state requires an individual approach. And the logic has led them to a conclu-

sion that the EU is a severely complicated and fragile system affected by internal conflicts between different member states that can be easily exploited. It is now evident that they know precisely how to activate these conflicts. A perfect example was Poland's accusation against France that it sold its Mistral ships via Egypt to Russia for 1 USD. Who could have come up with such an idea? Who could have been taken in by such naivety?

The Russian strategy towards each EU and NATO country is different. They know who they can make deals with, and who any dialogue is impossible with, like for example with Poland. And they take different actions towards individual EU and NATO members. In many areas they clearly succeed. It is dangerous for the EU economy to have Russian capital located in it, for example the Czech Republic or Slovakia, where a large part of their national arms industry is in the hands of Russians.

And right are probably those who point to Russia as the force behind the resurging separatisms in Europe; inciting destabilisation inside the EU and in individual member countries; inspiring government crises. Awakening nationalisms is for them a way to blow out Western liberal democracies. And the underlying target is to restore political and economic of Central Europe on Russia.

Who will Russia attack?

This question is asked by almost all "strategists" confused by Putin's rhetoric. It is worth noticing when we got to know about the ZAPAD 2017 military exercises. The Russian media were methodically "revealing" the intention of the Russian military to conduct these exercises. And the media got involved in this information war. For nearly a year, Russian media have been reporting a large number of rail transports ordered to transfer troops to the exercise areas in Belarus. This information paralysed uninformed Western politicians who are now speculating on when Russia will attack NATO. This information also scared the confused citizens. And this is exactly the goal of the Russian information war.

Each military man familiar with the art of warfare knows that this allegedly large number of railway transports is hardly enough to transfer the equipment of three or four mechanised or armoured brigades, and two or three brigade types of troops, i.e. artillery, sappers, and logistic. This is not a potential susceptible of scaring NATO. Especially since there is no notice neither about mobilization in Russia nor about building stocks of ammunition, fuel, etc. on the border with NATO. And that would not be easy to hide away.

Of course, we can consider various scenarios as to Russia's aggression against the NATO countries. I believe, however, that NATO strategic commanders are thoroughly investigating all data on possible threats and will make timely decisions that will protect us against an unexpected aggression. And I trust that this a top secret that no politician who anticipating war has access to it. Because access to such strictly classified knowledge is permitted only to reliable people.

Who should be then afraid of Russia? In my opinion it is definitely Ukraine. Why? Three years since the Russian attack on Ukraine a lot has changed in the country. First of all, Ukrainians rebuilt the army, which now constitutes a major battle force that Russians have to reckon with. If the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko wishes to preserve credibility among the Ukrainian citizens, he should pull all the stops to reclaim Donetsk and Luhansk and offset the Russian threat. Ukrainians dream of Crimea. But Ukrainian people and Ukrainian politicians need to become economically and mentally independent from Russian influences. Otherwise Ukraine will not escape the Kremlin's domination.

President Putin realises that every weak spot on his side is a chance for President Poroshenko. If Putin attacks NATO, then Ukraine will be the first to counter-attack. The country will benefit from Russia's involvement in the war with NATO, which can weaken Russia to such an extent that Putin's dream of the great Russian empire will remain nothing but a dream, and at the same time a unique opportunity for Ukraine. Many countries in Asia, too, are looking forward shed Russia's domination and they will surely follow the Ukrainian path in such case. This would be the end of the great Russia, and Putin is aware of that.

If in the next few months "the Korean Knot" comes to a peaceful outcome, Russia may be ready for confronting Ukraine. After the ZAPAD 2017 military exercises, Russians will possess a strong military potential in Belarus and at the northern border with Ukraine. This means having practically two armies, of which one is a armoured unit. This should suffice to strike Ukraine, cutting it in half, down to the Transnistria region, annex the pro-Russian part of the Ukraine, and outflank the main forces of the Ukrainian army east of the Dnieper River. Such a scenario would mean the end of Ukraine. Because all in all, which member of NATO would then engage in such a conflict? None because Turkey will oppose, being itself strongly tied with Russia by mutual interests in the Middle East. And NATO is probably asking itself what Recep Erdogan would do in case Russia attacks Ukraine.

