

Research Article

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Dr Grzegorz Kozłowski*

Evolution of Political and Security Relationship between the Republic of Poland and the United States of America in the years 1999–2019

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Biography: Grzegorz Kozłowski was born in Warsaw in 1974. He is a diplomat, lawyer and economist, with a PhD in Economics from the Warsaw School of Economics. He is serving as the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Estonia since February 2018. His general research interests include international relations and defence economics.

His recent publications (2019) are as follows:

Kakskümmend aastat Tšehhi, Ungari ja Poola liitumisest NATOga: eile, täna ja homme, Diplomaatia, no 4/2019, p. 7-8.
NATO Defence Expenditures and the Baltic Member-States, p. 71-81/in/M. Voyger (ed.), *NATO at 70 and the Baltic States: Strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in an Age of Non-Linear Threats*, The Baltic Defence College, Tartu, 2019.

Abstract: The article discusses the evolution of political and security cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the United States of America in the years 1999–2019. It argues that this relationship has been strengthened over the past several years to an unprecedented level, as reflected by the following: (a) permanent presence of US troops and facilities on the territory of the Republic of Poland; (b) significant reinforcement of energy cooperation that would contribute to the security of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region; (c) development of a high-level strategic dialogue; and (d) successful widening of the mutual scope of soft security collaboration, including economic, digital and people-to-people aspects. In this article, I try to answer the following questions: what are the reasons of upgrading Poland–US political and security relations? What was the process shaping US– Poland relationship during 1999–2019? What are the priorities for both sides in this cooperation? I suggest that the past 20 years of Polish–American relationship can be divided into three stages: (a) between Poland’s accession to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russian aggression towards Ukraine (1999–2014); (b) between the NATO Summit in Newport and the swearing in of Donald Trump as President of the United States (2014–2017); and (c) then onwards (2017/2018–).

Keywords: Poland, The USA, NATO, Security, Energy, Defence

1 Introduction

The relationship between the Republic of Poland and the United States of America has been strengthened within the past several years to an unprecedented level. The change is reflected by at least four factors. First, the US Government has confirmed the permanent presence of American troops and accompanying equipment on Polish territory; in addition, the completion of the European Phased Adaptive Approach Missile Defence Base in Redzikowo (northern part of Poland) is predicted for 2020. Second, Poland has started to import US liquefied natural gas (LNG), which gradually changes the energy architecture in the CEE region, helping to restrain the Russian dominant position on the hydrocarbon market. Third, high-level bilateral dialogue between Poland and US has been developed, allowing for expansion of the bilateral agenda to regional and global issues (i.e. Warsaw Process – see Section 5). Fourth,

*Corresponding author: Dr Grzegorz Kozłowski, E-mail: grzegorz.kozlowski@msz.gov.pl

Washington and Warsaw have strengthened soft security collaboration with the historic decision of including Poland into the Visa Waiver Program, which has been a primary and sensitive subject for the Polish public for decades. In this article, I try to answer the questions regarding how this relationship has evolved over the past 20 years, what were the main stages of this cooperation and the reasons for change. I suggest that the recent decisions in the political, military and people-to-people areas opened a new chapter in Polish–American relationship.

This paper is based mostly on an analysis of primary sources. Since there have been very few scholarly papers on US–Poland relationship under the current US administration (i.e. Kozłowski, 2017, Szklarski and Iłowski, 2019), this paper presents mostly the research results based on the analysis of US and Polish administration documents and speeches set by the author.

2 Relationship between Poland and the US: main characteristics

The relationship between Poland and the US could be characterised as a political and military alliance sharing the same values, such as liberty, independence and the rule of law.¹ This relationship has evolved over a century of cooperation, where the roles of the two nations and of individual people have been important for shaping the cultural and historical ties of both countries.² The post-cold war era has become the most effective and optimal period of cooperation between these two countries. The US was instrumental in supporting Poland in its integration with the transatlantic region.

