

Poland's Diplomatic Efforts to Assure Extended Deterrence within NATO, From Crimea to Warsaw and Beyond

Lukas Milevski
Lecturer, Leiden University

Introduction

Russia's ambiguous invasion and overt annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014 finally shattered dearly-held optimistic European security and defense beliefs concerning Russia's intentions. European defense finally again became a serious topic of public and political discussion again after twenty-five years' grace. In this debate the role of the Eastern European countries, with long experience of Russia, swiftly changed from that of Cassandra to Russia expert. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the marked transition in how NATO received Polish (and other Eastern European) warnings about Russia were especially poignant for Poland. March 12, 2014 marked the 15th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO. June 4, 2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the fall of communism in Poland. With regard to both recent history and current events, it was obvious to all why Poland—and all the rest of Eastern Europe—had rushed to join NATO in the 1990s and early 2000s.

A serious strategic issue was, however, that little tangible benefit to the military balance had followed accession to NATO. First, the West had other strategic commitments, including wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which demanded strategic concepts other than territorial defense and deterrence. Second, the older member-states of the alliance feared offending a temperamental Russia. Third, the financial crisis of 2008 dealt significant damage to NATO defense budgets throughout Europe, cuts from which European defense budgets have yet to recover. Finally, other security crises have since emerged, particularly south of Europe, which are engaging significant attention. In such a context, any action relating to European defense in the east is necessarily slow and painful, requiring much effort for relatively little result. NATO took two years to transition from reassurance of its easternmost constituents in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean annexation to a posture intended to deter Russia adopted at the Warsaw summit of July 2016.

Despite the psychological upset caused by Russia's annexation of Crimea and subsequent events—the war in the Donbas, the downing of MH-17—the alliance's achievements in forming its present deterrence posture were neither inevitable nor easy. Sustained deterrence required active and continuous diplomacy to achieve. Poland was one of the diplomatic leaders in NATO pushing for a substantial improvement in NATO's defense posture and conducting a diplomatic campaign in the two years leading up to the Warsaw summit of July 2016 to bring the alliance toward its vision.

Since early 2014, Poland has had one change of government. The first was led by President Bronislaw Komorowski with the Civic Platform Party (PO); the second by Andrzej Duda with the Law

and Justice Party (PiS). This latter party was elected on the premise that it would differ substantially from the previous government and would focus on internal matters. Although both governments clung to cooperation with the United States of America as a major pillar of their foreign policies, under Duda Poland's conduct has been marked by two other major principles: an emphasis on Poland's sovereign rights, especially relating to internal matters; and skepticism of multilateral institutions, especially if they appear to go against Poland's own self-defined interests and sovereignty. The issue of continuity is therefore a significant question in Polish diplomacy, albeit one whose emergence has been delayed.

Polish diplomacy for deterrence will be examined in three parts. First is the conceptual basis of Polish diplomacy—did the Poles actually and consciously frame their diplomacy within NATO from the perspective of deterrence? Second, the tactics, intricacies, and potential pitfalls for Polish diplomacy over the years will be brought to light. Finally, the Warsaw Summit and its consequences will be considered, and the question of what comes next will be raised.

1. The Conceptual Basis of Polish Diplomacy

Did the Polish government and its diplomats rely upon the concept of deterrence as they sought to draw a greater NATO presence into Central and Eastern Europe?

Poland has long had a strong understanding of and predilection for deterrence. The best example of this is its appreciation of the American missile defense facility in Poland at Redzikowo. Since 2002 American missile defense has been a diplomatic issue among the United States, Poland, and Russia (also the Czech Republic, which was to host a related radar site). From 2002 until the 2009 discontinuation of the project and its announced reformulation a month later, Poland demonstrated a deep understanding of deterrence and of the importance of the Redzikowo site for deterrence of Russia. First, Poland strongly desired this site because it would bring an American presence into Poland, at a time when for fear of offending Russia NATO was still resisting drawing up plans to defend its eastern constituents. The political weight of American troops in Poland was significant, as it would force any potential aggressor to reckon with the danger of a US response.

