

# **MISSILE DEFENSE AND POLAND'S TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP: STORMY WATER AHEAD?**

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# MISSILE DEFENSE AND POLAND'S TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP: STORMY WATER AHEAD?

By David H. Sacko\*  
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## OVERVIEW

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by potential enemies is an ongoing security issue for the United States and its allies abroad. At the forefront confronting this threat is the United States' Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS).

According to the Missile Defense Agency, the BMDS is a collection of elements and components that are integrated to achieve the best possible performance against a full range of potential threats. Since the United States withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, the Missile Defense Agency has taken crucial steps to integrating the collective efforts of the Department of Defense to provide missile defense.

A critical step is acquiring and positively engaging allies in this effort. International cooperation for the success of missile defense is essential. Regional efforts to acquire missile defense capabilities can be integrated with U.S. global missile defense priorities and objectives. Of particular note, lately, defense planners have considered the place of the proposed U.S. missile defense capabilities being planned in Poland and the Czech Republic. Should this leg of BMDS be deployed? Should it be integrated into NATO's strategic concept and NATO's emerging missile defense program, or should it be deployed along bilateral lines eschewing a multilateral context?

This project will address these questions in addition to two additional concerns. First, it explores the practical implications of deploying components of BMDS with our new NATO ally Poland. Poland initially expressed a willingness to cooperate on ballistic missile defense. Lately, this zeal has cooled and the wisdom of deploying a system in Poland is not immediately obvious. This project will evaluate the strategic value of doing so in light of the project's second objective, the Russian response. Russia's Foreign Ministry has repeatedly warned both Poland and the United States against deploying a U.S. or NATO missile-defense site on Polish territory, saying this action would undermine both security and stability and warning of unspecified measures in response. This paper will assess the range of Russia's possible reactions and will conclude with a hypothesis for what Russia's motivations are.

## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems by potential enemies is an ongoing security issue for the United States and its allies abroad. At the forefront confronting this threat is the United States' Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). According to the Missile Defense Agency, the BMDS is a collection of elements and components that are integrated to achieve the best possible performance against a full range of potential threats. Since the United States withdrawal from the

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Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, the Missile Defense Agency has taken crucial steps to integrating the collective efforts of the Department of Defense to provide missile defense. A critical step is acquiring and positively engaging allies in this effort. As the MDA states, “Fielding the missile defense mission requires the combined efforts of the Missile Defense Agency, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the U.S. Combatant Commanders, the Military Services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, other federal agencies, more than 17 major defense contractors, the Congress **and our allies and friends** (emphasis added).”

Thus, international cooperation for the success of missile defense is essential. Regional efforts to acquire missile defense capabilities can be integrated with U.S. global missile defense priorities and objectives. Of particular note, lately, defense planners have considered the place of the proposed U.S. missile defense capabilities being planned in Poland and the Czech Republic. Should this leg of BMDS be deployed? Should it be integrated into NATO’s strategic concept and NATO’s emerging missile defense program, or should it be deployed along bilateral lines eschewing a multilateral context? This project will address these questions in addition to two additional concerns. First, it explores the practical implications of deploying components of BMDS with our new NATO ally Poland. Poland initially expressed a willingness to cooperate on ballistic missile defense. Lately, this zeal has cooled and the wisdom of deploying a system in Poland is not immediately obvious. This project will evaluate the strategic value of doing so in light of the project’s second objective, the Russian response. Russia’s Foreign Ministry has repeatedly warned both Poland and the United States against deploying a U.S. or NATO missile-defense site on Polish territory, saying this action would undermine both security and stability and warning of unspecified measures in response. This project will assess the range of Russia’s possible reactions and will conclude with a hypothesis for what Russia’s motivations are.

## **THE UNITED STATES AND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

“The U.S. is from Mars and Europe is from Venus.”<sup>1</sup> The differences between the United States and Europe would seem to be quite profound. Ideology as well as power divides the United States and Europe. The Europeans, according to the perspective popularized by Robert Kagan, have a higher tolerance for insecurity after decades of American protection and now will not fight to preserve what Americans commonly regard as universal freedoms. Europe insists, rather, on their preference for achieving security through multilateral institutions and a Kantian vision of a “perpetual peace” achieved through inter-governmental cooperation, liberal regimes and economic intercourse. Americans, on the other hand, have a higher military capability and a willingness to use it, particularly following the events of September 11, 2001. Growing differences in foreign policy actions would seem to underscore this thesis. Even before the current Bush administration and its invasion of Iraq, this divergence could be seen in the United States’ failure to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty limiting nuclear weapon tests or

even to give serious consideration to the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. Both initiatives have wide popular and political support in Europe. Under the Bush administration, the Kyoto Protocol limiting carbon-dioxide emissions had been withdrawn from Senate ratification and the treaty guaranteeing U.S. participation in the International Criminal Court failed ratification in the U.S. Senate altogether.

In addition, several lesser trumpeted treaties prescribing social conduct proposed much earlier, notably the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1976, are widely signed into law in Europe but remain ignored by the U.S. If ideology is not driving Europe and the United States apart, another perspective holds that the changing polarity of the international political system is.<sup>2</sup> Without the unified security theme of Soviet containment, the union of West European security will inevitably fragment and revert to a multi-polar state system where powerful incentives for individual foreign policies exist. The inevitable anarchic character of this state system will override any ideological force, be it cooperative or conflictual in nature.