The Turkish president is well aware of the fact that the Alliance without Turkey will not develop a potential capable of threatening Russia, given that Americans have limited possibilities to support Europe, with its basic military potential being focused on North Korea.

And it is worth realising that NATO is largely reliant on the European Union, which is now faltering due to its very members and not strangers.

Russia counts on a US-Korean conflict, as it will exclude the US from involvement in Europe. Such a situation will change the relations between Europe and Russia. It will make Putin a player who, having oil and gas in his hands, will reach for some Eastern European countries, making them his followers.

The darkest scenario is the annexation of part of Ukraine by Russia and the breakdown of the European Union. And this seems possible if the youngest members of the EU fail not see early enough the threats brought about by new challenges. The EU's deficit of unanimity does certainly not help. And Poland is becoming a weak link in this vicious circle.

Dark clouds over Russia

Russia increasingly tightens its grip on the countries of the Middle East region. Precisely speaking: reactivates old ones and creates new ones. While the US and Western countries refrained from further involvement in the Middle East conflict, new players stepped in readily. In an unwritten alliance, Russia, Turkey and Iran took over a strategic initiative. Other countries, disappointed by the Western handling of the "Arab Spring", are joining them. Considering the political and military interventionism, the record of the last 20 years is not positive for the West. There are huge perturbations in the Middle East and North Africa, and the fault is with the Western countries.

Russia took over the leadership role not only in the battle against ISIS, but also in building the new political and economic reality in this region. Also trying to do something what no one manage to do before – to consolidate the environment, above the religious divisions, by the common purpose of fighting against ISIS. Arguably, the durability of this alliance will depend on how the situation evolves and first of all on how much the economic interests of the parties are satisfied.

The rapprochement between Moscow and Riyadh demonstrates that the situation is still evolving and is partly out of the US control. Saudi Arabia had to pay off its admission to the "game" ordering Russian S-400 systems. Unthinkable just a few months ago. It is still very difficult to notice any Trump's strategy in this region. Except for the support for Iraq and Kurds, Washington's eyes are on Asia, precisely on the protection of its own interests against the Chinese expansion, as well as on the Korean conflict. Encouraging Kurds proved wrong because it created a front of strong opponents, enemies of the independence of the Kurdish state.

And it is very clear that Russians have a tacit consent to their conduct. Israel should be willing to support any action that will weaken or reverse the influence of Iran or Hezbollah. Egypt is anxiously following the developments in Libya and is probably intending to intervene to suppress the rebellion on its eastern border. Saudi Arabia got engaged in the war in Yemen. There are more scenarios of the kind taking place in the region. And the multitude of combat fronts requires the intervention of strong players. Russia fits these expectations.

The times of ISIS are slowly coming to an end. Fighters are evacuating to other regions, to religiously favourable environments, where the economic and social situation is likely to serve as an incubator for further mutations of terrorism, where Islamic fundamentalism has never been strong so far. And where it has never had such a tragic expression as in the Middle East.

Russia is strongly engaged in the fight against ISIS, well aware of the threats associated with the migration of jihadists. Thousands of fighters come from the Caucasus and former Soviet republics of Central Asia. And they go back there. They infiltrate their environments, penetrate local and tribal authorities. They create organisational foundations for reviving militias, exploiting the difficult economic situation and popular dissatisfaction caused by corrupt leaders, pointing to nepotism as a source of evil. It is hard to find a better breeding ground.

These threats are taken account of by Russia. In its own security interest, Moscow wants to avoid the burning southern border at all costs, especially when waging an undeclared war with Ukraine, when in conflict with Georgia, when in a state of political and informational war with NATO, when significantly engaged in Syria. Generally, new flash-points are multiplying and will multiply around Russia. Some of them are generated by Russia itself - such as conflicts with Ukraine and Georgia. Others are emerging through the crisis-laden Russian economy upon which the post-Soviet states of Central Asia are highly dependent.