Moreover, Poland believed that uncertainty within an ostensible deterrent relationship was counterproductive. The Poles did not accept the full subtleties of American Cold War deterrence theory—such as Schelling's 'threat that leaves something to chance'—but instead believed that clarity was necessary for deterrence to be effective. They were willing to open the Redzikowo interceptor site to Russian inspection in a virtually totally transparent manner—twenty-three hours a day, six days a week. The Russians declined the offer, preferring to attempt to counter and possibly engineer the discontinuation of the project rather than live with it¹. This appreciation of deterrence continued unbroken across all Polish governments active for the duration of the project—the presidencies of

¹ Interview with a Polish defense expert (who preferred to remain anonymous), 5 September 2017.

Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Lech Kaczyński, and Bronislaw Komorowski.

However, Russia's actions in Crimea marked an inflection point, both for NATO and for Poland. NATO finally recognized the extent to which Russia was a potential danger to Eastern Europe and that the fears and recurrent warnings since accession of Poland, the Baltic States, and so forth were valid. NATO therefore began seriously considering the creation of a deterrent posture in Central and Eastern Europe.

At the same time, however, Poland's conceptual basis shifted. At exactly the time when NATO became receptive to the idea of deterrence in its east, Poland switched gears to focus almost exclusively on defense. Deterrence largely vanished from the lexicon of the Polish government. This was as true of the Komorowski presidency as it has been of the Duda presidency. The report by the council of ministers on the goals of Polish foreign policy in 2014-15, for example, contained no mention of deterrence whatsoever². Reports in subsequent years respectively mentioned deterrence once, once, and again not at all³. The combined press releases since February and March 2014 of the Ministries of National Defence and Foreign Affairs, as well as of the Presidency, also result in only trace amounts of deterrence mentions, with far more references to defense. When Polish diplomats and national representatives—ministers, presidents—employed the term deterrence, it was usually instrumentally, in speaking to a Western audience. Thus, in a speech to the National Press Club in Washington DC, President Duda stated that “the Warsaw Summit must demonstrate that we are capable of building an adequate and cohesive DEFENSE potential based on RESILIENCE and DETERRENCE. Today this involves increasing the presence of troops and allied infrastructure on NATO's Eastern flank. Real deterrence means real presence⁴.”

This shift of focus from deterrence to defense, strongly deemphasizing the former in favor of the latter, is particularly notable given the context. First, Polish governments had already demonstrated a

² Grzegorz Schetyna. “Report by the Council Of Ministers on the Goals Of Polish Foreign Policy in 2014 – 2015”, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 November 2014, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/fd8da23a-9100-4b52-b1ef-7afeef2ae1eb:JCR>, accessed 28 August 2017.

³ See Grzegorz Schetyna. “Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Goals of Polish Foreign Policy in 2015”, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 April 2015, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/7005a7b3-c56d-46eb-887d-0d5be8a92913:JCR>, accessed 28 August 2017; Witold Waszczkowski. “Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Polish Government's foreign policy in 2016”, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 January 2016, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/601901dd-1db8-4a64-ba4a-9c80f2d5811b:JCR>, accessed 28 August 2017; and Witold Waszczkowski. “Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2017”, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 February 2017. http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/p/msz_en/foreign_policy/goals_of_foreign_policy/annual_address_2011/, accessed 28 August 2017, respectively.

⁴ ““Real Deterrence Means Real Presence””, Polish Ministry of National Defence Press Release, 1 April 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/latest-news/real-deterrence-means-real-presence-32016-04-01/>, accessed 9 June 2017.

continuous appreciation of deterrence, and how it is understood to work, in the previous twelve years prior to the Russian annexation of Crimea. Yet this appreciation seemed to vanish overnight, perhaps reflecting the urgency of Polish concerns about Russian intentions. Second, starting in 2014, NATO gradually began talking the language of deterrence again, by way of reassurance, after an absence of two and a half decades from the topic. Ostensibly, it should have been the perfect time for Poland to couch its diplomacy in terms of deterrence. Finally, the world of Polish think tanks and expert commentary continued to remain well aware of the concept of deterrence⁵. Moreover, one year prior to the Crimean annexation, there had even been some concern in Poland that US extended deterrence might have been weakening, drawing lessons from a crisis with North Korea⁶. Such concerns would suggest that a defined deterrence posture might be strengthened before transitioning to a more active focus on defense.