In foreign policy, the United States has unilaterally used force when member countries of the European Union have often urged restraint in favor of a multilateral institutional response. In addition, a difference in perspective between the United States and Europe is apparent, with Europe favoring longer-term outlooks on problems such as the Middle East. Europe holds that the linchpin to Middle East peace depends on an equitable resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, whereas the United States has concentrated its efforts on its plan to institute democracy in Iraq.<sup>3</sup> These efforts have been firmly rebuffed by the United Nations Security Council. In many respects, the United States has attempted to capitalize on its unipolar moment and its domineering military capability to use deliberate force to achieve security. These broadly painted differences as they are typically portrayed, however, obscure the great ideological convergence and shared security interests between the United States and Europe.

Importantly, the United States and the states of Europe are not inextricably on divergent courses driven by the forces of ideology or *realpolitik*. Their methods of attempting to achieve security surely have diverged, but the basic interests that security policy should serve for both the United States and European states remain more convergent than contradictory. Simply, the differences in worldview between the United States and Europe are often overstated. Clearly U.S. foreign policy diverged from that of many European states in the situations delineated; however, a more nuanced assessment finds differences less in the goals than in the execution of policy to achieve those goals.

Most European states preferred that Iraq not be invaded and occupied but agreed that Saddam Hussein should be contained and not allowed to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Europe believes in brokering a peaceful resolution to conflict in the Middle East starting with Palestine, not Iraq. Many European states continue to have an integral part in military operations in Afghanistan in the International

Stabilization Afghanistan Force. This discussion raises a second question: at what level of generality can we even assume a unified European ethic? Indeed, not all European states have completely broken with U.S. policy and many continue to participate in U.S. military operations.

Poland represents one such European state that shares many more ties that bind with the United States. The 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy predominantly focuses on the Global War on Terror, the trend of democratization and world free market expansion, world energy security, and the need to diffuse problematic regional conflicts. While European security is affected by terrorism, democratization, globalization, energy and regional problems, the strategy was preoccupied with the aforementioned challenges as they apply *outside* Europe. Despite the American proclivity for short-term interest obsessions, the US has not lost sight of the fact that Europe, more than any other region, remains an absolute necessity to long-term U.S. security interests. The National Security Strategy of the United States, as articulated in 2006 states:

Europe is home to some of our oldest and closest allies. Our cooperative relations are built on a sure foundation of shared values and interests. This foundation is expanding and deepening with the ongoing spread of effective democracies in Europe, and must expand and deepen still further if we are to reach the goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.<sup>4</sup>

A stable and secure Europe is of paramount importance to US security. A stable Central Europe is critical to a stable Europe and a secure Poland is a linchpin to Central Europe. The question is: from the US perspective, what are the long term security interests to Poland? An answer to this question may be found within the framework of the dominant security issue area, namely, the NATO Alliance. Without the constraints of bipolarity, perhaps today's political possibilities are in fact more fluid for both competition and cooperation?

### **NATO, THE UNITED STATES, AND POLAND**

In the course of the past fifteen years, both the organization and security concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) evolved. NATO's membership changed, incorporating first East Germany, then Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and most recently Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. The E.U. and other established NATO countries postulate that "broadening the membership of NATO is part of a much broader strategy to help create a peaceful, undivided and democratic Europe, an objective shared by NATO, the EU, WEU, OSCE and the Council of Europe."<sup>5</sup> Conditions for NATO membership include accountability and liberal institutions at home, although the primary expectation is that each country should be able to shoulder its share of the defense burden. NATO thus took on a socializing role to promote security within just as much as to provide security without. Just as NATO began to expand, though, its static defensive posture was also altered

when it conducted forward operations in Bosnia in 1993-1995, and then in Kosovo in 1999. In addition, it has commanded the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan since 2003. Both these evolving currents have served to demonstrate security cooperation and true partnership between the United States and Europe. The United States and its NATO allies disagreed substantially on the pace and direction of NATO expansion, yet the point of uniting Europe under one security umbrella prevailed in practice. There was even more vociferous disagreement on the nature and conduct of offensive operations in Bosnia and Kosovo,<sup>6</sup> yet despite tactical conflicts between member countries, NATO's strategic objectives were primarily achieved.

In any political organization, there will be always be substantially more disagreement than accordance. NATO's primary successes were found in its ability to endure, expand and conduct the operations discussed above. Lately, an area of contestation between NATO members has been ballistic missile defense. Over the past several years, NATO has been planning a ballistic missile defense ability,<sup>7</sup> ostensibly to protect the European continent from a small scale launch from North Korea or Iran. In early 2007, the United States announced a series of bilateral agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland, prompting Russian questions about the ultimate strategic aims of such a system and the system's impact on its own security. To this end, not all NATO countries agree that such a "missile shield" is in the European interest.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the NATO alliance members will most likely broker an agreement to deploy ballistic missile defense, but as in many security disagreements between the United States and Europe, the question is not whether the system will be implemented but how and when. Multilateral military cooperation between the United States and Europe in the form of the NATO alliance, thus, continues to represent an area of some rivalry in limited issues, but overall it represents a boon for partnership between the United States and Europe. While NATO facilitated cooperation between the militaries of its European members, the United States, and Canada, the alliance's expansion, its ability to forwardly operate and its attempts to acquire a continental ballistic missile defense system created sources of tension between the United States and Russia. These tensions present serious challenges for future security cooperation.