The black scenario for Russia is already on the horizon. Putin sees that already. Hence his strong efforts to stop the expansion of terrorism from the Near East to the vast areas of the Middle East. He will be happy to direct the difficult-to-stop waves of migrants towards Europe.

And it is worth taking a look at through the prism of our European security. None of the previously mentioned Middle Eastern players is interested in playing in "our team". On the contrary, they will all gladly export to Europe hundreds of thousands of refugees and hundreds of jihadists. We saw a prelude to this two years ago. It is about time to think how to prevent this. It seems that our methods, forces and resources used so far may prove insufficient in the confrontation with the growing wave of migration. And there is no other way than the consolidation of EU countries. Any manifestation of weaknesses will be meticulously exploited against us.

Will Poland defend itself ...?

According to politicians, yes. According to military officials, this is a highly unbelievable vision. Even in 10 years. Even if we spent 5% of GDP on armaments each year.

And it seems that this declaration of politicians is erroneous in identifying the potential enemy of our country. Unless it concerns a country with much less economic and military potential than Poland. Therefore, this political declaration, certainly taking into account strategic analyses carried out by renowned think tanks, does not concern the threat from Russia. And none of the experts takes into account the conflict, including a military one, within the EU – between the existing partners. And certainly not in Central Europe. This cannot be said about the situation in south-eastern Europe and the strange behaviour of Erdogan in relations with the EU and his friendship with Putin. But this is already beyond the subject of this paper, although it is clear from this example that it is worth taking care of political and military alliances to make them last.

None of the strategic authorities is considering leaving Poland alone to Russia. And this applies above all to the US and NATO. Hence the presence of their troops in Poland, which we have been yearning for for at least 10 years. Such is the geopolitical reality in our region today, which has been built with our participation since our accession to NATO. What will it be like in 10 years? The most audacious visionaries certainly do not know it for sure, even though strategic forecasters should predict near future. What can be clearly stated today is that Russia will remain our eastern neighbour. What can not be foreseen is what will happen with Russia and in Russia after the Putin era.

The fundamental issue in assessing a potential opponent is a multi-level strategic analysis of its economic and military potential, human resources and their availability, determination to support rulers, often pushing the nation to make war, as well as its potential allies, both political and military. In general, such a study is worked on for several years by a joint effort of many task forces using a number of tools, spanning science, politics or business.

Did those responsible for our security carry out such analyses? Or, like Germans in 1941, did they overestimate their capabilities and underappreciate the opponent who, apart from the great areas of its country, possessed enormous human resources? In fact, after three months of Russian campaign in 1941, Germans realised the tragedy of their situation. Then they only made desperate attempts to save themselves from oppression. How it ended, we know from history in detail. And what's interesting, German historians officially admit – Russian historians only unofficially – that for one German soldier killed on the Eastern Front there were ten Russian ones. This is one of many conclusions that should be included in the strategic analysis.

Saying that Poland will be able to fend off Russia's aggression is nothing but an unfounded declaration. And hopefully none of our allies takes this declaration seriously. And may it be like that. Because the worst thing that could happen is the isolation of Poland. Isolation as a result of political mistakes of Poles. And the history of our country has often been among the most distressing in Europe. We needed a few generations to raise our Homeland from ruins and heal the Nation from painful wounds. I am afraid, unfortunately, that some of us quickly forget about these cruel experiences. And I am referring to our political elites for whom partisan interests are more important than those of Poland.

Poland, with its potential, is needed by Europe, and Poland needs Europe. And regardless of the range and the tone of the information war, carried out against Poland by Russia

in Western Europe, we are still perceived, just like in 1920, as a bulwark against the aggression from the East. And despite the change in the Kremlin's rhetoric in relations with Germany and France, we can still count on the support from the West and the US. And it is worth noting this fact in the context of the war in Ukraine, a country supported mainly by the US, but also by the EU. And yet not a member of either NATO or the EU.