Some Polish experts have suggested that this recent lack of appreciation of deterrence reflects a broader conceptual failure of failing to think about war and defense altogether. This is especially true of the PiS government, which is focused on its internal audience, and which is therefore acting largely reactively in foreign and defense policy, rather than striving toward a clearly defined and articulated set of goals⁷. As Tomasz Paszewski noted,

[s]ince the collapse of communism, an enduring axiom of Polish defence policy, albeit one rarely expressed explicitly, has been a deeply rooted conviction that Poland would never be able to repel large-scale military aggression on its own, at least with its regular armed forces... This mistaken premise has contributed to the failure of Poland's armed forces either to adopt a long-term territorial-defence strategy or specify its most important defensive capabilities. For some 20 years, the attachment to territorial defence manifested itself mostly in the insistence on the viability of Article 5 guarantees in NATO corridors, some resistance to downsizing the armed forces (and abandoning conscription), and the recurring idea of popular resistance⁸.

A Polish emphasis on defense may simply be a default position to mask a shallow understanding of what is possible and what is preferable in defense and security policy.

⁵ See for example Artur Kacprzyk. "Deterring Russia after Ukraine: CEE Divided on the Future of NATO Policy", Polish Institute of International Affairs *Policy Paper* 13/96 (July 2014); Artur Kacprzyk. "Conventional Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank after the Warsaw Summit", Polish Institute of International Affairs *Bulletin* 48/989 (3 August 2016); Łukasz Kulesa. "Careful What You Wish For: Nuclear Reductions and Conventional Deterrence in Europe after Crimea", Polish Institute of International Affairs *Strategic File* 15/51 (August 2014).

⁶ Łukasz Kulesa. "U.S. Extended Deterrence Weakened? Lessons Learned from the North Korean Crisis", Polish Institute of International Affairs *Bulletin* 57/510 (28 May 2013).

⁷ Interviews with Polish defense experts, 4 and 5 September 2017.

⁸ Tomasz Paszewski. "Can Poland Defend Itself?", *Survival* 58/2 (2016), 121-122.

Returning to the specific question of deterrence, and despite the Polish government's focus on defense across both the Komorowski and Duda governments, one may still detect a residual concern for deterrence in Polish diplomacy. The credibility of NATO and especially American commitments to Poland remain an important consideration. During the Wales Summit of September 2014, President Komorowski stated that "[f]or Poland it is a matter of basic importance for all potential aggressors to know that there will be an immediate and effective response"⁹. Two years later, the Polish Foreign Minister in the succeeding Duda government stated that "[w]e want Warsaw to be the place where, through practical steps, the Alliance reaffirms the credibility of security guarantees vis-à-vis countries of its eastern flank"¹⁰.

One might suggest that an emphasis on defense is implicitly a focus on deterrence by denial. As Glenn Snyder, the originator of the distinction between deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial, wrote: "Denial deterrents are characterized by a higher probability of being applied and by much greater effectiveness in blocking enemy gains"¹¹. This is a characterization of defense as such, although it is contingent upon having the forces and capability actually to block the enemy's gains. Although this is logically true, there is no ready indication that the Polish government has linked the two concepts in such a manner.

In sum, Poland's diplomacy since 2014 has not been explicitly based upon deterrence, but rather more directly upon defense, although some residual conceptual trappings of deterrence remain, as evidenced by Polish concern about American and NATO credibility.

2. Polish Diplomacy for Defense

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Poland's diplomatic activity focused on strengthening NATO's presence in Eastern Europe, not just in Poland but also in the Baltic States and Romania. It employed various diplomatic tactics to bring about this basic end, but also faced certain potential obstacles to realizing its goal. To explain Poland's diplomacy fully, first its goals will be defined, then its ways and means, then any final potential obstacles.