## **NATO AND POLAND**

Both NATO and the EU have played very significant roles in consolidating political and economic reforms in Poland during the past decade. However, today both blocs are suffering from an identity crisis. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has expanded its geographic reach and operational scope, but this has also resulted in conflicting views over NATO's future role and mission. Similarly, the EU is undergoing intensive discussions with regard to the deepening and widening of the European project. Meanwhile, both sides of the Atlantic are facing security challenges with global implications,

stemming from insecure energy supplies, the proliferation of WMDs, the rise of China, ethnic conflicts, and various regional crises. Poland is concerned with two main questions: whether the EU and NATO will be able to overcome their internal debates and achieve a level of coordination and complementarity to tackle these challenges, and what role it can play in the process.

NATO has changed its original core responsibility from deterring the Soviet threat against its members, to the post 9/11 era of battling the dangers of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction that originate beyond Europe's borders. NATO's transformation poses several important challenges for both old and new members. Some analysts argue that NATO as a multinational military organization composed of countries with shared interest in maintaining global stability, has unparalleled potential to cope with today's challenges. The success or failure of the Alliance in Afghanistan, which is the bloc's first deployment outside of Europe, will demonstrate whether it is capable of achieving that goal. If the NATO mission in Afghanistan were to fail, it may encourage Europe to aim to further develop its own separate defense and security structures. This will place NATO under even more scrutiny and erode its solidarity. The EU's European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) is still embryonic. Its ultimate goal is to facilitate greater integration within the Union in developing civilian and military capabilities for international conflict prevention and crisis management. The EU currently has 4 military and 12 civilian missions around the world. However, internal EU power struggles and the debate concerning sovereignty vs. supranationalism in the field of foreign policy, may hinder the realization of such common efforts. Without the necessary political, strategic and budgetary support, the ESDP lacks an integrated policy.

Poland has clear concerns about the challenges facing both NATO and ESDP. Should NATO lose its stature as a military bloc and a system of collective security, Poland will be left to deal with a weak EU alternative and an eroded Transatlantic relationship. The recently bilateral agreements between Poland and the US underscore this concern providing some assurance if NATO were to erode. Poland has taken the lead in Central Europe in defining its own role in a transformed NATO. First and foremost is the question to what extent are the new NATO states capable of and willing to contribute to the new, global mission of NATO. Second, they have to decide if they are willing to develop expeditionary forces that can operate effectively with other NATO units outside Europe. Furthermore, they have to convince their own publics that NATO interests also represent their national interests. In all these areas, Poland is way ahead of other new NATO members.

Poland will be an important ally for the United States. It has demonstrated its willingness to participate in US led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq in addition to providing full cooperation in the Global War on Terror. Poland's agreement to consider hosting missile interceptors did create tensions between it and its European allies, not to mention with Russia.

## **US–POLISH SECURITY CHALLENGES**

From the perspective of the United States, Poland faces three main security issues that will need to be addressed in the near future. The issue of an economically empowered and increasingly assertive Russia, energy security and of course Poland's role in BMDS. Prior to the 2004 elections in Russia, Moscow's motivations and long-term ambitions were not scrutinized too closely. In the aftermath of 9/11, security concerns overshadowed any debate on the behavior of Russia in its former sphere of influence in places like Chechnya or in domestic politics. The consent on the Global War on Terror clearly guided the relationship between President Putin and President Bush. A resurgent and more authoritative Russia under Mr. Putin's direction has brought a degree of tension as US – Russia relations are experiencing contesting interests. Washington's and Moscow's agendas have clearly clashed in Europe. Russia's political efforts to consolidate the gas delivery in Europe has affected Europe's political constraints writ large.

The proposed deployment of U.S. missile defense sites on the territory of the Czech Republic and Poland has also become central to the security debate in the region. Concerns have been voiced that the sites could lead to confrontation with Russia, or make Central Europe a target for rouge states and terrorist attacks. The US believes that the anti-missile defense shield offers an advanced security feature that stretches beyond the recipient countries and offers protection that the whole continent can benefit from. It is the US position that an installation comprised of a radar in the Czech Republic and missile interceptors in Poland does not have the geographic and technical capability to pose any threat to Russia. The ultimate goal of the project is to deter a potential nuclear threat emanating from the Middle East, and most particularly Iran.

## **U.S. MISSILE SECURITY PROGRAM**

The US has been planning a varying mix of strategic and tactical missile defense programs since the 1980s. After the United States announced that it would withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2001, these plans were particularly invigorated as the US outlined a plan to begin deployment of operational ballistic missile defense systems. The Department of Defense's overall Ballistic Missile Defense plan includes ground-based, sea-based, airborne, and space-based systems. The Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system is the land-based missile interceptor system and it consists of ground-based interceptors, X-band radars, early warning radars, space-based sensors, and battle management command, control and communications.

Between 2004 and 2005, a total of seven ground-based interceptors were deployed in Fort Greely, Alaska, and another two at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. Since September 2006, the system



was successfully tested on a number of occasions leading to confidence that the Continental United States had some capability to protect against ballistic missile attack. Europe, however, was vulnerable to a potential ballistic missile attack from the Middle East. Therefore, after initial negotiations started as early as 2005, formal negotiations to expand the BMDS into the Czech Republic and Poland were launched in January 2007, after due consultations with the Russian Government. The US proposal was to build a ballistic missile tracking radar in the Czech Republic and to install a small number, perhaps 10, long-range interceptors in Poland. Initially, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) expected to make a decision on these programs by the end of 2007. Unexpected political issues, however, have derailed the process.