Therefore, we should strongly pursue and demonstrate our political and military ambitions. But always in confidence that our security is guaranteed by reliable alliances. For today, we have guarantees within NATO. And this is our strategic asset.

Russia's strategy of intimidation

Russia's involvement in conflicts in Ukraine and Syria; maintaining strong military contingents in Armenia, near Georgia, in Abkhazia, in the former republics of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan and in Transnistria; operating naval bases in the Mediterranean (Tartus in Syria) and the South China Sea (Cam Ranh in Vietnam); development of combat potential through, among other things, reform of the armoured army in the Western Military District – all this makes Russia a major global player again. One which should still be reckoned with. And perceived as a serious threat to world peace. Mainly due to its imperial ambitions, but also because the US cannot respond with an unequivocal strategy to Russia's aspirations. And what Trump does, or rather fails to do, clearly shows that Russia exploits the US temporary, let's hope, disorientation in international politics.

Russia and China support each other in demonstrating their military cooperation. And although Beijing claims the economic nature of its warships visit to the Baltic Sea, it sends out a clear message for the US and the Baltic countries, including Poland. And this is not a courtesy visit, as politicians want it to be seen. China will be everywhere where it can build new zones of economic influence. And it will cooperate with anyone who can be helpful in displacing Americans from these zones. As it does in Asia and Africa. Thus a question is arises: Can the Baltic and, above all, Europe become a zone of economic and then also political influence of China? Certainly yes. China will have the door to Europe opened by Russia which, facing hard times at home, needs the Chinese economic support at all costs. And that is why Putin will do everything for China. Otherwise, Russia will be dismembered by its enraged citizens. It should be added that the "Silk Road" will run through the regions dominated by Russia. The Chinese know this for sure.

Putin has reawakened Russia's superpower desires. He modernises and expands military forces. He implements modern destruction systems. He extends non-conventional combat systems, including ones located in space. He consistently achieves new abilities, especially in the areas of cyber-warfare and radioelectronic warfare as well as air and missile defence. He cooperates with China on the development of secret weapons. Examples could be multiplied.

And the aim is not to threaten anyone. But to show that the lack of strategy in the US-Russia relations can be catastrophic in the long run. Especially when it comes to the world's economic invasion by China and Afro-Asian demographic eruption, aspects where Russia pretends to play a role of a "traffic controller" directing everything towards Europe. For only one purpose - to break the unity of the EU, to weaken its economic potential, to revenge for its support for Ukraine.

Do the eastern countries, with Poland among them, and NATO have something to be afraid? Given lack of a clear or confrontational strategy of Trump's administration towards Russia, the answer is definitely yes.

Any Trump's involvement in the North Korean conflict will trigger a significant commitment of the US Army to defend South Korea, on a much bigger scale than in Iraq or Afghanistan. Russia and China will express their "righteous indignation" before the UN Security Council, while discreetly supporting North Korea in different ways under the pretext of "humanitarian aid". This was the case of Donbas in Ukraine. Weapons and ammunition were pouring in, for the price of US involvement in this devastating war.

Putin counts on the US military involvement in Asia and other spots. This will allow him to execute the act of revenge: destruction of the EU and then NATO. Without the US, the North Atlantic Alliance, after years of reduction of military budgets by the key EU states, has an insufficient military potential that needs to be repaired quickly. Otherwise Europe might be in danger because Americans will hardly be able to maintain their troops in two or three theatres of war.