(1) Defining the Ends

The overriding diplomatic ambition of the Polish government was to secure a greater and enduring NATO presence in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the form of heavy brigades, than had

⁹ "No discord on strengthening NATO eastern flank", Polish Presidency Press Release, 4 September 2014, <http://www.prezydent.pl/en/president-komorowski/news/art,685,no-discord-on-strengthening-nato-eastern-flank.html>, accessed 19 June 2017.

¹⁰ Waszczkowski, "Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Polish Government's foreign policy in 2016".

¹¹ Glenn H. Snyder. *Deterrence by Denial and Punishment*. (Princeton: Princeton University Center of International Studies 1959), 38.

previously been the case. Such deployments would strengthen Polish (and Baltic, Romanian) defense, but also implicitly serve deterrence purposes simply by representing an entire alliance presence in the potentially threatened countries. As Prime Minister Beata Szydło articulated, “it is about the constant presence of NATO forces in Poland¹²”.

However, this goal itself faced a significant obstacle in the form of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed on 27 May 1997. The Founding Act stated that “NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries” and that “NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces¹³.” Some NATO constituents did not wish to depart from this treaty, even though the geopolitical context had, in the eyes of NATO’s eastern members, clearly and substantially changed from the overly optimistic 1990s.

Russia also played a small role with regard to the Founding Act, as in the early 2000s it sought to define explicitly what the formulation “substantial combat forces” actually meant in terms of real military power. Russian diplomats offered one brigade as an acceptable upper limit for NATO’s substantial combat forces. NATO fortunately never entered the conversation, and NATO leadership at the time had the sense that Russia could and would accept a larger NATO presence if necessary.

Understanding that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to assure permanent deployment, Poland was pragmatic about its ambition to bring in NATO military forces. Polish leaders accepted that if necessary an enduring but rotational NATO presence would be satisfactory, as long as the actual military infrastructure necessary to host allied brigades on an indefinite basis were put into place.

Beyond Poland’s overarching goal of bringing in allied military power in as significant quantities and for as long a time as possible, it also sought NATO fulfillment of subsidiary decisions concerning funding and organizational specifics made at the Wales Summit in September 2014.

Many observers have called the Wales Summit the game-changer, for bringing collective defence back to the forefront. The Readiness Action Plan (RAP), with its enhanced NATO Response Force (NRF) and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), as well as the Defence Investment Pledge where European member states recognized the need to stop cutting

¹² “Prime Minister Szydło: Constant Presence of NATO Forces in Poland – an Objective that Will Be Met”, Polish Ministry of National Defence Press Release, 31 April 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/prime-minister-szydlo-constant-presence-of-nato-forces-in-poland-an-objective-that-will-be-met-j2016-04-21/>, accessed 9 June 2017.

¹³ “Founding Act”, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 12 October 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm, accessed 14 September 2017.

defence budgets, were important first steps agreed in Wales. The Warsaw Summit was largely about implementation¹⁴.

(2) Poland's Diplomatic Ways and Means

The Polish diplomatic push to secure a greater NATO presence in Eastern Europe and implementation of the Wales Summit decisions assumed a number of salient features. Poland mobilized a series of arguments in its favor, especially in the public diplomacy conducted by its successive presidents and ministers of state. These included a reiteration of common values and of the historical sacrifices which Poland had made in their defense, sweeteners such as observing the need for NATO's southern flank also to have high priority, and diplomatic maneuvers such as focusing diplomatic efforts on specific states and creating a like-minded lobbying group within NATO. Some of these aspects featured prominently in Poland's public diplomacy, while others represent more classical diplomatic actions taken behind doors – both ajar and closed.