The overall cost of the Czech and Polish facilities projected by MDA was to be about USD 3-3.5 billion, of which USD 700-900 million in contracts is planned to go to local firms. The interceptor installations in Poland were estimated to cost about USD 2.5 billion, while the rest of the funds were to be used for the related radar facility in the Czech Republic. This cost, however, does not include additional infrastructure. According to the initial negotiations, there was to be no direct costs to Prague or Warsaw for the construction of the missile defense sites. The construction of the sites was expected to start in 2008 rendering initial capabilities available by 2011 with full operational capability expected by 2013.

#### **THE POLITICAL DEBATE OVER BMD**

The US proposal to build radar and missile interceptor sites in Central Europe has sparked an unexpected degree of controversy both within Europe and with Russia in January 2007. Washington was presented with the challenge of explaining the benefits of the anti-missile sites to its European allies and to Russia as well. Throughout, it was the US position that the missile defense shield in Central Europe would specifically target long-range missile attacks against NATO members emanating from the Middle East. Early-Warning-Radar sites already exist in the UK and Denmark, and have recently been upgraded, but the interceptors in Poland and the radar site in the Czech Republic would take missile defense a necessary step further by detecting and intercepting medium- and long-range ballistic missiles originating from turbulent regions such as the Middle East, especially Iran.

It has been the US position that Iran has been steadfastly working to develop long-range ballistic missiles to increase its strike capabilities. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad is on the record for making threats against Israel and has displayed a belligerent stance toward the US, in addition to having friendly relations with Poland's one belligerent neighbor Belarus. Some expect that Iran will possess (ICBM) capabilities by 2015 and that defensive measures are necessary, and that a functional BMD system may even deter such a deployment. Long-range interceptors deployed in Alaska and California counter potential North Korean threats. US State and Defense Department officials assert that the

proposed Central European sites will simultaneously bolster both European and American security from a Middle Eastern threat. The future of the project remains dependant on the final phase of negotiations with the Czech and Polish governments as well as surviving the US Congress.

Following the announcement that the US was in official negotiation with Poland and the Czech Republic for missile defense, President Putin used the February 11, 2007 occasion at an international security conference in Munich to state Russia's counter position. He voiced extreme alarm at the US proposal and asserted that expansion of the US Missile Shield is a hostile act toward Russia. Mr. Putin accused the United States of provoking a new nuclear arms race. In addition to the proposed deployment, Mr. Putin used to claim the US was "systematically undermining international institutions and making the Middle East more unstable through its clumsy handling of the Iraq war." Mr. Putin used the opportunity to bring forth a long list of complaints about American domination of global affairs, including the expansion of NATO into the Baltics and the perception in Russia that the West has supported groups that have toppled other governments in Moscow's former sphere of influence. Mr. Putin continued that the world is now unipolar: "One single center of power. One single center of force. One single center of decision making. This is the world of one master, one sovereign." At the same time, however, Mr. Putin said President Bush "is a decent man, and one can do business with him," he said. From their meetings and discussions, Mr. Putin said, he has heard the American president say, "I assume Russia and the United States will never be enemies, and I agree."

In response, Washington attempted to illustrate that it is trying to build a partnership with Russia and not initiate another arms race by attempting to make the case that the two sites in Central Europe do not have the technical capacity to intercept Russian ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the U.S. side has invited Russian officials to numerous consultations in the hope that dialogue would result in constructive solutions. It is also important to note that Russia has already deployed four S-300 surface-to-air systems in Belarus along the Polish border, reportedly in retaliation for the recent delivery of U.S.-made F-16 fighters to Poland.

#### **WHAT ARE US LONG-TERM INTERESTS WITH POLAND?**

Poland will be an important ally for the United States. Poland has become an increasingly more important partner for US policy, especially with regard to the Global War on Terror and the US project of democracy promotion. Poland has offered sizable support to the US and NATO contributing troops to the mission in Iraq and lately increasing its level of military and civil involvement in Afghanistan, namely with placing more resources in southern Afghanistan where the alliance has launched new missions. With regard to both Iraq and Afghanistan, the Poland is now acting as a donor nation even though not long ago they themselves were recipients of assistance. The shared values of freedom, democracy, prosperity, and

respect for human rights have become a solid pillar of the increasingly close partnership between the U.S. and Poland. Because of their past experiences, Poland has been particularly responsive and effective in the areas of democracy building, civil society, and promotion of good governance and human rights in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Belarus, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Considering their engagement in global issues and the sacrifices they have made to maintain the partnership with the U.S., Poland must be regarded as a valuable ally for Washington. It is in America's best interest to further invest in and nurture its relationship with Poland. The U.S.-Poland partnership should not be taken for granted. Poland is undergoing an important generational transition from a leadership that was strongly committed to Transatlantic relations. For the emerging leaders the communist period is a distant memory, and if US does not listen carefully to their concerns, the traditionally strong ties are likely to wane.

