

Together against Contemporary Russian Imperialism: The Role of Poland in the US Security Strategy

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the state of cooperation between Poland and the United States over the past few years. Since the early 1990s, Polish-American cooperation has been taking place in several areas: military, political and economic. Close alliance relations between these partners are crucial to maintaining the security architecture in Central Europe and countering Russia's imperial policies. Cooperation in the military, political and economic areas came was intensified after 2015 and was a result of political changes in Poland. Another impetus for increased cooperation was Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

Keywords: United States, Poland, International Security System, NATO, Russia

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Introduction

Polish-American relations have a very long tradition, spanning more than 200 years. One of the most important moments from the perspective of US and Polish policies were the political changes in Europe in 1989, which led to the fall of the Iron Curtain. Since then, Poland has played an increasingly important role in the US security strategy.¹ Poland's key role in building the security system of a united Europe increased after Poland joined NATO and the European Union. From the US position, Poland's importance increased through the participation of Polish troops in operations organized on the initiative of the US and, especially, its loyal stance in the Global War on International Terrorism. The growing importance of Poland in the American concept of security strategy is very much influenced by the development of the political situation in the world and, primarily, by the aggressive policy of Russia. This thesis is confirmed by the creation and consistent strengthening of NATO's eastern flank, in which Poland, due to its potential and geostrategic position, plays a key role. The comprehensive scope of Polish-American relations includes political, military and economic cooperation (especially cooperation in the energy sector). Intensification of cooperation in these areas has taken place in the past few years for a number of reasons. Among the most important factors are the winning of the 2015 parliamentary elections in Poland by the ideologically conservative Law and Justice party, which is a proponent of adopting a pro-US orientation in the country's foreign policy, the 2017 assumption of the office of US president by Donald Trump, who also adheres to conservative views, and the dynamic international security situation,

1. See: "A Europe Whole and Free." Remarks to the Citizens in Mainz. President George Bush. Rheingoldhalle. Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, May 31, 1989, accessed 2023-02-23, <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

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exemplified by Russia's neo-imperialist policy confirmed by its full-scale military aggression against Ukraine launched in February 2022. Research methodology in political science is interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, research methods characteristic of, for example, the historical sciences (analysis and criticism of sources) or legal sciences will naturally be used. Using the case study method, the statistical method and the comparative method, an analysis of US foreign policy in the 21st century and the changes that are taking place in the international environment and affect the evolution of the US position on the political map of the world will be carried out. In order to thoroughly investigate the above-mentioned research problem, the paradigm of political realism characteristic of the sciences of international relations will be adopted.

1 The military and political cooperation

Since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, meaning independence from Soviet control, Polish authorities have unanimously recognized that institutional cooperation with the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a prerequisite for Poland's security. For several years, the issue of cooperation on the military level has come to the fore in Polish-American relations. Already between 1991 and 2007, the US gave Poland some USD 370 million to modernize the Polish army. However, compared to the amounts transferred to other countries, this is a small percentage. For example, in 2007 Egypt received USD 1.2 billion. This was undoubtedly due to the higher priorities of the Middle East in US foreign policy at that time. The first US troops arrived in Poland only in 2010, along with one battery of the US Patriot anti-aircraft system. It was rotated to Poland from the German military base of Kaiserslautern. Along with the system, its personnel, namely about 100 people, was stationed in Poland. In 2012, a ten-member subunit was sent to Poland for permanent stay, operating US F-16 Fighting Falcon and C-130 Hercules aircraft and training Polish pilots. A year later, the size of this subunit was increased to twenty people (Pacula 2008, 88).

An important moment in the evolution of the US perception of the threat to European security was the Russian Federation's attack on Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In response to the growing threat, the US government decided to increase its political and military involvement in Eastern Europe, and assigned a special role to Poland. Already in April 2014, a joint Polish-American-Canadian exercise was held, in which the Baltic States participated as well (Lasoń 2014, 73). In June 2014, during his visit to Warsaw, President Barack Obama announced the creation of a new program in response to Russia's aggressive policies. Called the European Reinforcement Initiative (ERI), the program provided additional funds for US military activity in Europe. It is financed from the Foreign Contingency Operations Fund. The ERI was allocated USD 1 billion in 2015 and USD 0.8 billion in 2016, with as much as USD 3.4 billion planned for 2017. Based on the decision taken at the next NATO summit, held on July 8–9, 2016 in Warsaw, Poland became one of the so-called framework countries. The following were delegated to the role of framework states for the forces of the so-called Enhanced Forward Presence—future battalion groups in the eastern flank region: US for Poland, Germany for Lithuania, Canada for Latvia and the UK for Estonia. It was assumed that they should also be supported by contingents from other countries. Eighteen NATO member states have expressed their readiness to support the formation of battalion groups. In addition, the United States has pledged to deploy an Armored Brigade combat team to Poland in 2017. Poland, for which the United States is the framework country within the framework of the forces of the so-called enhanced forward presence, is assumed to station 795 soldiers from the United States, 72 soldiers from Croatia, 120 soldiers from Romania, and 130 soldiers from the United Kingdom.²