Poland's representatives, especially President Duda, often publicly stressed the West's common, liberal values, which Poland also shares. In this vein, at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, Duda plaintively stated, “[l]et us create a world founded on the force of law and not on the notion ‘might is right’¹⁵”. Elsewhere he also stated that “[t]here cannot be peace in the world without respect for international law” and that “[o]ne cannot accept any violations of borders. One cannot accept any violations of state sovereignty - such actions always demand a firm position and firm reaction, irrespective of whether it happens today or happened some time ago¹⁶”. Duda also tied Poland's historical record into the mention of common values, particularly the Second World War: “Poland was always on the right side, Poland always supported the free world. Poland did not have a collaborating government. Polish soldiers were fighting on all WW2 fronts, they were fighting for Poland's freedom, for your freedom and ours, and they liberated other nations¹⁷”. Such public diplomacy not only highlighted shared cultural values and indicated that these values must be defended, but also subtly implied that the West owed Poland a debt of blood due to the unprecedented degree of its struggles to defend those values during the Second World War.

¹⁴ Karsten Friis. “Introduction: NATO after the Warsaw Summit” in Karsten Friis (ed). *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century: An Assessment of the Warsaw Summit*. (Abingdon: Routledge 2017), 1.

¹⁵ ““Poland against a world of influence zones””, Polish Presidency Press Release, 28 September 2015, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,38,poland-against-a-world-of-influence-zones.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

¹⁶ “World peace impossible without respect for international law”, Polish Presidency Press Release, 23 August 2015, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,18,world-peace-impossible-without-respect-for-international-law.html>, accessed 11 July 2017; “Poland always supported the free world”, Polish Presidency Press Release, 1 September 2015, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,21,poland-always-supported-the-free-world.html>, accessed 11 July 2015.

¹⁷ “Poland always supported the free world”.

Both Komorowski and Duda also stressed alliance solidarity in their public diplomacy. Even as the crisis in Crimea was unfolding, Komorowski stated that “[w]e share the same fears and also share the same hopes, that by demonstrating the solidarity of the whole Western world we will be able to halt the progress of events across NATO's eastern border and the European Union's eastern border¹⁸”. He was also optimistic about the outcome of NATO’s summit in Newport, Wales, because he believed that it confirmed alliance unity and solidarity. Duda later spoke in a similar vein, noting that “NATO has to show internal solidarity and responsibility for security issues wherever problems emerge¹⁹”.

The various Polish governments since the annexation of Crimea were realistic enough to understand that appeals to shared cultural roots, historical experience, and alliance solidarity were hardly enough. Poland also needed to employ sweeteners to convince other, less threatened, countries in NATO that it was worth supporting the eastern flank. One sweetener was recognizing that NATO’s southern flank held equal priority—that is, that alliance solidarity flowed both ways, not just eastward but also southward. Added to this message was the assurance that the Warsaw Summit would address the south in equal terms with the east. As Duda argued in a Canadian interview,

[t]he Alliance must be based on the concept of solidarity and co-responsibility. That’s why there should be no division between the east and the south. Security cannot be divided. NATO must guarantee equal status to all its members and monitor all threats. The Warsaw summit should yield exactly such an outcome. We should forge a collective strategy for the east and the south, aimed at protecting the territory of all member states, protecting peace, protecting international law—no matter where the current threats come from. It means that the eastern flank should be strengthened through defence infrastructure and reconnaissance capabilities. Meanwhile the southern flank needs a clear mandate for common action. I am convinced the Warsaw summit will bring us some definitive answers in this respect²⁰.

Another vital sweetener concerned Russia, and specifically the concerns of other European countries about pushing Russia too far away. Poland had to reassure its allies that although it desired security in the east, it did not wish to see Russia as an adversary. As Duda articulated,

¹⁸ “Poland, United States agree on Crimea and NATO defence solidarity”, Polish Presidency Press Release, 18 March 2014, <http://www.prezydent.pl/en/president-komorowski/news/art.584.poland-united-states-agree-on-crimea-and-nato-defence-solidarity.html>, accessed 19 June 2017.

¹⁹ “President: NATO must show internal solidarity”, Polish Presidency Press Release, 18 April 2016, <http://www.prezydent.pl/en/news/art.147.president-nato-must-show-internal-solidarity.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

²⁰ “The Alliance Must Be Based on the Concept of Solidarity and Co-responsibility”, Polish Ministry of National Defence Press Release, 16 May 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/the-alliance-must-be-based-on-the-concept-of-solidarity-and-co-responsibility-w2016-05-16/>, accessed 9 June 2017.