US analyses of Polish foreign policy are based on simple geopolitics: the popular military analysts take the very simple tack that Polish national interests is best served by pursuing a "special" relationship with the US and that Poland will always have such preferences. National interest is not a fixed calculation; rather, there are contrasting perspectives or schools that are in perpetual dialectic conflict. Poland will not perpetually seek US protection. In the future, it may decide move closer to Europe or attempt to pursue an individual foreign policy. The appointment of Radek Sikorski as Foreign Minister in Tusk's otherwise very pro-US cabinet ought to raise eyebrows. As Defense Minister for the previous coalition, Sikorski openly questioned the terms of the US-Poland relationship. The question is was this posturing for better terms or the beginnings of a possible strategic realignment?

Civic Platform's rise to power in the Sejm in November 2007 did not significantly alter Polish foreign relations with the United States. Donald Tusk stated recently that he would "very consistently continue the Polish strategy of close ties with the United States."<sup>9</sup> The pro-business coalition's rise in the Polish Sejm is seen by the US as a positive development—while Law and Justice's coalition was supportive of US foreign policy, the US embassy believes Civic Platform to be more "willing and easier business and foreign policy partners." On the surface, this is a perfectly reasonable assertion: PiS' infatuation with lustration distracted both economic and security policy, consequently Civic Platform is now ready for the "business of governing." Underneath this relatively optimistic sheen, however, challenges remain for the US and Poland. The next period of US and Polish relations will prove to be critical. The status of Poland's 900 member military contingent in Iraq and the ultimate disposition of the "third site" Ballistic Missile Defense system in Poland will of course dominate the immediate agenda between the US and Poland. More important issues, however, remain to be resolved, issues that go to the very heart of Poland's perceived identity. Poland is searching for the definition of its role between its own

separately sovereign interests, its role as a European state and its quest for a “special relationship” with the United States. The ultimate resolution of this role will determine its place as a US ally and affect stability in Central Europe.

The question of the paper now turns to Poland’s domestic situation. Historically, Poland has had three primary “lenses” from which to view itself—national, continental and, civilizational. Since 1989 there has been little contradiction between pursuing a Nationalist, European or Transatlantic foreign policy. Lately, contradictions and tradeoffs are beginning to emerge. The resolution of these tradeoffs will determine what Polish foreign policy is to be and Poland’s role in the world. The announcement of the “third site” sent a wave of reaction from both within and outside of Poland. The bilateral nature of this agreement leapfrogged NATO angering European allies and the substance of this proposal reminded Russia of previous humiliations infuriating President Vladimir Putin. The response to its west and east stoked an already suspicious response from the Polish people. What was to be gained from allowing the US access to Poland?

The politics of Ballistic Missile Defense in Poland is fundamentally driven by domestic politics. Ideas about what Poland means to Poles in both the European context, the former Soviet sphere of influence and the quest to be a “special” alliance partner with the US all explain the Polish government’s decision to agree to host a base for ten missile interceptors, the manner in which the government informed their constituents, the reaction to both its NATO partners and Russia and then finally to the Polish people. Polish foreign policy has historically been driven by internal reaction to external contexts. Realist geopolitics explains a great deal about Polish behavior but it only goes so far and fails to address important variations on questions of Polish national security. Considering the importance of both power and institutions, this paper turns to the *constructivist role* of self-referential ideas for addressing such key questions. Constructivism bases its analyses on how national actors perceive themselves in a given social context.

### **REALISM, LIBERALISM, AND CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Political realism, the most influential tradition of analyzing foreign policy, focuses on historical patterns and continuity in Poland’s foreign policy. Scholars in this tradition often emphasize Poland’s national interest as the driving force behind its international behavior. National interest is typically defined in terms of the preservation and enhancement of power within the existing international system—an enduring geopolitical reality rather than something open to gradations or even other interpretations. Ideology, the nature of government, and political culture matter only in order to specify, but never contradict, the true latent national interest. Similarly, neorealist thinking focuses on the relative level of anarchy in the international system, that the effects of the absence of a legitimate authority are the central

force that affects Poland's international behavior. In this case, whether the system is unipolar, bipolar or multipolar primarily drives Poland's foreign policy. Structural realists continue to view power and national interest as the underlying forces, perception and domestic politics are assigned secondary roles and will not vary to the extent that they overrule systemic attributes.

Change or stability for political realists is limited to fluctuations of available power in local contests or to the extent that a change in the international system is affected. In the realist tradition there is little room for foreign policy patterns as shaped by considerations other than power, such as indigenous ideas or cultural beliefs. As a result, realists run the risk of drastically misinterpreting changes in Polish foreign policy. A realist analysis of foreign policy is least problematic when the actual policies are of a zero-sum nature. When actual possibilities for cooperation exist, however, realist analyses exaggerate the effect of anarchy and the incentive to defect.

After the end of the Cold War, liberalism constituted a dominant challenger to realism and produced the new expectations of increasing policy convergence across nations. Liberals advanced theories of foreign policy that emphasized the common values of democracies in both war-fighting and alliances, the need to democratize states, and the value of market economies across the international system. The liberal view of the system was principally different from realists. Unlike realists, who emphasize international anarchy and cyclical development, liberals have argued the global and progressive ascendancy of Western political and economic values. The end of the Cold War meant the opportunity to assert that economic and political modernization, rather than geopolitically defined national interest, should serve as the ultimate foreign policy goal.