Donald Trump's administration not only carried out Obama's plans in 2017 but also increased funding for the initiative to USD 4.8 billion in 2018 and USD 6.5 billion in 2019. It requested USD 5.9 billion for 2020, but Congress reallocated about USD 6.5 billion. The EDI primarily envisaged increasing the US military presence in Europe, joint military exercises, improving pre-positioning, expanding critical infrastructure, and building the capacity of the partnership with Europe.

2. See: "Warsaw Summit Communiqué." Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016, last updated July 1, 2022, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed 2023-06-14, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

For Poland, this translated directly, at the very beginning of the project, into a rotating presence of nearly 900 American troops.³ Three main components have been formed as part of the European Deterrence Initiative. These are the Combat Aviation Brigade, the Armored Brigade Combat Group, and the logistics component. The individual troops and sub-components have been deployed to a number of European countries, particularly those on NATO's eastern flank. Poland, of course, became one of these countries. Part of the Combat Aviation Brigade was stationed in Powidz, with a strength of almost 20 combat and transport helicopters. In turn, elements of an armored group were deployed to Żagań. It is also noteworthy that the command of the 1st Infantry Division was located in Poznań already in 2017. The European Deterrence Initiative has proven to be a very important element in ensuring security in Europe and has been very enthusiastically received by commentators. Although aimed at a number of European countries, it has become one of the pillars of building US military presence in Poland (Świdziński 2019).

The military cooperation intensified under President Donald Trump and after Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022. The key element of this cooperation is undoubtedly the Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation regarding the presence of the armed forces of the United States of America on the territory of the Republic of Poland, dated June 12, 2019. It can be said that this is a special agreement emphasizing the importance of Polish-American security cooperation. It not only reaffirms commitments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as the basis of mutual defense relations but also, more importantly, defines more specific issues of increasing US military presence in Poland. The presidents' joint declaration of defense cooperation on the presence of US forces on Polish territory provided for the rotational deployment of an additional 1,000 US troops, as well as several new projects and infrastructure investments for the US military. Several particularly significant provisions of this agreement should be noted. A US Divisional High Command, headquartered in Poznań, to coordinate the US troops already present in our country, was established. A squadron of US Air Force MQ-9 unmanned aerial vehicles, designed for intelligence and reconnaissance activities, was announced to be located in Łask. Within the framework of joint training and exchange of experience, a Combat Training Center was to be established in Drawsko Pomorskie and eventually in several other locations. It is also worth mentioning the creation of infrastructure to support the presence in Poland of an Armored Brigade Combat Group, an Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and a Logistics Support Battalion. From the Polish point of view, a very important provision is the one concerning Poland's share of the maintenance costs of US troops as well as the infrastructure they would use. Another step increasing Polish-American military cooperation is the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on Enhanced Defense Cooperation (EDCA), dated August 15, 2020.⁴ This agreement replaced the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on the Status of the Armed Forces of the United States of America on the Territory of the Republic of Poland signed in 2009. The Agreement on Enhanced Defense Cooperation broadly addresses many issues relevant to the organization of US forces stationed in Poland. The agreement concerns, among other things, the financing of US troops, the allocation of the necessary infrastructure, the issue of criminal jurisdiction, and widely understood logistical issues. It provides a legal basis which shapes the conditions under which American troops operate in Poland. It has also created opportunities to further increase the American military presence in Poland through the preparation of an appropriate infrastructure to enable the rapid transfer of additional allied troops to Poland (Cowell 2018). The document specifies the distribution of most units of the US military. In 2020, the U.S. Army's 5th Corps advanced command was deployed to Poland. The Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement provided the legal framework for the stationing of increased US forces and

3. See: "Europejska Inicjatywa Odstraszania – bilans i perspektywy." PISM Biuletyn, nr 118 (2050), The Polish Institute of International Affairs, June 4, 2020, available at https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/Europejska_Inicjatywa_Odstraszania__bilans_i_perspektywy.