The alliance between the US and Poland is asymmetric. Most of the theories interpret asymmetry as an imbalance of capacities and power. Pfetsch and Landau described power as “the capacity to move somebody in a direction he would not have chosen without the interference of somebody”; there are at least three dimensions of power, which can be expressed as follows: power as a possession (Thomas Hobbes school: measured mostly by economic resources and military capacities but also using other factors, such as resources, population or diplomatic skills); power as a relation (John Locke school: power is the result of a comparison of actions between two actors); and power as relativity (Karl Deutsch: the amount of power an actor possesses depends on the amount of power another has; Pfetsch, Landau, 2000, pp. 27–28). The fact of asymmetry between the US, the only superpower in the world, and Poland, a country that aspires to be a sub-regional power (a leader of the CEE region) does not require broader analysis. In every above-mentioned method of analysis of differences in the potential of states, determinants of power of the US and Poland are enormously different. We can, however, present selected data regarding the economy and military power of the two countries (Table 1).

The asymmetry of relations has consequences for the perception of both countries. Polish National Security Strategy positions the US as “the most important non-European ally of Poland with a key significance for the security of the Republic of Poland”. It places the US as one of the three (also the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] and the European Union [EU]) pillars of security of Poland.³ In 2019, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Jacek Czaputowicz, underlined that “Poland has consequently been strengthening the strategic partnership with the United States, the key ally in NATO”.⁴ The same tone on the relations between Poland and the US was taken by previous Polish governments regardless of the political parties composing the Cabinet.⁵

On the other hand, Poland is, for the US, “a stalwart ally in Central Europe and one of the United States’ strongest partners on the continent in fostering security and prosperity regionally, throughout Europe, and the world. The United

1 i.e. “The United States and Poland share a history of close ties between our people and our values, a commitment to democracy, a close defense relationship, and a willingness to confront common dangers and threats” in the text of Declaration on Strategic Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland, signed in Warsaw, 20 August 2008, /in/ <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/aug/108660.htm> – accessed on 11 October 2019.

2 i.e. the role of the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, in the regaining of independence by Poland in 1918. He wrote in his Fourteen Points that “XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant”. /in/ M. MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, Random House Edition, New York, 2003, p. 496.

3 *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, 2014*, /in/ https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/NSS_RP.pdf – accessed on 27 May 2019.

4 *Minister Czaputowicz o priorytetach polskiej dyplomacji w 2019* /in/ <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/minister-jacek-czaputowicz-o-priorytetach-polskiej-dyplomacji-w-2019-roku> – accessed on 27 May 2019.

5 *Exposé Ministrów Spraw Zagranicznych 1990-2013*, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Biuro Archiwum i Zarządzania Informacją, Warszawa 2013.

Table 1: Potential of US and Poland: selected measures.

Measure	The US	Poland
GDP (billion USD)	19,490.00	524.80
GDP per capita (purchasing power parity, in USD)	59,800.00	29,600.00
Export (billion USD)	1,553.00	224.60
Population (million)	329.30	38.40
Area (1,000 m ²)	9,833.50	312.60
Defence expenditures (million USD)	706.063	12.088.00
Armed forces (thousands)	1,314.00	118.00
Expenditures on education (% GDP)	5.00	4.90

GDP: gross domestic product.

Sources: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html> - accessed on 23 February 2019; and Communiqué PR/CP(2018)091, *Defence Expenditures of NATO countries (2011–2018)*, 10 July 2018, NATO Documents.

States and Poland partner closely on NATO capabilities, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth and innovation, energy security, and regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe”.⁶ During the recent visit of President Donald Trump to Poland in July 2017, he said that the US and Poland “share a special bond forged by unique histories and national characters”, identifying Poland as a committed member of NATO and a “leading nation of Europe”.⁷ However, we have to see the position of Poland from the perspective of a superpower country, which has global interests. There are >60 countries in the world, which possess a status of US ally, stemming from multilateral treaties, bilateral treaties and US domestic law (major non-NATO allies)⁸.