We do not intend to isolate Russia... We need a focused dialogue to reduce the risk of miscalculation, to avoid conflicts and to increase predictability in our relations. But the nature and scope of NATO-Russia dialogue should in no way undermine NATO's deterrence and collective defense arrangements. We need to bear in mind that in order to have a constructive engagement, this dialogue must be based on the principle of international law and respect for territorial integrity of all states. Otherwise, the dialogue will simply boil down to an empty word²¹.

Poland hoped that a willingness to engage with Russia would make Western European members of NATO more amenable to a presence in the east, but at the same time emphasized that engagement required specific conditions, otherwise it would be little more than a waste of time. Even during the Warsaw Summit, "the question of maintaining dialogue with Russia was important for many member states²²."

Another important aspect of Poland's diplomacy was rooted in its defense policy, as it recognized that it could not honestly ask for support from NATO unless it too was contributing to NATO's overall security. Thus Poland sent a contingent to take part in NATO's air policing mission over the Baltic States as early as April 2014, in the immediate aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Moreover, this was the fifth time that Poland had contributed forces to the mission, having also done so in 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012²³. Poland also sought to match the investment of two percent of GDP which had been required in NATO since 2006 and reaffirmed at the Newport Summit in Wales in September 2014.

One observer suggested in 2015 that "total Polish defence spending has doubled since 2002" and that by 2022 "Poland will...have the most powerful ground force in Europe²⁴." Another is less sanguine, believing that Poland's defense policy since accession to NATO has been premised upon unhelpful assumptions about the need for military reform and the role of popular resistance under the umbrella of NATO's Article 5 and thereby sent awry²⁵. Poland already reached two percent of GDP in defense in the years after Crimea and now seeks to reach two and a half percent. Yet, at least for the moment,

²¹ "President's speech at the NATO Defense College", Polish Presidency Press Release, 17 May 2016, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art.167,presidents-speech-at-the-nato-defense-college.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

²² Karsten Friis. "Conclusions: looking towards Brussels 2017 and Istanbul 2018" in Friis (ed), *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century*, 98.

²³ "President endorses use of Polish Air Force in NATO's Baltic mission", Polish Presidency Press Release, 11 April 2014, <http://www.prezydent.pl/en/president-komorowski/news/art.596,president-endorses-use-of-polish-air-force-in-natos-baltic-mission.html>, accessed 19 June 2017.

²⁴ Alexander Lanoszka. "Do Allies Really Free Ride?", *Survival* 57/3 (2015), 141.

²⁵ Paszewski, "Can Poland Defend Itself?"

Poland's two percent is somewhat a mirage as it reached this level of spending in 2016-17 through the final payments for its F-16 acquisition. These payments have now been completed, causing a subsequent drop in Polish defense expenditure below two percent, even if only temporarily²⁶. However, while considerations of the actual effectiveness of Polish military investment are relevant to military talks within NATO, they have had little apparent bearing on political decisions relating to the basic fact of whether or not other NATO member countries have been willing to deploy in Poland and elsewhere.

Poland has focused its diplomacy within NATO primarily on states sympathetic toward Polish, Baltic, and others' concerns about a resurgent Russia, rather than on those which were not. Poland found allies in Central and Eastern Europe, but its greatest efforts were directed at the United States and Great Britain. Komorowski, at an event celebrating the 25th anniversary of Poland's regained independence at which Obama also spoke, cited the Polish-American brotherhood-in-arms²⁷. Duda, for his part, emphasized Poland's history with Britain: "Poland and the United Kingdom have always been strong allies and our noble anniversary gives a solid proof of that fact. Our common struggle during the Second World War, including the Battle of Britain, brought together our countries and our Nations²⁸." Polish diplomats and national representatives took advantage of any opportunity and venue to build support, among both government officials and the domestic public, in such vital countries as the United States and Great Britain to buttress Poland's security ambitions in Eastern Europe.