4. See: "Relacje polsko-amerykańskie w czasie prezydentury Joe Bidena." PISM Strategic File, nr 6 (98), by Andrzej Dąbrowski, Łukasz Kulesa, and Mateusz Piotrowski, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, July 2021, available at <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/relacje-polsko-amerykanskie-w-czasie-prezydentury-joe-bidena>.

defined Polish financial and material support for the US military presence. On the basis of the signed agreement, a number of infrastructure projects provided by Poland for use by US forces on its territory began: a military complex in Poznań, where command components of the US Armed Forces are to be stationed, a training ground in Drawsko Pomorskie, as a Combat Training Center, an airport in Wrocław-Strachowice, with an air loading and unloading base of the US Armed Forces—Main Base of Operations, an Air Force Base in Łask, where unmanned aerial vehicles are to be located, a military complex and Air Force Base in Powiśle, as an air force, air defense and logistical support base of the US Armed Forces, a military complex in Lubliniec with a company-level operational base for US Special Forces, a training ground in Żagań, military complexes in Toruń and Skwierzyn as a location for the Armored Brigade Combat Group of the US Armed Forces, additional airfields in Katowice (Pyrzowice), Kraków-Balice and Mirosławiec, constituting Additional Operational Bases for US aviation, and an Air Force Base in Dęba as another Additional Operational Base for the US Armed Forces.

As a consequence of the signed agreements, at the end of 2021 more than 5,500 US troops were stationed on the territory of the Republic of Poland on a rotational presence basis, the most significant element of which remained the Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT). A total of about 10,000 US troops of various formations are currently stationed in Poland, the US State Department reported in October 2022. US servicemen on NATO's eastern flank are also present in Romania, and take part, for example, in protecting the airspace of the Baltic states. Across Europe, meanwhile, about 100,000 troops have been stationed since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. They are stationed primarily in Germany (in bases that have existed since the Cold War), Italy, the UK, and Spain. Smaller contingents are present in Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey, among others.⁵ US soldiers are stationed in Poland both as part of NATO cooperation and on the basis of bilateral agreements with the US. The largest and most significant components for providing security include the aforementioned ABCT with a command in Żagań, with a strength of about 3,500 troops, The Divisional High Command, which operated as the Mission Command Element of Operation Atlantic Resolve until October 2019, located in Poznań, the NATO Enhanced High Presence Combat Group stationed in Orzysz, the MQ-9 Reaper Unmanned Aircraft Component in Mirosławiec, and US F-15s, stationed in Łask in support of the Baltic Air Policing mission.⁶

US soldiers also participate in numerous exercises and trainings together with the Polish military. From FY 2019 through FY 2021, the United States also authorized the permanent export of over USD 1.2 billion in defense articles to Poland via Direct Commercial Sales (DCS). The top categories of DCS to Poland were Gas Turbines and Associated Equipment (USD 296.6 million), Aircraft and Related Articles (USD 173.9 million), and Ground Vehicle (USD 158.1 million). In response to the resurgence of Russian aggression since its 2014 seizure of Crimea and its renewed further invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Congress has approved USD 288 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Poland to build defensive capabilities to deter and defend against an increased Russian threat and support military capabilities Poland has or will provide to Ukraine. Poland received USD 1.76 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding in FY 2020–2021. IMET provides professional military education and training to military students to increase professionalization, build capacity in key areas, enhance joint interoperability, create a better understanding of the United States, and build lasting military-to-military relationships. Over the last five years, the United States has provided more than USD 34.0 million in security assistance to Poland for military mobility, counter-Weapons of Mass Destruction, and intelligence capabilities.⁷ President Joe Biden's administration is continuing its predecessor's policy by pursuing the establishment of the so-called "missile shield" base located in Redzikowo, northern Poland, whose construction and equipping with anti-ballistic missiles is currently nearing completion. The base is to be part of the

5. See: "U.S. Security Cooperation with Poland." U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, October 31, 2022, accessed 2023-06-10, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-poland/>.

6. See: "Wzmocnienie wschodniej flanki NATO" [Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank]. Ministry of National Defence, accessed 2023-06-14, <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/wzmocniona-wysunieta-obecnoscc>.