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Poland towards the world. One hundred years after regaining independence

Jan Rokita

I. Axioms

In April 2018, the Spanish Internet newspaper “Público” painted a map of Europe for its readers, on which the countries that had invaded or occupied Polish territory throughout history were marked in red. It turned out that there were 13 such countries, and the map of Europe is mostly covered in red. The comment of Spanish journalists was as follows: “Oh, Poles have chosen a bad place for life!”. For a contemporary Spanish reader, the whole thing is probably just yet another anecdote. But from the perspective of Poles, this map depicts the very essence of Poland’s problems with the rest of the world. On one hand, its central location in Europe meant that from all four sides of the world independent Poland was in the past seen as a potential area to seize, or at least to include in one’s sphere of influence. For centuries, such political thinking prevailed in St. Petersburg, Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm, Istanbul, and even in Paris. On the other hand, whenever Europe became the arena of imperialist conquest (e.g., Gustavus Adolphus, Napoleon, Hitler or Stalin), great occupational armies swept through the Polish territories, destroying the country, ruining its economy, and above all, trying to enforce submission of the Poles. In such geopolitical conditions, independent Poland could only last as long as it counted itself among the largest European powers, i.e., until the end of the 17th century, and thus was able – using either diplomacy or armed forces – to defend its independence in the east, west, south and north. In the 18th century, by its own fault and poor governance, Poland became weak and vulnerable, and was eventually torn apart between its neighbouring countries. Not until over the century later did it have its independence restored, following the unexpected simultaneous collapse of three monarchies: Prussian, Russian, and Austrian as a result of World War I. That is exactly what happened 100 years ago.

That independence, unfortunately, was not permanent. It lasted barely 20 years, and the Poles themselves began to put up a brutal question: ‘Isn’t Poland just a “seasonal state”?!’. The experience of a repeated loss of independence in 1939, this time as a result of Hitler’s collusion with Stalin, shaped the entire Polish contemporary thinking about relations with the outside world. And the conclusions from that traumatic experience became the axioms of Polish foreign policy after 1989, when Poles again managed to break free towards independence thanks to the “Solidarity” movement and the fall of the USSR. The first of these axioms was the conviction that without deep roots in the global alliance that was formed by the United States after World War II, Polish independence may once more prove temporary and fragile. Without awareness of this fear, it is impossible to understand the Polish role and attitude in contemporary international relations. Only then can we rationally explain why Poland was so eager to tie its future with the United States and NATO, making anything resulting from this alliance an absolute priority of its foreign policy. With this in mind, it becomes quite clear, for example, why Poland so willingly provided support to George W. Bush in a warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq, while America was abandoned by its strongest European allies. Or why Polish efforts were so persistent to have permanent quarters of the largest US forces on Polish territory – an attempt which only in recent years

was crowned with a partial success. In both cases, the underlying idea was to best secure the newly regained independence.

The second key conclusion that emerged from the renewed loss of independence concerned the European East. And above all, the geopolitical model of this part of the continent desired by Poland. From the end of the 17th century, the whole region was dominated by Russia, whose peak of territorial supremacy fell on the times of the post-World War II communism. For centuries, Poles lived in one republican state, along with Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians, and when this state first faltered, and eventually collapsed at the end of the 18th century, this was the beginning of the era of conflicts of Poles with these nations as they experienced their important national rebirth over the course of the 19th century. These conflicts continued also during the period of short independence between the two world wars, and during World War II they brought great atrocities and slaughter. So when, in 1989, Poland was back on its feet, all its eastern policy was oriented at overcoming the bad past and supporting the independence and democratic aspirations of its eastern neighbours. What was symbolic in this respect was the fact that the Polish government was the first in the world to recognise the independence of Ukraine in 1991. It was further forged into the axiom of Polish foreign policy not to ever allow the reconstruction of the imperial zone of Russian influence in Eastern Europe, in which case Poland would also inevitably become an area (as experts said) of "rare security". It was this imperative that made Polish President Lech Kaczyński organise a rescue "expedition of five presidents" to Tbilisi in 2008, when Georgia's independence was suddenly threatened. And Polish politicians, as well as many young Poles, enthusiastically engaged in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004, and later provided support for the Kiev Maidan of 2014. This was all a conscious investment in the durability of regained Polish independence.