3 Poland as a new member of NATO (1999–2014): political membership

The first 10 years (1989–1999) of US–Poland post-cold war relationship were driven by American assistance to Poland in the successful economic and political transformation of the country and support for NATO membership. Poland’s transatlantic dream started on 12 March 1992, when Manfred Woerner, Secretary General of the Alliance, said in Warsaw that “the doors to NATO are open”. The political process began, with two factors of crucial importance: gradual acceptance of CEE countries’ aspirations by the West and the successful withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland (Kozłowski, 2019). Within the next several years, NATO members made critical decisions to finally invite Poland (and the Czech Republic and Hungary) to start accession talks during the NATO Summit in Madrid in July 1997.⁹ The key in this process was the support from the US Senate. On 25 July 1996, this chamber approved legislation stating that “the admission to NATO of emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe which are found to be in a position to further the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty would contribute to the security of the region”. A year later, by the agreement of the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, the 28-member Senate NATO Observer Group was established to permit close interaction between the Executive Branch and the Senate during negotiations on NATO enlargement (Helms, 1998, p. 8). However, the NATO membership of Poland (as well as of the Czech Republic and Hungary; 12 March 1999) was not unconditional.

⁶ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, *US Relations with Poland*, 25 April 2018 /in/ <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2875.htm> – accessed on 27 February 2019.

⁷ *Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland*, 6 July 2017, Warsaw /in/ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland/> – accessed on 27 February 2019.

⁸ The US Code /in/ <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2321k> – accessed on 21 February 2019.

⁹ *Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation*, issued by the Heads of State and Government, Press Release M-1 (97)81, Madrid, 8 July 1997, /in/ <https://www.nato.int/DOCU/pr/1997/p97-081e.htm> – accessed on 15 February 2019.

Parallel to the preparation for enlargement of the Alliance, the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, signed in Paris, France, between NATO and the Russian Federation (hereafter, the NATO–Russia Founding Act) was established. The document was largely a response to the fierce Russian opposition to NATO enlargement, which created apprehension among the concerned European Member States about provoking Russia. According to this document, NATO took the obligation that “in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces”.¹⁰ Consequently, despite the huge success of the foreign and security policy, one had to acknowledge that Poland’s membership in NATO was political, with no real chance for hosting allied troops or facilities.

The first years of NATO membership of Poland brought visible and almost unconditional support for US foreign policy, including support for the US and the UK over the invasion of Iraq. Poland’s stance (along with that of other CEE countries seeking NATO membership), was strongly criticised by French President Jacques Chirac and some other Western European countries (Stoicescu and Lebrun, 2019, p. 2). In fact, the dispute between the US (and the UK, Italy, Spain and Poland) and France and Germany led to a transatlantic crisis, but it – in the near time – improved the position of Warsaw in Washington, especially when Poland decided to purchase 48 F-16 multi-role fighter aircrafts, which were chosen over other European bids. In fact, Poland was the only Eastern European country involved in ground operations in Iraq, apart from the eventual decision to buy F-16 (Seguin, 2008, pp. 12–15).

One of the key elements of the close bilateral cooperation between the US and Poland in the first decade of the 21st century was a discussion on the potential deployment of American missile defence elements on Polish territory. President George W. Bush proposed a European Ballistic Missile Defence programme in 2007; the programme called for the deployment of silo-interceptor missiles to target ballistic missiles originating from Iran. Simultaneously, it aimed to optimise ballistic missile defence coverage for the US and to protect US allies and US personnel stationed in Europe (Dubriske, 2013, p. 96). Formal negotiations between the US and Poland took place in 2007 and 2008 and ended in 2008 by the signing of the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Poland Concerning the Deployment of Ground-Based Ballistic Missile Defence Interceptors in the Territory of the Republic of Poland. This document was signed together with the Declaration on Polish–American Strategic Cooperation, which introduced a framework for an institutional dialogue, but, primarily, it reconfirmed the American commitment to Polish security. However, this upgrade in the bilateral level partially ended on 17 September 2009,¹¹ when the White House (under the new Democratic President Barack Obama) issued a statement saying that the US “no longer planned to move forward” with the project as had been planned. A shift in the US strategy (connected to the resetting of US–Russia relations) resulted in the amending of the Ballistic Missile Defence bilateral agreement, with the new siting of a Missile Defense Complex as a part of the newly sketched US European Phased Adaptive Approach (Sliwinski, 2012, p. 194).