7. Ibid.

US Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system, which protects the US and its allies from ballistic missile attacks. An analogous base has already been established in Romania.⁸

Two intergovernmental agreements were also signed under President Donald Trump in 2019: “on strengthening cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime” and “on cooperation in border security and immigration,” expanding the area of cooperation between the two countries. The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on Cooperation in the Field of Border Security and Immigration, signed in Washington on August 16, 2019, indicates that the two countries seek to ensure cooperation, joint activities, and exchange of information in ensuring border security and border management. The agreement provides a legal basis for assistance in the control of persons for enforcement purposes of the states parties. The exchange of personal data is carried out through the mechanisms of the National Automated Biometric Identification Systems. The law’s provisions are intended to ensure the requirements of the visa waiver program, as well as to combat serious crime.⁹ The Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on Strengthening Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Serious Crime, signed in Washington on June 12, 2019, includes in its preamble a provision in which the parties express their desire to strengthen their relations, cooperation, and partnership. The goal of the document is to ensure cooperation for the efficient detection and prosecution of perpetrators and suspects of crimes, and at the same time to ensure respect for human rights and freedoms. In this regard, constant exchange of information as well as protection of personal data are ensured. In particular, the aim is to combat cross-border crime, illegal migration, and terrorism. Under the agreement, a catalog of the authorities responsible for the cooperation has been established. On the Polish side, they are the Ministers of Finance and Interior, the Commanders of the Police, the Border Guard, the State Protection Service, the Head of the Centralne Biuro Antykorupcyjne (Central Anti-Corruption Bureau), and the Commander of the Centralne Biuro Śledcze Policji (Central Police Investigation Bureau). On the American side, they are the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The agreement established rules for the transfer of personal and other data for the prevention of crimes.¹⁰

Not insignificant for Polish-American political cooperation is Russia’s imperial policy, which manifested itself in full in February 2022 with a military attack on Ukraine. Russia is seen as a threat by both the United States and Poland. Poland consistently supports the view that corruption and money laundering in the financial systems of Western countries enable Russia to expand its influence and finance hostilities in Ukraine, as they did in Georgia or Chechnya in the past. In Poland’s view, additional measures will be needed in the future to prevent human rights violations, cyber-attacks, and Russian disinformation campaigns. Influenced by Russia’s actions, President Joe Biden’s administration has changed its mind on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and reverted to the position presented under President Donald Trump. Authoritatively, without consulting its allies in spite of its earlier announcements highlighting the risks posed by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, in May 2021 the administration of President J. Biden decided to suspend sanctions against the company-operator of the project. The decision came as a surprise not only to the Polish authorities but also to other Central and Eastern European allies, as well as Ukraine.

8. See: “Navy Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Program: Background and Issues for Congress.” CRS Report RL33745 by Ronald O’Rourke, Congressional Research Service, August 28, 2023, available at <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/weapons/RL33745.pdf>, page 8.

9. See: Umowa między Rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a Rządem Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki w sprawie współpracy w zakresie bezpieczeństwa granic i imigracji, podpisana w Waszyngtonie dnia 16 sierpnia 2019 r. [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on cooperation in the field of border security and immigration, signed in Washington on August 16, 2019.]. DzU z 2019 r. poz. 2402.

10. See: Umowa między Rządem Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej a Rządem Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki o wzmocnieniu współpracy w dziedzinie zapobiegania i zwalczania poważnej przestępczości, podpisana w Waszyngtonie dnia 12 czerwca 2019 r. [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the United States of America on strengthening cooperation in the field of preventing and combating serious crime, signed in Washington on June 12, 2019.]. DzU z 2019 r. poz. 2038.

The change in US policy came with opposition from some State Department officials. The suspension of the sanctions caused clear dissatisfaction of the Polish government. Also in the United States, the critics, including even Democratic Party Senators, said that by avoiding talks with partners interested in the topic before making the decision, the administration appeared more committed to rapprochement with Germany than to supporting Central and Eastern Europe. They also raised the question of the possible negative consequences of the decision for relations with Russia and NATO's deterrence policy.

All of the above activities strengthening Polish-American cooperation bring benefits to both parties. From Poland's perspective, a close relationship with the US means a significant increase in the level of state security in the event of a potential attack from the outside. On the other hand, for the American side, the benefits of cooperation with Poland are also measurable. A loyal and reliable ally in Central Europe provides real support for activities in the field of international security in this part of Europe. Poland's historical and geopolitical experiences are extremely valuable to US analysts and policy makers, especially in the current situation, when the threat to international security as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine has increased. From the perspective of US interests, it is not insignificant that Poland, through its active policy supported by the EU and the US, can realistically support the democratic transition in Belarus, which could potentially put an end to the dictatorial rule of A. Lukashenko. Not insignificant for the security of NATO's eastern flank are the actions of the Lukashenko regime in the form of migration pressure on the Polish-Belarusian border initiated even before Russia's aggression against Ukraine (Adamczyk and Jomma 2020).