Related to its diplomatic focus on only a particular set of countries, Poland also formed a political lobbying group with eight other NATO states, all from Central and Eastern Europe, to argue their case for reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank. This group consisted, besides Poland, of the three Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. These countries met in their own summits prior to major NATO meetings to coordinate their positions and more effectively use their voices. Within NATO diplomacy this represented an innovation, but even just within the Polish diplomatic service it was a controversial decision. Although in the short term it seemed to prove useful in amplifying the concerned voices of Central and Eastern Europe, those with a longer-term view believed that it would only open an undesirable can of worms. If such politicking were to become commonplace in NATO, then sooner or later Poland would end up on the losing end²⁹.

A potential major obstacle at the time, which nevertheless did not appear to hinder Polish diplomacy, was contemporaneous tension between Poland and the European Union over refugees and

²⁶ Interview with Polish defense expert, 5 September 2017.

²⁷ "Polish-American brotherhood-in-arms continues", Polish Presidency Press Release, 3 June 2014, <http://www.prezydent.pl/en/president-komorowski/news/art.633,polish-american-brotherhood-in-arms-continues.html>, accessed 19 June 2017.

²⁸ "Poland and the United Kingdom have always been strong allies", Polish Presidency Press Release, 15 September 2015, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art.27,poland-and-the-united-kingdom-have-always-been-strong-allies.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

²⁹ Interview with Polish defense expert, 5 September 2017.

migrants. Poland's relations with the European Union as a whole, and particularly with Germany and France, suffered as a result of its differing and strident stance on the issue. This formed an important context for Polish diplomacy within NATO and was perhaps a factor which pushed Poland to coordinate with the other eight Central and Eastern European states, as well as the United States and Great Britain, rather than attempt to negotiate directly with continental Western Europe.

Another potential obstacle to Polish diplomacy in the time between the Wales and Warsaw Summits was, ironically, NATO's new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Academic opinion has questioned the VJTF, as observers are not convinced that it would be capable of deterring Russia. For all the capability the VJTF now has in principle, neither it specifically nor NATO in general has a proper doctrine to employ it or the decision-making culture to sustain its credibility³⁰. Poland itself was concerned about the VJTF for a very different reason: would the relative success in establishing the VJTF and the work put into ensuring its ability to deploy quickly satisfy NATO that enough had been done? Contrary to the opinion of outside academics, Poland never considered the VJTF an instrument for deterrence, but rather as an instrument of defense. In line with this thinking, Poland feared that the focus on the VJTF could distract NATO from taking more public measures of solidarity, such as deploying an allied military presence to Poland and also to the Baltic States and Romania³¹. As President Duda stressed, "it must be 'very well carried out and visible when it comes to the presence of soldiers'³²."

3. The Warsaw Summit and After

What decisions were made at the Warsaw Summit? The results were fortuitously in line with Polish diplomacy and security ambitions. NATO's enhanced rapid reaction force, the VJTF, was finalized and declared operational at Warsaw. NATO made the definitive decision to deploy a permanent presence of rotational troops in the three Baltic States and Poland. Along with this, the United States quadrupled its budget for its armed forces in Europe, as well as deploying a rotational brigade in Eastern Europe separate from the NATO rotational forces. The summit also reminded Russia that NATO was a nuclear alliance, albeit defensive and for deterrent purposes. In line with Polish diplomacy, the summit itself managed to strike a balance between NATO's eastern flank and southern flank. As Patrick Keller observed, "NATO's eastern and southern flanks are not treated equally, but they were both addressed according to their impact on Alliance security and to the sufficient satisfaction of all member states³³."

³⁰ Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning. "Can NATO's new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force deter?" in Friis (ed), *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century*, 16-22.

³¹ Interview with a Polish defense expert, 5 September 2017.

³² "President Duda Speaks Out about the Tasks of the Warsaw NATO Summit", Polish Ministry of National Defence Press Release, 2 March 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/president-duda-speaks-out-about-the-tasks-of-the-warsaw-nato-summit-22016-03-18/>, accessed 9 June 2017.