There are two deficiencies with realist and liberal accounts of foreign policy. First, both theories tend to emphasize one aspect of international system at the expense of others. Rather than acknowledging the validity of both power and modernization imperatives in foreign policy formation, they are forced into a false dichotomy. The two approaches, therefore, refrain from developing a comprehensive and complex explanatory framework. In addition, these two approaches assume common cultural lenses and do not pay attention to history and system of self-reinforcing perceptions, that is, they are ethnocentric. Realists commit foreign policy to notions of Western power and dominance while liberals advocate Western economic and political modernization. Developed in the West, by the West, and for the West, these two approaches are increasingly problematic in a world that is multicultural and multimeaningful. In order to address their limitations, both approaches need to be sensitized to social conditions, in which various changes of foreign policy take place. In other words, to understand national foreign policy, the idea of "nation-ness" must be explored.

The perspective that begins the analysis by asking what national is and that exposes the nation to various meanings and interpretations is called social constructivism. The international system is a social phenomenon *constructed* by actors. In addition to military and institutional constraints emphasized by realism and liberalism, constructivists concentrate on cultural contexts and meanings, in which these actions take place. The international system, from this perspective, is not merely a terrain for applying available military, economic and diplomatic instruments. The international system, rather, is to assist states in their socialization and understanding of interest in world politics. The international environment thereby constructs state actions and interests. This action and interest is not rationally uniform and differ depending individual state experiences with the international system and its components. Particular social contexts define national interests, the formation of such interests should be carefully studied, rather than merely assumed as rational or irrational.

The central dynamic of constructivist theory, therefore, is identity. Before nations figure out how best to defend their interests, they first seek to understand what these interests, in the context of international society, are. In the interaction with other members of international society, nationals develop affiliations, attachments and ultimately their own identity. Historically, some nations emerge as more important than others, it is through these significant “Others” that national “Selves” define their appropriate character and types of actions. The very existence of the Self becomes difficult without recognition from the Other. National identity therefore is a system of meanings that expresses the Self’s emotional, cognitive, and evaluative orientations toward its significant Other. The significant Other establishes the meaningful context for the Self’s existence and development and therefore exerts decisive influence on the Self. Through its actions, the Other may reinforce or erode the earlier established sense of national identity. Depending on whether these influences are read by the Self as extending or denying it recognition, they may either encourage or discourage the Self to act cooperatively.

A key point of departure for constructivism is the unitary actor assumption: a nation is not a homogenous entity. Different ways of thinking arise within the state in reaction to both international influences and local conditions; these schools and the images they hold are critical in understanding the processes of foreign policy formation and change. In open societies, these ideas compete for the dominant position and derive political support from social groups or political coalitions. A coalition puts forth a particular image of national identity reacting to local conditions and recognized by the significant Other. Identity coalitions constitute a basic organizing locus in political society. International influences by the Other create the meaningful context in which the national Self evolves and then shapes foreign policy. Past interactions, either positive or negative, serve to cement these roles and the ideational component inherent within.

## **POLAND'S DOMINANT SCHOOLS OF FOREIGN POLICY THOUGHT**

Polish foreign policy is primarily a response to various international contexts while displaying a strong degree of historical continuity. Across ages of monarchy and republicanism, Poland's engagement with the world has followed several persistent patterns of thinking and behavior. As a borderland nation in an uncertain, often volatile external environment, Poland had to continuously respond to similar challenges to its security. These challenges include unrests in neighboring states, threats of external invasion, and difficulties in preserving internal state integrity. In Polish history, three distinct traditions, or schools, of foreign policy thinking have developed—Europeanists, Nationalists and Civilizationists. Europeanists are those that see Western Europe as the most viable and progressive civilization in the world. Poland's future and foreign policy ought to be fully geared to cultural, political, economic and even military integration with Europe. Nationalists emphasize the state's ability to govern and preserve the social and political order. It chooses values of power, stability, and sovereignty over those of freedom and democracy. Critical to the statist perspective is the notion of external threats to Poland's security. Given the history of partition, the World Wars and Soviet occupation, Poles have developed a psychological complex of insecurity and a readiness to sacrifice for independence and sovereignty. Nationalists are not anti-European but recognize that Europe is no guarantee of their security. Finally, Polish "Civilizationists" see Polish values as different from those of Western Europe, and that Polish security depends upon the extension of Polish values.

## **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF POLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY**

In Poland's case, the Western European major powers, Russia and the United States play the role of the significant Other and prominently figured in debates about national identity. These states create the meaningful environment of Poland's past in which Poland's elites articulated and defended their visions of national identity and national interest. Europe and Russia partition Poland into legal non-existence in 1798 and the US with European support that bring the Polish state back to Europe in 1918.

The immediate post-war period precipitated a definite climate where the European Continentalism, Statist Nationalism, and Civilizationalism schools all clashed with each other. Initially Europeanism was accepted as the dominant school in the nascent Polish state as Poland implements a republican constitution and attempts institutional integration with the west. The Civilizationalist school represented by Josef Pilsudski, initially a popular perspective to be sure, proposed a federation "between-seas" from the Baltic to the Black Seas to emulate the high water mark of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom but was shouted down given the international resistance it would face. Soon after imposition of the

constitution, statist concerns quickly override all other priorities as Pilsudski's coup in 1926 renders Poland an authoritarian state. The liberal West therefore rejects Poland as its own, and Poland pursues a decided nationalist course. Under Pilsudski's rule Poland strove to maintain their independence and be beholden to no major power, but did not expand outward as Pilsudski had intended in 1919. Although Poland allied with France and Britain, they also allied with Romania and Hungary in addition to signing non-aggression pacts with the Nazis and Soviets. Poland would not have an opportunity for an independent foreign policy again until the 1989 of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's ascension to Prime Minister.