4 Political–military membership of Poland in NATO (2014–2016/2017): strengthening of bilateral energy cooperation

An upgrade of the relationship between Poland and the US came with the beginning of war between Russia and Ukraine in 2014. As Stoicescu and Jarvenpaa wrote, “Russia’s aggression against Georgia in August 2008 did not ring alarm bells in most NATO capitals, but the illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea and the incitement and support of ‘separatism’ in Ukraine’s Donbas region entirely changed the situation” (Stoicescu and Jarvenpaa, 2019, p. 1). During the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, the Alliance adopted a Readiness Action Plan, which included assurance and adaptation measures. It allowed to enhance the NATO Response Force, to establish Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and to raise the readiness and capabilities of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast. The Alliance

¹⁰ NATO, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, signed in Paris, France, between NATO and the Russian Federation*, 27 May 1997, Section IV.

¹¹ Which was an element of additional humiliation for Poland, since it was communicated exactly on the 70th anniversary of Soviet Union’s aggression on Poland.

strongly came back with a collective defence, stipulating in the communique that “the greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to protect and defend our territories and our populations against attack, as set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty”.¹² Simultaneously, the US provided four airborne infantry companies to the Baltic States and Poland. This triggered even more important decisions during the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016, where, on the one hand, the Alliance confirmed that Russia has breached the values, principles and commitments that underpin the NATO–Russia relationship, as outlined e.g. in the NATO–Russia Founding Act, and on the other hand, it (the Alliance) decided to establish battalion-sized enhanced forward presence in the Baltic States and Poland. Thus, Art. 40 of the Summit communique confirmed that the US would serve as a framework nation of a battalion-sized battlegroup on the territory of the Republic of Poland.¹³ In addition, President Obama chose to announce his Administration’s European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) during his visit to Warsaw in June 2014.¹⁴

These developments radically changed the position of Poland in the Alliance. Polish membership in NATO transformed from a political (almost non-NATO facilities on the ground) to a political–military (sizeable presence of the Alliance facilities and troops) one, which was confirmed in Newport and set in Warsaw and in Brussels.¹⁵

The change of Poland’s status in NATO, with expansion of US military presence on Polish soil, was directly connected to the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, which was a consequence of Kremlin policy. However, this was not the only radical change in US–Poland bilateral relations in these years. Parallel with strengthening military ties, both governments and private entities looked for gradual improvement in energy relations, stemming from the “shale gas revolution”.

Initial analysis showed that this phenomenon changed the exploration for and production of unconventional hydrocarbons not only in North America but also in Europe, including Poland. At the beginning of the shale revolution, the Polish side expected that American companies would heavily invest in the Polish unconventional hydrocarbon market. According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates, the potential of shale gas in Poland was one of the highest in the world (Table 2).

According to EIA data, Poland was the biggest possessor of shale gas in Europe and 10th in the world (and only 3.8 times less than today’s hegemon – the US). The vast potential of unconventional hydrocarbons in Poland created growing interest in big US energy companies (i.e. Exxon, Conoco, Chevron and Marathon Oil Corporation) to start exploration activities. However, it soon occurred that these reserves are not economically viable for extraction.¹⁶ As Milina wrote, “Poland presents the most disappointing illustration of the difference between technically and economically recoverable shale resources. The country has some of the most important proven reserves of technically recoverable shale gas in Europe. However, in May 2013, Canadian and US companies refused to continue their studies and to engage in production in Poland due to the complex geology of shale fields and high population density in these regions – factors that increase the cost of production and make these deposits economically ineffective for mining” (Milina, 2013, p. 81).

But soon, Poland started benefitting from the shale gas revolution in the US. Within just several years, the US has become the main producer of natural gas and oil (Table 3).