2 The economic cooperation

The most important element of the economic cooperation between Poland and the US is the Three Seas Initiative. It serves to strengthen ties in the wider Central European region (between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Sea), creating a sustainable foundation for economic development in energy, transportation, digital communications, and the economy. The first meeting of the Initiative took place on September 29, 2015 in New York, while the first formal Three Seas Summit took place on August 25, 2016 in Dubrovnik. On July 6, 2017, Donald Trump made his first visit to Poland. Significantly, Poland was the first European country to be visited by the new president. In connection with his visit, the importance of cooperation within the framework of the Three Seas, especially in reference to the areas of transport infrastructure, digitization, and energy, was emphasized. The visit was perceived as a political success and a basis for further cooperation (Pacula 2008, 84). President Donald Trump was a special guest at the Second Summit of the Three Seas Initiative, which took place on July 6–7, 2017 in Warsaw, Poland. The presence of the American president at the Warsaw summit increased interest in international opinion. The summit was co-hosted by the presidents of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović. The summit was accompanied by the Global Forum—a meeting of government, business and media representatives and leading experts on transatlantic affairs on the topic of European-American relations. In addition, Donald Trump raised the issue of the supply of American gas, which would be the answer to the problems of diversification of the raw material by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹ Minister Krzysztof Szczerski specified that for further (especially economic) development the Three Seas Initiative needs a transatlantic partnership, as the EU alone does not have enough resources to fully take over the operations. Therefore, the meeting in Warsaw was to address these issues, among others.¹² The view presented by Minister Szczerski is also shared by

11. See: "Szczyt Inicjatywy Trójmorza NAJWAŻNIEJSZE INFORMACJE" [Three Seas Initiative Summit, key information]. The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, June 7, 2017, accessed 2023-09-05, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/inicjatywa-trojmorza--three-seas-initiative,637>.

12. See: "Minister Szczerski: tematem szczytu Trójmorza współpraca Europy Środkowej i USA" [Minister Szczerski: the topic of the Three Seas summit is cooperation between Central Europe and the USA]. the official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, June 20, 2017, accessed 2023-09-05, <https://www.prezydent.pl/kancelaria/aktywnosc-ministrow/minister-szczerski-tematem-szczytu-trojmorza-wspolpraca-europy-srodkowej-i-usa-,10360>.

representatives of other countries belonging to this form of international cooperation. For many of them, the watershed in the change of approach and increased interest in this initiative was the presence of President D. Trump at the second Three Seas Summit in Warsaw in 2017. The Czech partners see involvement in TSI as a geopolitical platform to enhance cooperation between the US and Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary, on the other hand, became more active in supporting TSI after the US announced in 2020 the possibility of contributing USD 1 billion to the TSIIF for energy projects. Lithuania points to the Initiative's potential to intensify cooperation between this part of Europe and the US. It sees the need to integrate regional security issues into the cooperation, and stresses the importance of TSI infrastructure projects for strengthening NATO's eastern flank by increasing the interoperability of the allied troops. The idea of TSI is also supported by the center-right government of Ingrida Šimonytė, who sees the Three Seas Initiative as an important element of policy toward the US and as an economic and infrastructure initiative. Increased interest in the Initiative in Latvia is linked to the TSI Summit in Riga in 2022. Latvia has announced that it will promote under TSI the inclusion of private capital in the modernization and expansion of transportation, energy, and digital infrastructure. According to Latvian politicians, TSI can serve as a tool for enhancing EU-wide cohesion and transatlantic cooperation. The importance of the latter is evidenced by the fact that TSI was among the topics of Minister Rinkēvičs' talks this year with Wendy Sherman, US Deputy Secretary of State. The Slovenian President, Janez Janša, sees TSI first and foremost as an opportunity to strengthen integration and cooperation to overcome developmental differences within the EU. He stresses the importance of US interest as an opportunity to cement transatlantic ties and business relations, including mutual investment in infrastructure. Romanian authorities also see participation in TSI as an opportunity to strengthen their relations with the US, especially in the defense field. In this context, the country stresses the need for the development of transportation infrastructure, which could make it easier for the allies to provide assistance in the event of a blockade of Black Sea ports. Subsequent Romanian programs have emphasized the importance of TSI's transportation infrastructure for defense, followed by the economic importance. Romania sees TSI as a potential for developing small modular reactor technology in close cooperation with the US.¹³