Following the reconstitution of an independent Polish government in 1989, the foreign policy priorities of the Polish government were driven by geopolitics and pragmatism—survival and stability were easily the priorities for the foreign ministry. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, an academic with ties to the Solidarity movement, became the new minister of foreign affairs. He stated at the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 1989 that “there will be elements of continuity in Poland's foreign policy but that, at the same time, an effort will be made to implement more independent and innovative programs in those areas where the new government perceives some room for maneuver.”<sup>10</sup> Skubiszewski realized that although the new Polish regime was indeed independent, prudence and caution should be the watchwords. Mazowiecki pursued a policy of “non-antagonism”. This was based on the assumption of mutual reciprocity. That if Poland did not threaten its neighbors by calling for a general uprising then its neighbors would not threaten the Polish experiment's success. This same philosophy was utilized in handling the most delicate problem of the large Polish ethnic presence in Lithuania. Ethnic Poles had attempted to declare their district's autonomy but were overruled by Lithuanian authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs made it clear that Poland did not instigate the Poles' claims and that while they sympathized with their well being a spokesman stated that “the problem should be solved calmly and gradually on the diplomatic level.”<sup>11</sup>

The main departure of Poland's Foreign Policy was in changes in approach and philosophy rather than in fundamental principles. It was reasoned that their policy should be based on a realistic comprehension of national interests rather than on some abstract ideological criteria. The fact is that Poland is placed between two great powers and that this strategic location should predominantly dictate its foreign policy. *This is a fact that was asserted in 1989 and has been reasserted ever since.* As Skubiszewski stated, the new foreign policy should “be based firmly on the fundamentals of external sovereignty and internal independence.”<sup>12</sup> In 1990 Mazowiecki was defeated in his bid for president by Lech Walesa, the former unionist head of Solidarity, but then became the prime minister.

Walesa's election cemented a de facto economic and political alliance with the United States and began a series of “warm diplomatic relations” that have defined relations to this day.<sup>13</sup> The Polish



Civilizationist perspective, alive at the end of partition, was simply no longer viable after the end of Soviet occupation. The Civilizationist perspective was supplanted by a fourth way, alignment with the United States, a school that would serve as the center of gravity in Polish politics *but certainly not be the ever present dominant equilibrium*. Walesa's Presidential administration was described as one of "war at the top" given the degree of bureaucratic infighting within the Polish government. The Sejm did go through several changes in leadership, five different prime ministers during Walesa's tenure. Despite this amount of domestic turnover, the department of foreign affairs remained remarkably stable. Skubiszewski would serve through the end of the Suchocka regime in October 1993, and only after plotting a course that would bring Poland stability and dictating a course that would be followed by subsequent Foreign Ministers of State.

Polish Foreign Policy initially had three prime elements: the protection of national independence, trans-border cooperation and regional cooperation.<sup>14</sup> All governments have this goal, but Poland is especially sensitive to defending national independence due to Soviet subjugation for over forty years and near annihilation by the Germans before that. The emphasis on independence also serves national interests by "facilitating internal political and economic changes."<sup>15</sup> The specific manifestation of this policy has been the unremitting efforts to develop and maintain friendly relations with Poland's most powerful neighbors Germany and Russia. Also along this end Poland has sought rapprochement with the west, particularly Western Europe. Skubiszewski said, "We shall seek to anchor our independence in the broad framework of European security as well as in multilateral and integrative forms of international cooperation." The cooperation he wanted came from the west.

The second major consideration of Polish Foreign policy was that of geopolitical imperatives which dictate the focus of Poland's regional involvement. Regional cooperation is imperative in light of past mistakes. Poland's relations with Czechoslovakia in the 1920's and 1930's were strained by ethnic and territorial conflicts. They had enormous political differences with Hungary. In effect, they became an island in a sea of indifference and it hurt them. Without regional solidarity, it was all the easier to conquer. Good relations with neighboring countries are sought today for security and economic well being. Also of great importance is the need to stabilize the potentially volatile political situation in Eastern Europe. It is hypothesized that a stable Central Europe will stabilize the political situations with the former Soviet States. In theory, regional cooperation will lead to a larger "new European order required among countries to preclude the economic or political isolation of any one country and attempts by one country to dominate others."<sup>16</sup>

The final consideration in the creation of Polish foreign policy has been in maintaining a consistent order of priorities in dealing in diplomacy. The Polish foreign ministry has declared its desire

to participate in the “new European order” and announced its determination to conduct an “open and dynamic policy, friendly toward other countries, a policy rooted in the norms of morality and the rules of international law.”<sup>17</sup> Following Walesa and Skubiszewski, Polish priorities would be fine-tuned. Maintaining the American center of gravity, the administrations under Aleksander Kwasniewski would move more and more to EU integration. Kwasniewski’s policies transformed Polish institutions and moved Poland into position to become a member of the European Union. Kwasniewski maintained close relations with the US all the while, supporting the US invasion of Iraq and providing full cooperation to the US in its “Global War on Terror.” The election of President Lech Kaczynski administration retained consistency in cooperation with the United States but represented a marked departure from European cooperation. With the Polish path to full EU membership assured, Kaczynski articulated a path that now presented Polish state interests defined first in Warsaw (*closely* followed in Washington) with Brussels a distant third and Moscow of course not even in the race.