According to 2017 statistics, US has produced more hydrocarbons – owing to the shale gas revolution – than Russia and Saudi Arabia. But what was more important for Poland, which created enormous opportunities, was the building of appropriate LNG facilities in North America to export liquid gas to Europe. Within just several years, the US started to be not only the primary producer of hydrocarbons in the world, but also, owing to the LNG architecture, one of the exporters of liquid gas. Today, one-third of the US gas export is already represented by LNG; US commenced LNG export only in 2016 (Caldwell, 2019). The dominant position of the US will soon be even more visible as Fatih Birol, Executive

¹² Wales Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 5 September 2014, /in/ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm – accessed on 24 October 2019.

¹³ Warsaw Summit Communique, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, 8–9 July 2016, /in/ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm – accessed on 24 October 2019.

¹⁴ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, *Remarks by President Obama at 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day*, Warsaw, 4 June 2014.

¹⁵ Brussels Summit Communique, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 11–12 July 2018, /in/ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm – accessed on 24 October 2019.

¹⁶ See: US Energy Information Administration, *Technically Recoverable Shale Oil and Shale Gas Resources: Poland*, US Department of Energy, September 2015 /in/ https://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/pdf/Poland_Lithuania_Kaliningrad_2013.pdf – accessed on 27 September 2019.

Table 2: Natural gas production and reserves (2013, trillion m³).

Country	Technically recoverable resources of shale gas	Natural gas reserves	Natural gas production (2011)
China	1,115	124	4
Argentina	802	12	2
Algeria	707	159	3
Canada	573	68	6
The US	567	318	24
Mexico	545	17	2
Australia	437	43	2
Russia	287	1,688	24
Brazil	245	14	1
Venezuela	167	195	1
Poland	148	3	0

Source: US Energy Information Administration, Technically Recoverable Shale Oil and Shale Gas Resources: An Assessment of 137 Shale Formations in 41 Countries outside the United States, US Department of Energy, June 2013, p. 6–7, /in/https://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/archive/2013/pdf/fullreport_2013.pdf – accessed on 27 September 2019.

Table 3: The world's biggest producers of natural gas and oil (2017 Mtoe).

Country	Natural Gas	Country	Oil
The US	641.7	The US	590.9
Russia	581.0	Saudi Arabia	568.7
Iran	182.5	Russia	549.0
Canada	153.4	Canada	249.2
Qatar	149.8	Iran	235.5

Source: International Energy Agency, Atlas of Energy, 2018/in/http://energyatlas.iea.org/#!/tellmap/-1920537974/0 – accessed on 29 September 2019.

Director of the International Energy Agency, predicted that “the second wave of the US shale revolution is coming. It will see the United States account for (1/4) some 75% of the expansion in LNG trade over the next five years” (Mackinson, 2019).

The New US energy position created opportunities in US–Poland relations, since the Polish government perceives energy through security lenses and is prone to pay a premium for a security benefit, despite lower prices of Russian natural gas.¹⁷ US LNG might be a solution for breaching the Russian domination on the gas market; in 2016, imports from Russia covered 36% of EU gas, with some of the CEE countries (i.e.: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) being dependent on Russian gas by >80%. Taking into account the fact that gas production in the UK and the Netherlands is declining and gas demand in Europe remains flat, the only strong options to fulfil European countries' gas needs could be Russian gas and LNG.¹⁸

¹⁷ The European import price of pipeline gas was ~USD 5/mm BTU (million British thermal units) in 2016. The full delivered cost of US LNG is estimated to be >USD 6/mm BTU. /in/ *Russia to keep its dominance in European gas market*, Atradius Economic Research, Amsterdam, July 2018 /in/ https://atradius.se/documents/atradius_economic_research_european_gas_july_2018_ern180710.pdf

¹⁸ Ibidem.

5 New era of US–Poland security and political relations: strategic alliance (2018/2019–)

The final upgrade of this cooperation came with the election of Republican candidate Donald Trump as President of the US, who has not only continued important military projects such as the ERI or the European Phased Adaptive Approach Missile Defence project in Poland but also opened new avenues for cooperation. What were the prerequisites for the White House policy?