The keen interest in this form of international cooperation in Central Europe is evidenced by the participation of US Secretary of Energy, Rick Perry, in the Third Summit of the Three Seas Initiative, held on September 17–18, 2018 in Bucharest, and in the Fourth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative, held in the Slovenian capital on June 5–6, 2019. Participants in the Third Summit adopted a joint declaration under which the business and economic nature of cooperation within the Initiative will be expanded. This will be served by the goals achieved during the Third Three Seas Summit: signing a declaration on the establishment of the Three Seas Chamber of Commerce Network, signing a letter of intent on the establishment of the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund (TSIIF), and adopting a catalog of priority projects of the Initiative. The United States pledged to inject \$1 billion into the TSIIF budget in 2020 for the implementation of energy projects.¹⁴ In turn, the Fifth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative, held in Tallinn in 2020, was attended by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken.¹⁵ In June 2022, already after Russia's aggression against Ukraine, another Three Seas Summit was held in Riga. Russian aggression against Ukraine not only prompts TSI to strengthen mutual cooperation but also determines to increase security efforts in the region, primarily related to energy. This mainly concerns transmission infrastructure and the development of the LNG sector. That is why recently completed projects, such as the GIPL pipeline

13. See: "Promocja Inicjatywy Trójmorza w krajach członkowskich i wśród państw-obszarników." PISM Strategic File, nr 12 (104), by Tomasz Żornaczuk et al., The Polish Institute of International Affairs, December 2021, available at <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/promocja-inicjatywy-trojmorza-w-krajach-czlonkowskich-i-wsrod-panstw-obserwatorow>.

14. See: "Trójmorze." [Three Seas], Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, accessed 2023-06-12, <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/trojmorze>.

15. See: "W poniedziałek Szczyt Trójmorza z udziałem Prezydenta RP." [On Monday, the Three Seas Summit with the participation of the President of the Republic of Poland], the official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, October 17, 2020, accessed 2023-06-20, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/w-poniedzialek-szczyt-trojmorza-z-udzialem-prezydenta-rp,1938>.

connecting Poland and Lithuania or the terminal on the Croatian island of Krk, have taken on particular importance. The current situation is forcing the countries of the region to transform their energies faster and to make even greater use of renewable sources (green hydrogen, wind farms, photovoltaics). The EU's support for the member states implementing strategic projects, declared in Riga by Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson, is therefore important. The increase in US interest in the initiative is evidenced by the fact that the US, along with Poland, is supporting it financially to the greatest extent. Poland's financial contribution to the Three Seas Initiative's budget in 2021 was the highest (EUR 750 million), and the United States' contribution was the second highest (USD 280 million).¹⁶

US administrations have been politically supportive of TSI since 2017. This is evidenced by the fact that the American president and other high-level officials, including former Energy Secretary Rick Perry, participated in the Bucharest and Ljubljana summits (in 2017 and virtually in 2021). Perry's involvement indicated that TSI was initially seen mainly as a mechanism to find buyers for US liquefied natural gas. Over time, however, TSI has achieved a position as an instrument in American politics. The US sees investment opportunities for business in the TSI countries and hopes to embrace them through public-private partnerships. In November 2020, TSI also gained the support of Congress in the form of a resolution. However, the US only pledged participation in TSIIF, and it was only after Trump's election loss in December 2020 that the decision to contribute USD 300 million was approved. However, the amount has not yet been paid. In addition to maintaining a commitment to contribute up to USD 1 billion to the fund, but not exceeding 30% of the money raised by shareholders, President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have stressed the importance of the TSI to the economic development and security of Central Europe and the EU as a whole. In the US, influential non-governmental institutions have become involved in promoting the Initiative and lobbying for it. The most active of them is the Atlantic Council, which is expanding its instruments for Trilateral cooperation. Its Three Seas Chairs have been established to assist investment in Central Europe. They are headed by Georgette Mosbacher—a former US Ambassador to Poland, Gen. James L. Jones Jr.—a retired executive chairman of the think tank, and Ian Brzezinski—among others, a Republican Party-affiliated member of the Atlantic Council's strategic advisory group and one of TSI's chief promoters in the United States. Individual researchers, such as CEPA-affiliated Kurt Volker and Andrew Michta of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, are engaged in similar activities promoting the TSI.¹⁷