II. Atlanticism

The independence regained in 1989 was, on one hand, the result of ten years of the Solidarity movement, which was pushed underground in 1981 by the military-communist junta that declared martial law. But, obviously, it would not have been possible had it not been for the failure and collapse of the USSR, as a result of a lost military and economic competition with America. In Poland, the memory of the achievements of the then President of the USA, Ronald Reagan, is treated with special respect. Not only did he respond with sanctions to the military coup in Warsaw in 1981 and to an attempt to tear down the Solidarity movement, but he also imposed the technological arms race on the weakening Soviet regime, which was ruining for the latter. When, eventually, Solidarity came off victorious, Poles had a huge gratitude and a fond sentiment for America, which was widely regarded as a co-creator of Polish independence. The only foreign politician who in those years was greeted on the streets of Warsaw by tens of thousands of people was President George Bush Sr. who, in a historic speech at the Castle Square in Warsaw, welcomed a new era of freedom and democracy that would inevitably take over all over the globe. This peculiar idealism of America, which then believed in the possibility of building a better world, also became a canon of thinking for Poland in the last decade of the 20th century. Already in 1992, the Polish government decided that it would apply for full membership in NATO. And while Russia, which was democratising at that time, raised its objections to it, it appeared that they would not be too firm. It became characteristic that, during a historic visit to Warsaw in 1993, Russian President Boris Yeltsin announced the possibil-

ity of withdrawing Russian objections in this matter ("Poland's accession to NATO does not violate the interests of the Russian Federation," he said). Ultimately, this fundamental goal of Polish politics came into being in 1999, as - again thanks to the firm decision of the US President (this time it was Bill Clinton) - four Central European countries became members of the Western alliance. There were certain limitations that did not evoke Polish enthusiasm (including the announcement of the absence of the quarters of major NATO units in Poland on account of Russia), but Warsaw hoped these would be lifted over time.

Since then, atlanticism has become the Polish state doctrine. Perhaps it was most clearly visible in 2003, when the Polish army joined the controversial operation "Iraqi Freedom", along with the US, British and Australian troops. Importantly, it was accompanied by Warsaw's heated dispute with Berlin and Paris, both opposing the operation. That came about at the moment when Poland was just finalising its accession to the European Union, putting it at risk of serious perturbations if not postponing. This met with certain anxiety from some Polish intellectuals, especially the leftist ones, while the opinion tossed around the European media that "Poland is a Trojan horse of the USA in Europe" aroused irritation. However, this did not affect the decisions of the then government, despite the fact that the post-communist SLD party was at that time in power. The strategy of atlanticism was also manifested in Poland's active efforts to locate in its territory the so-called anti-missile shield, first announced by President George W. Bush. At the same time, Warsaw tried to ensure that along with the elements of the "shield", which was to protect primarily the US, there would also be the US air defence systems deployed on Polish territory, protecting it against a hypothetical invasion. These efforts did not bring the expected results then, especially in the face of the new, more resilient and volatile policy of Barack Obama, badly accepted in Poland. The then head of diplomacy, Radosław Sikorski, even described the first six-year anniversary of the Obama Presidency as "lost years". Only the new situation that emerged after the outbreak of the war in the Crimea and in the Donbas did produce a shift in American politics, so much desired in Warsaw. And the Warsaw NATO summit in the summer of 2016 turned out to be a breakthrough, leading to concrete decisions strengthening the so-called NATO's eastern.

III. Dangerous East

Poland was one of the Central European countries that, after the 1989 great Autumn of Nations, tried to build a new and good relationship with a rapidly changing Russia. It is significant, for example, that Poland requested the withdrawal of Russian troops from its territory - which finally happened only in 1993 - much later than the Czech Republic or Hungary. The first Solidarity government, led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, did a lot (in Poland it is considered today that far too much) not to antagonise Russia. In 1992, President Lech Wałęsa even risked a serious conflict with Prime Minister Jan Olszewski, only to lead to a compromising Polish-Russian agreement. The democratisation of Russia, progressing in those years, as well as President Yeltsin's putting straight the history of the Soviet crimes committed against Poles caused Warsaw to believe that Russia ceased to be a hostile and dangerous country, and became a business partner that may even someday aspire to enter the European Union.