First is the role of the Polish minority in the swing states: the Polish diaspora in the US amounts to 10 million people, which might have had a significant influence on US domestic policy. This factor was especially present during the recent presidential campaign, when the votes of Polish-Americans had a special meaning for President Trump in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania (all of them – the so-called “swing states”, where the latest result could go either way: Republican or Democrat); this group of voters could have had 10%–15% of all the votes¹⁹.

Second is the economic, burden-sharing issue, which has been one of the priority issues of President Trump in his security policy vis-à-vis European allies. Already in his campaigning foreign policy speech, Trump emphasised that the allies “are not paying enough their share (¼) and they must contribute toward their financial, political, and human costs”.²⁰ Later, he has made burden sharing a flagship project during his meeting with European allies, perceived in a wider perspective of economic relationship between the US and the EU (especially Germany) and the unfavourable situation of trade volume (huge trade deficit against Germany).

According to NATO financial guidelines, stemmed from Art. 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty and Art. 19 of the Strategic Concept of NATO, allies should spend at least 2% of their GDP for defence, including 20% for major equipment,²¹ and only five countries, including Poland, are meeting both those requirements.

Third, President Trump came with a critical position vis-à-vis international institutions, based on a theme “Make America First Again”, emphasising more of the bilateral cooperation connected to cost–benefit calculations (Stokes, 2018, p. 134). This has opened both dangerous (such as contesting Alliances such as the NATO; divisive and selective positioning among European allies) but also attractive avenues for regions such as the CEE area, wherein most of the countries (including Poland and the Baltic States) prioritise their relationship with the US, presenting clear and transparent expectations vis-à-vis the American partner (like more of defence engagement) and understanding the position of a superpower (like burden sharing). This strengthening of relationship with the CEE region was possible especially in the context of the divergent interests of US, Russia and China in the region.

Enhancement of US–Poland relations to the highest level in history came with the final decision of the US government to deploy the permanent presence of US troops and facilities. This aim was articulated by not only current, but also previous, Polish governments²² as it had to be perceived as a “long-standing wish”.

The final act of completion of the enhancing of Polish American Military Cooperation was done through the signing of the Joint Declaration between the Republic of Poland and the United States of America on Advancing Defense Cooperation, signed by President Andrzej Duda and President Donald Trump in New York on 23 September 2019. According to this document, bilateral military ties and US defence and deterrence capabilities in Poland will be bolstered; the number of US military personnel in Poland will be increased in the near future from 4,500 to 5,500 and be present in six different locations, including the following places:

Poznań: the Division Headquarters (Forward) and the United States Army area support group;

Drawsko Pomorskie: the primary Combat Training Centre for joint use by the Polish and United States Armed Forces;

Wrocław-Strachowice: the United States Air Force aerial port of disembarkation;

Łask: the United States Air Force remotely piloted aircraft squadron;

¹⁹ See e.g. *Trump wouldn't win without Polish Americans*. /in/ <http://dziennikzwiazkowy.com/news-in-english/trump-wouldnt-win-without-polish-americans-an-interview-with-william-bill-ciosek/> – accessed on 24 October 2019.

²⁰ *Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech*, The New York Times, 27 April 2016, /in/ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html> – accessed on 18 June 2019.

²¹ Wales Summit Declaration, op. cit.

²² i.e. Polish officials, at the beginning of 2014, called for two NATO brigades (approximately 10,000 soldiers) to be stationed in Poland as a security guarantee; /in/ D. E. Mix, *Poland and Its Relations with the United States*, Congressional Research Service, 7 March 2016, Washington, p. 10 /in/ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44212.pdf> – accessed on 28 October 2019.

Powidz: a combat aviation brigade, a combat sustainment support battalion and a special operations forces facility; Lubliniec; a further special operations forces facility.

In addition, it was confirmed that both sides would continue dialogue about the most suitable location in Poland for an armoured brigade combat team²³.