An important element of Polish-American cooperation is the establishment and expansion of cooperation in the energy field. In recent years, the United States has begun exporting gas to European countries, while Poland has made independence from Russian gas one of its main policy goals. The growing Polish-American cooperation in this area can be seen as a major thread in the multi-faceted relationship. In 2009, US leaders in gas extraction obtained a license for gas exploration in Poland. The issue of gas extraction became the subject of two cooperation platforms: Strategic Dialogue and Economic Dialogue. In 2010, Poland accepted the US invitation to participate in the Global Shale Gas Initiative. Its goal is to provide institutional and regulatory support to the administration. It is significant that the cooperation took place mainly at the government level, as entrepreneurs lacked the financial resources and access to technology. However, exploration took place without involving public funds. For this purpose, the capital of American investors was used. An important aspect of the cooperation was the involvement of American companies in shale gas exploration in Poland, but despite the concession, they quickly withdrew from the activities due to the moderate geological conditions of resource extraction. In 2016, the PGNiG Group brought the first cargo of natural gas from the US to Poland. In 2017, a 5-year contract was signed for 9 shipments of US liquefied natural gas between 2018 and 2022. Poland is becoming an important partner for the US in the energy sector. Since 2017, Polish companies, including Orlen and Lotos, have been importing American oil. The first-ever shipment of LNG from the US arrived in Poland in June 2017.

16. See: "Siódmy szczyt Inicjatywy Trójmorza w Rydze." PISM Komentarz, nr 98, by Kinga Dudzińska, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, June 23, 2022, accessed 2023-06-14, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/siodmy-szczyt-inicjatywy-trojmorza-w-rydze>.

17. See: "Promocja Inicjatywy Trójmorza..." op. cit.

The Joint Declaration on Enhanced Cooperation in the Field of Energy Security, signed on November 8, 2018, created a policy framework for increased gas purchases by Poland. Since then, some 9.3 bcm⁽¹⁸⁾ of gas has been contracted from US companies (data from 2023), which is about half of Poland's current demand. In 2018, the Strategic Dialogue on Energy was concluded. Its main topics are diversification of energy sources in Central and Eastern Europe, LNG exports, and cooperation in nuclear energy technology. On June 12, 2019, a Nuclear Cooperation Memorandum was signed, which included a commitment by both countries to long-term cooperation in the development of Poland's civilian nuclear program in the context of its plans to acquire 6–9 gigawatts of power.¹⁹

The steadily increasing importance of Poland as an economic partner of the US is evidenced by statistical data. There is a regular growth in the value of trade, which increased from USD 9.7 billion in 2015 to USD 14.4 billion in 2019. At the same time, imports of goods from the United States to Poland are growing, and in 2020 they reached PLN 31.7 billion. The United States is the second country after Germany investing in Poland, with a share of 11% of investments and a value of 4% of Polish GDP. Approximately 1,500 companies with American capital operate in Poland. Examples include Microsoft's USD 1 billion investment plan in the Polish Digital Valley and Amazon's numerous investments in logistic infrastructure worth a total of USD 14 billion.²⁰ Also, the modernization of the Polish Armed Forces with US military equipment is taking place. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has led to an increase in Poland's purchase of US arms.

Concluding remarks

The tradition of cooperation between the US and Poland on many levels goes back to many years ago. This cooperation intensified after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and it is especially important at present, considering the threat to the international order posed by the neo-imperial policy of the Russian Federation, evidenced by its aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. The United States, by virtue of its global power, has interests all over the world. Poland tends to focus on the regional security of Europe, particularly Central and Eastern Europe, and mainly on the threats posed by the expansive policies of the Russian Federation. The United States, on the other hand, in addition to Russia, also competes with many other countries, such as China. Because of its involvement in problems and threats in Asia, South America, or Africa, the Americans must to some extent limit the forces and resources assigned to specific theaters of operations that do not require full engagement. We could see this in Europe when Washington was withdrawing forces from the old continent before 2014, and Russia intensified its actions against Ukraine, which translated into a change in American policy (Rumer and Sokolsky 2019). It is therefore important to look at how the United States views the issue of Europe and the threat from the Russian Federation, as well as how Americans view Poland and the prospects for the development of our relations both bilaterally and within NATO.

For many years, Americans have invariably referred to Poland as a close ally of the United States. Top-level American politicians also express the need to strengthen defense relations with Poland. In 2018, US President Donald Trump described Poland as one of America's closest allies, stressing the need for further cooperation of the two countries. The current US President, Joe Biden, spoke in a similar manner during his visit to Poland in March 2022. We can draw compa-

18. [Non SI abbreviation: bcm = billion cubic meters (of natural gas)—Ed.].