Problems between Poland and Russia began in earnest in 2000, when after the Second Chechen War and the massacre of Grozny, Poland gave shelter to numerous Chechens fleeing persecution. The relationship became more acute as a result of Polish diplomacy during the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004, when Poland managed to persuade the

head of European Union diplomacy, Javier Solana, to Europe's unprecedented commitment to the removal of pro-Russian Victor Yanukovich, accused of rigging the presidential election. From the Polish perspective, it was a simple application of the axiom expressing a duty to support the libertarian and democratic aspirations of Ukrainian neighbours. And then came the mission of five Presidents to the rescue of Georgia, organised by President Lech Kaczyński in the wake of its invasion by Russia in 2008, as well as the terrible catastrophe of the Polish presidential plane in Smolensk in 2010, after which Moscow took over the wreck and openly falsified the results of the investigation in order to cover up the mistakes made by the Russian ground control services. Such a tangle of political circumstances was accompanied by informal sanctions which Russia regularly imposed on Polish exports, most often under false sanitary pretexts, as well as Gazprom's drastically overrated gas prices for Poland (even by 1/3 in relation to those offered to Germany). As a result, Warsaw found itself in a state of chronic deterioration of relations with Moscow.

Today there is a fairly common conviction in Poland that Russia under the rule of President Vladimir Putin has become a dangerous country, openly seeking a change in the political order that was created in Europe after the breakup of the USSR. Interestingly, such a diagnosis is shared both by the right-wing government and the liberal opposition, despite the deep internal political conflict that Poland is currently experiencing. One major result of this diagnosis was the programme of modernisation of the Polish army undertaken in recent years, so that it would not only be able to perform "out-of-area" operations, but above all to defend the country in case of danger. Poland is one of the few NATO countries meeting the jointly agreed requirement to devote 2% of GDP to defence. Another response to a sense of threat is the Polish energy policy aimed at making the country independent of Russian energy supplies. Finally, the Tri-Sea Initiative (TSI), launched two years ago by the Presidents of Croatia and Poland, aims to create a high political patronage that would break the two-decade-long inertia in the field of energy and transport infrastructure cooperation on the Central European North-South axis, from the Baltic Sea all the way to the Black Sea and the Adriatic. Unfortunately, in both latter cases, Polish efforts encounter certain problems in some European Union countries, especially in Germany. And this undermines public opinion's trust in European partners and allies in Poland.

III. Federalism or sovereignty?

The political unity of democratic Europe was an obvious goal for the state undergoing a rebirth after communism. It is true, as in most EU countries, that Polish society has also been divided since 1990s into those who accepted European integration with enthusiasm and without reservations, and those who pointed to some negative aspects to it, especially when it comes to ideology that dominates across the EU institutions, questioning religion, national patriotism and traditional customs. But even the latter have always resolutely supported Poland's accession to the European Union, and their votes ensured that membership was approved by almost 80% of Poles in the 2003 referendum. While euro-enthusiasts see the European Union as a powerful mechanism for modernising the country (including cultural modernisation), euro-realists argue that the EU is the second tool, alongside the military alliance with the US, ensuring state security and faster development. In this respect, it is particularly important for Poland that the EU rules of community building be also valid for Germany, which transformed from Poland's mortal enemy into its nearest economic partner and political ally. With the single European market, Poland and Germany now form a truly common economic area, while the annual Polish-German

trade exchange reaches over EUR 100 billion, clearly exceeding, for example, the value of the German-Russian trade (which is often a surprise for observers). In Poland, it is highly appreciated that under the German presidency of the EU, exercised by Chancellor Angela Merkel, the EU for the first time recognised so firmly that for a ban on Polish agricultural products imposed by Russia under false pretexts was not only a bilateral Polish-Russian issue, but rather a problem of the entire block. The Russia-EU summit in Samara in 2007 was a breakthrough when it comes to the EU's attitude towards Polish commercial interests.