This decision stays in parallel to the completion of the third phase of the European Phase Adaptive Approach of building a Missile Defence Base in Redzikowo (northern part of Poland). It should be completed by 2020, and it would mean the introduction of the second “Aegis-Ashore” site with SPY-1 radar and 24 standard missile (SM)-3 missiles. These would supplement the deployments at sea and in Romania and will extend coverage over a greater percentage of Europe (Reif, 2019).

The relationship between Poland and the US does not concern only the bilateral, regional or NATO interests. It also has a global dimension since Poland could become supportive for US interests outside of its natural political geosphere. One of the recent examples is the Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East (organised on 13–14 February 2019, in Warsaw), where the Foreign Ministers and representatives of 62 states met to work towards a more secure and stable Middle East. The Polish- and American-led initiative called the “Warsaw Process” started the discussion on the risks stemming from the proliferation of weapons and the development of ballistic missile programmes in the region; ways of addressing humanitarian crises in the region; countering violent extremism; combatting threats to cyber and energy infrastructure; and disrupting illicit financial networks. The process has been institutionalised by establishing international working groups and having further works planned.²⁴ The position of “mediating country”, or rather host of the meeting, is a special one, but not new, in the international arena.²⁵

Poland started to be a gateway of US business in strategic sectors – energy and defence. The former one creates an opportunity to limit Polish dependence on Russian gas (in 2018 itself, owing to LNG contracts from Norway, Qatar and the US, imports from Russia squeezed down by 6% in comparison to imports in 2017). In 2018 and 2019, Poland signed long-term agreements with three American companies, such as Cheniere Energy, Venture Global LNG and Sempra Energy. The financial terms of their deals have not been disclosed and some depend on export facilities still to be built, but the expected shipments are going to grow in numbers, creating opportunities not only for Poland, but also for the whole CEE region (Reed, 2019). The latter opens a multibillion dollar market for the US defence industry. With >12 billion euros for a yearly defence budget, including 3 billion euros for major equipment, Poland remains – in NATO – a very attractive partner for US business. This is especially important, considering that most of the Western European countries rely on the European industry, and Turkey (second biggest NATO army) makes a controversial decision towards acquisition of Russian SS 400 missile system (Pitel and Bott, 2019). On 28 March 2018, Poland signed a letter of offer and acceptance with the US government to buy Raytheon’s medium-range Patriot system (the contract will have a multibillion dollar value) to be delivered within the next 3–4 years (Judson, 2018). Warsaw considers purchasing other multibillion dollar equipment, including a fleet of F-35 (a decision is yet to be taken). In addition, Poland creates very special conditions for the presence of the US armed forces (political, military and economic framework); in a proposal for their permanent presence, the Polish Ministry of Defence committed to “contributing 1.5–2.0 billion USD to cover the cost of facilitating the stationing of one US armoured division or equivalent force in Poland”.²⁶

Defence and energy cooperation drives the economic relations between US and Poland. Data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis show that Poland has attracted more US investment than any other CEE country,²⁷ having received investments (by 2017) totalling 12.6 billion USD. Over the past several years, in which Polish companies also started to

²³ Joint Declaration on Advancing Defense Cooperation, signed on 23 September in New York /in/ <https://www.president.pl/en/news/art,1107,joint-declaration-on-advancing-defense-cooperation.html> – accessed on 27 September 2019.

²⁴ Office of the Spokesperson, *Co-Chairs’ Statement on the Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East*, Washington DC, 14 February 2019 /in/ https://pl.usembassy.gov/cochairs_statement/ – accessed on 6 October 2019.

²⁵ Example: Sweden, the host of nuclear talks between the US and North Korea.

²⁶ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Poland, *Proposal for a US Permanent Presence in Poland*, 2018 /in/ <https://g8fip1kplyr33r-3krz5b97d1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Proposal-for-a-U.S.-Permanent-Presence-in-Poland-2018.pdf> – accessed on 27 October 2019.

²⁷ *American Investments in Poland*. KPMG, American Chamber of Commerce in Poland, April 2018, p. 25 /in/ https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/pl/pdf/2018/04/pl-raport-polska-ameryka_eng-online.pdf – accessed on 27 March 2019.