### **POLISH FOREIGN POLICY TRADE**

Where does this leave us? Poland will be an important ally for the United States. Poland really has no better strategic option. The US should allow Poland the appearance of looking independent, this costs very little. The US should act like a good big brother and empower Poland and stop squandering good will. If we consider missile capability from Iran as being imminent, we ought to push for deployment of BMDS in Central Europe. If it is not a pressing issue, we should allow the respective domestic forces to suspend deployment and re-engage through NATO in a multilateral setting.

What can the US do to strengthen ties to Poland? There actually are very simple steps that would go a very long way. The extension of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program to include the new EU members in CEE will be an effective way to preserve and develop this valuable partnership. More scientific exchanges and increased educational and training opportunities would strongly consolidate the relationship. The U.S. administration is striving to widen these programs, while cooperating with Warsaw to improve their security and border protection. With regard to economic ties, the EU is the largest trading partner for the U.S. and Poland is becoming an increasingly significant part of the trillion dollar transatlantic trade. Billions in trade and investment between U.S. and Poland has been registered during the last year. Economic growth, foreign investment, and joint ventures are a sign of growing confidence in Poland by U.S. business.

Finally, one of the most important issues in the U.S.-Poland agenda should be the emergence of Russia as an international power aiming to reestablish its political influences in the region. Energy issues are a common priority for the U.S., Poland, and the EU as they have serious implications for Transatlantic security. The U.S. needs to take a more proactive role and work with European capitals to ensure the

diversification of energy sources, the management of energy demands, and transparency in energy negotiations. In sum, developments in Central Europe demand greater attention in Washington. As new EU members, CEE states are seeking to eliminate any lingering divisions in Europe and the U.S. can benefit from a strong and unified continent.

The recent arms transfer negotiated by new Defense Minister Sikorski has gone a long way to securing Poland's continued allegiance. Poland's Air Defense needs improvement and their army needs serious airlift capacity. More exercises will integrate joint capacity. Poland continues to ask for access to more intelligence (on the order of the US-UK intelligence sharing), this will have to wait, but not forever.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Mr. Roman Owczarek, Director of Strategic Research, MAPEI Company, Warsaw Poland, February 17, 2007

Professor Edward Halizak, Director Institute of International Relations, Warsaw Poland, February 22, 2007

Dr. Justyna Nakonieczna, University of Warsaw, February 27, 2007

Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, February 28, 2007

Mgr Anna Jankowska, Polish Military Staff College, March 11, 2007

John Gorkowski, Political Officer US Embassy, March 18, 2007

Laura Griesmer, Economic Officer US Embassy, March 18, 2007

Air Attache US Embassy, March 18, 2007

Dr. George A. Gladney, US Fulbright Scholar, University of Wyoming, April 17, 2007

Professor Sebastian Wojciechowski, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, School of Humanities and Journalism in Poznan

Capt Scott Wilson, USN, Command Group Director of Staff Operations Joint Force Training Center, May 2007

Professor Z. Antony Kruszewski, Professor of Political Science, University of Texas El Paso, El Paso, TX, June 19, 2007

Slawomir Debski, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Head of the Research Office, June 13, 2007

Ronald J Sullivan, SAIC, NATO HQ Brussels, June 2007

Mr. Roberto Zadra, NATO, NATO HQ Brussels, June 2007

Mr. Bill Puttman, NATO, NATO HQ Brussels, June 2007

Major Kristi Swain, Russia-NATO Council, Brussels June 2007

Mr. Dave Johnson, NATO, Brussels, June 2007

LtCol William Casebeer, USAF, Mons June 2007

LtCol Keith Detwiler, USA, Embassy Minsk, June 2007

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> An early work outlining such forces is John Mearsheimer's "Why the We Will Soon Miss the Cold War." *The Atlantic Monthly*. August (1990).

<sup>3</sup> The Commission's Official Statement on the Middle Eastern Peace Process.

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<sup>4</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States, 2006*. [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/) pg. 38

<sup>5</sup> Gebhart Von Moltke. *Ascension of New Members to the Alliance, 1997*

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<sup>6</sup> Tedd Galen Carpenter. *NATO Enters the Twenty-First Century*. (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> NATO Missile Defense, [http://www.nato.int/issues/missile\\_defence/index.html](http://www.nato.int/issues/missile_defence/index.html)

<sup>8</sup> John Inocur, "Trying to Legitimize Missile-Shield Hostility in Germany." *International Herald Tribune* March 13, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> AP, "Poland Swears in New Government," *New York Times*. November 16, 2007

<sup>10</sup> Anna Swidlicka, Radio Free Europe - Radio Liberty Research Report. "The New Government's Foreign Policy" (12 October 1989) p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p8.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> US State Department

<sup>14</sup> Jan B. de Weydenthal, Radio Free Europe - Radio Liberty Research Report "Poland on Its Own: The Conduct of Foreign Policy." (8 January 1993) p1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.