19. See: "Polityka energetyczna Polski do 2040 roku." [Energy Policy of Poland until 2040] Załącznik do oświadczenia Ministra Klimatu i Środowiska z dnia 2 marca 2021 r. w sprawie polityki energetycznej państwa do 2040 r. [Annex to the announcement of the Minister of Climate and Environment of March 2, 2021 on the state's energy policy until 2040.]. Monitor Polski, Dziennik Urzędowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z 2021 r. poz. 264; this document is also available at Ministry of Climate and Environment website, <https://www.gov.pl/web/klimat/polityka-energetyczna-polski-do-2040-r-przyjeta-przez-rade-ministrow>.

20. See: "30 lat inwestycji amerykańskich w Polsce. Raport Amerykańskiej Izby Handlowej w Polsce i KPMG w Polsce." [30 years of American investments in Poland. Report of the American Chamber of Commerce in Poland and KPMG in Poland], KPMG, April 2020, available at <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/pl/pdf/2020/04/pl-raport-pt-30-lat-inwestycji-amerykanskich-w-polsce.pdf>.

table conclusions from a fact sheet published by the US State Department on October 31, 2002. It identified Poland as one of its key allies, stressing the importance of security cooperation with Poland. Among other things, we can read in the fact sheet that over the past five years the United States has provided some USD 34 million in resources of various kinds to build Poland's national security. The report is toned down in its form, and although there are no clear and hard declarations of cooperation, one can conclude from it that the United States is vitally interested in reducing the threat from the Russian Federation and building security in Europe.²¹ Also noteworthy are the words of the US ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, who said at a public meeting on May 17, 2022 that the US wants to work with Poland as a strong regional leader not only against the Russian threat but also against China's European inclinations. Recognizing the threat of the Russian Federation's expansionist policies, the US would love to see Poland as a local leader playing an important role in stabilizing the situation in Eastern Europe within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The international situation has forced the United States to refocus its policy goals toward Russia. This has translated into an intensification of American relations with European countries, especially those on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance, such as Poland. The Russian threat determines the Polish-American security relationship and realistically influences its tightening. In recent years, there have been clear signals emitted both by American diplomacy, politicians and various centers of political thought that indicate that the threat from the Russian Federation is taken seriously and that in the near future the Americans will cooperate with Poland against it. The current intensive cooperation between Poland and the US is a response to a specific situation on the international arena, and in a different reality it could develop in a completely different direction. At this point, it is worth mentioning the United States' support for the modernization of the Polish armed forces. Since 2015, Poland has been consistently and rapidly expanding and modernizing its army, the more so in the face of the war in Ukraine. One can even go so far as to say that Poland is currently the most armed country in Europe. The American Department of Defense accepts Polish requests for equipment. This is not a rule, as equipment is first given to America's strategic partners and allies who need it, such as Israel, surrounded by hostile Arab states. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the US administration cares about rearming Poland. This is also indicated by the Foreign Military Financing Project funds already mentioned. Polish-American relations have excellent prospects of development. In the era of the war in Ukraine, all of Europe is vying for US involvement on the old continent. In addition, in the United States there is currently a strong pressure to cooperate with Europe and a tendency to pursue a tough policy towards Russia by intensifying cooperation with the countries of NATO's eastern flank, including Poland. This gives Poland—a strategically located country with significant military and economic potential—a chance to build a strong partnership with the United States. Also, the pro-American sentiment prevailing among Eastern European countries offers good prospects for the development of Polish-American relations. With the right policies in place, such as the effective promotion of the idea of The Three Seas Initiative, Poland can become a strong leader in the region. However, it should be remembered that local security cannot be built without cooperation with the European Union and other local organizations, such as the Visegrad Group. Taking all these issues into account, it can be concluded that Polish-American security relations are thriving. The main reason for the intensification of these relations is the threat from Russia, after the expiration of which the cooperation will naturally be reduced, so Poland also needs to build relations with the European Union countries. The overall relationship with the United States indicates an intense desire to cooperate and strive for a strategic partnership. Recent years in Polish-American relations show continuity in US security policy pursued by both D. Trump's and J. Biden's administration (Wordliczek 2013, *passim*). The main threat to the international security architecture is Russia's imperial policy, and Poland's potential plays a key role in curbing it.

21. See: "U.S. Security Cooperation with Poland." *op. cit.*

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