Table 4: US trade volume with Poland in 2015–2017 (in million USD).

The US	Poland		
	2017	2016	2015
Export (rank)	4,523.5	3,657.7	3,715.4
Import (rank)	7,106.0	5,960.5	5,637.9
Total	13,629.5	9,618.2	9,353.3

Source: https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/ft900_index.html

invest in the US and during which the trade volume dynamically grew, investment increased – by 45% between 2015 and 2017 (Table 4).

In addition, economic cooperation has been widened to new areas of interests, such as artificial intelligence. On 5 September 2019, US and Poland signed the Joint Declaration on 5G (fifth-generation wireless communications networks), declaring that it will be “vital to both prosperity and national security in the near future”.²⁸The final and symbolic game changer in US–Poland relationship is the inclusion of Poland into the Visa Waiver Program, a decision long awaited by the public for many years. As of 30 September 2019, Poland has completed all necessary bilateral security agreements and has met the required visa refusal rate and has qualified to be nominated for membership in the US Visa Waiver Program.

6 Conclusions

The completion of the US–Poland military agreement on permanent deployment of US troops and facilities on Polish soil, strengthening of energy cooperation and inclusion of Poland into the Visa Waiver Program can be treated as enhancing of the US–Poland relationship to unprecedented levels. For the first time in the Polish agenda, there can be no more pressing issues towards the US government.

This change relies mostly on the US recalibration of politics since Warsaw has always (since 1989) prioritised relations with Washington. As former Polish Ambassador to the US, Przemysław Grudziński, stated, “The development of Polish-American relations has been a priority for Polish governments since the collapse of Communism. Traditionally, relations are dominated by strong cooperation in international security. This reflects a convergence in the assessment of the challenges facing the international community as well as the shared values upon which the policies of both countries are built” (Grudziński, 2004).

The recent upgrade of US and Poland political and security ties has, in Washington, both bipartisan and Republican explanations. The former includes the following: (a) US approach towards Russia’s aggressive policy against Ukraine and is reflected by the necessity to strengthen the eastern security flank of NATO; (b) consequences of a shale gas revolution, which changed the position of US in the hydrocarbons market, making it possible for the US to become an important LNG exporter to Europe. The latter stems from the policy of President Donald Trump and can be understood at least on three levels. First, shared interests that characterise the US–Poland relationship are underpinned to an important extent by a foundation of broadly shared values. Trump sees Poland as a like-minded country; “an old ally (1/4) an example for others who seek freedom and who wish to summon the courage and the will to defend our civilization”; this perception is directly connected with the important role of 10 million Americans of Polish heritage in the cultural as well as political dimension (“Polish-Americans have also greatly enriched the United States, and I was truly proud to have their support in the 2016 election”²⁹). Second, business and economic elements play an important, or sometimes even predominant, role in Trump’s policy towards shaping US bilateral and multilateral relationships. In this context,

²⁸ *US-Poland Joint Declaration on 5G*, 5 September 2019 /in/ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/u-s-poland-joint-declaration-on-5g/> – accessed on 29 October 2019.

²⁹ *Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland*, op. cit.

the strong Polish engagement in building close business connections with the US in strategic sectors (defence and energy) and the extending of full support to the US in NATO – in terms of burden sharing – places Warsaw high in the list of European allies. Third, Trump has an unfavourable position vis-à-vis multilateral institutions, including the EU, which could imply selective (and sometimes divisive) positioning towards European allies. The CEE region (with the strong position of Poland) is seen as a region supportive to US policy and an area of growing interests for China (i.e. 17+1 format) and Russia.

We have to be aware, however, of a few challenges. First, the recent changes were mostly done by the Republican/Trump administration and one cannot be sure whether they will be continued under a new administration. Second, the US–Poland relationship has been, to a certain extent, a function of US–Russia relations; any rapprochement between Moscow and Washington can have an influence on US–Poland relations. Third, we cannot exclude the possibility that growing competition between the US and China might influence, in the long-term perspective, the lower level of US interest in the CEE region.

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