Until 2015, there was no doubt in Warsaw that deepening European integration towards quasi-federalism is desirable and lies in the Polish interest. Poland preferred EU decisions to be taken as much as possible by the community method (i.e. by the Commission and the European Parliament), believing that whenever only national governments decide, it will always be a threat to the national interests of the strongest EU countries, especially Germany and France. The dispute over the mechanisms of decision making in the Treaty of Lisbon, as a result of which Poland lost the privileged position won during the accession negotiations, left some resentment and fear that Berlin and Paris may always try to impose their will on the whole of Europe. Poland has had greater trust in the community institutions for issues such as energy solidarity, the European services market or the Baltic gas pipeline, for they show a significantly higher sensitivity to the interests of EU members from Central Europe. Unfortunately, this situation has clearly changed for worse: firstly, the European Commission, under Jean-Claude Juncker's leadership, has made attempts to impose a new asylum policy on Central Europe, as a result of which these countries would be forced to accept large numbers of Islamic immigrants; secondly, it got engaged in a severe domestic dispute in Poland, explicitly supporting the liberal camp, which had lost power following the 2015 elections. The result of this is currently a significant re-evaluation of the Polish position on the issue of further federalisation of the European Union. The conservative PiS party, which today exercises power with strong approval ratings, has changed the European vectors of Polish politics, advocating the limitation of the power and competence of the Commission and the Parliament and proposing the intergovernmental method of decision making in Europe, i.e. in the form of agreements and compromises between the countries. Interestingly, this direction largely coincides with the German government's cautiousness in this matter, with the latter fearing that the excess of community would threaten the advantage of countries that are unpopular with Germany's fiscal rigor.

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One hundred years after it first regained independence as a result of the fall of the three empires, Poland is at the point of redefining some of the objectives of its international policy. This, in turn, provokes a serious and sometimes intense internal dispute over Poland's attitude towards the world, between the ruling conservatives and the liberals who, after many years in government, were confined to opposition. Polish liberals and leftists believe that the government unnecessarily enters into disputes with the European institutions, expecting it to show a greater will to compromise. They also look sceptically at the government's efforts related to the Tri-Sea Initiative, i.e. to revive deeper economic integration of Central European countries. They furthermore criticise the government for pointless resuming of historical disputes with Poland's eastern neighbours (especially with Ukraine) over crimes committed during World War II. And they also demand a closer coordination with Berlin and Paris, which are seen (especially by Polish liberals) as key al-

lies. This string of serious disputes prompts political turmoil in Poland. However, it is worth realising that behind the facade of these acute internal conflicts, there is a community of understanding the key axioms of Polish foreign policy, just as they were formed after 1989. Poland's pronounced atlanticism, seeking a permanent guarantee for independence and western integration for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, efforts to diplomatically and militarily stop the attempts of the Kremlin, building a community of interests with Germany in a united Europe - these are the vectors of the Polish political strategy that no serious person in Poland questions. Therefore, despite internal tensions, Polish politics is known, proven, comprehensible and credible for allies and partners.



Jan Rokita (born 18th of June, 1959 in Krakow) - Polish politician, commentator, in 1992-1993 Minister, for five consecutive terms was a Member of the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament). He graduated from the Faculty of Law and the Philosophical-Historical Faculty of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. In the 1890s he was the Head of the Independent Students' Association and an activist of the opposition Freedom and Peace movement. In 1988, he organised and presided over the International Conference on Human Rights. He was the Chairman of the parliamentary club of the Civic Platform party from 2003 to 2005. Laureate of the Kisiel Award and the 'Wprost' weekly's Person of the Year 2003.



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