³³ Patrick Keller. "Divided by geography? NATO's internal debate about the eastern and southern flanks" in Karsten Friis (ed), *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century*, 58.

Polish officials were pleased with the results of the summit. As early as the second day, Duda's chief aide Krzysztof Szczerski noted how satisfied Duda was with the summit³⁴. Later in July, Polish defense minister Antoni Macierewicz reflected on the summit in a speech to the Atlantic Council, in which he noted "that the decisions made during this Summit will help to strengthen the Western World and its reconstruction, based upon the common values that we all share... I dare say that the NATO Summit in Warsaw was of historical importance. For Poland, it is second only to the accession to NATO itself... We may finally feel fully-fledged members of the Alliance³⁵." Such rhetoric amounts to positive reinforcement after a job well done. This satisfaction was not limited to Poland, or even to Central and Eastern Europe alone. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced in a speech on the second day of the Summit that "[t]oday, we made decisions which guarantee deterrence and defence in the 21st century, in the face of 21st century threats NATO has responded swiftly and with determination³⁶".

One may justly wonder who was actually responsible for the success of the Warsaw Summit. The Polish government naturally framed the summit as its own success story. For instance, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło emphasized that

[t]he most important thing that we should all repeat, should be proud of, should boast of, talk about all the time is that the NATO Summit in Warsaw was Poland's huge success. This is a great success of Poland, this is an event that will go down in history as the Summit which drew a new map of global security, strengthened security of Poland³⁷.

Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski was similarly emphatic about the effectiveness of Polish diplomacy and foreign policy.

³⁴ "President Andrzej Duda very satisfied with NATO summit results", Polish Presidency Press Release, 9 July 2016, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,215,president-very-satisfied-with-nato-summit-results-.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

³⁵ "The Warsaw NATO Summit and Its Implications for the Polish-American Bilateral Relationship", Ministry of National Defence Press Release, 25 July 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/latest-news/the-warsaw-nato-summit-and-its-implications-for-the-polish-american-bilateral-relationship-u2016-07-25/>, accessed 9 June 2017.

³⁶ "NATO Summit decides to strengthen presence on Alliance's Eastern flank", Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release, 9 July 2016, http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/nato_2016/nato_summit_decides_to_strengthen_presence_on_alliance_s_eastern_flank1, accessed 7 June 2017.

³⁷ "Prime Minister Beata Szydło: NATO Summit was Poland's huge success", Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release, 14 July 2016, http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/nato_2016/prime_minister_beata_szydlo_nato_summit_was_poland_s_huge_success, accessed 7 June 2017.

The nature of Polish foreign policy has changed as well. We have empowered it and restored the proper hierarchy of priorities in which our country's broadly defined interests come first. It is to these interests that we have devoted so much attention and efforts. Instead of standing on the side-lines and cheering on the main players, we have entered the game on the international arena. It turned out that we are able to work out a tactic, set out our arguments, and promote our point of view. We are able to withstand the first wave of aversion, attacks, and even assaults. To build coalitions and to win. This was the case with the missile defence shield, the presence of NATO troops in Poland, and the problem of migration³⁸.

Despite Polish rhetoric about the success of the summit, the Polish government over-exaggerated its own role for its domestic audience. Poland does not have sufficient weight within the alliance to move the policies of countries such as France or Germany. Rather, it was members such as the United States and Great Britain, which had finally become wary of Russia during and after the annexation of Crimea, which were the real diplomatic engines leading to the success of the Warsaw Summit and the decisions made there.

This reality is somewhat reflected in Polish diplomacy after the conclusion of the summit. Polish diplomacy after Warsaw has focused on implementation, and Duda consequently highlighted implementation of the summit's decisions as one of his foreign policy priorities in 2017³⁹. However, Poland's diplomatic efforts within NATO have lost nearly all public prominence after the Warsaw Summit, whose crescendo has given way to a near complete silence, at least in public. This silence may be the result of a variety of factors. Perhaps the Polish government wishes to ensure implementation of current decisions before moving toward new decisions. Perhaps Poland is satisfied with what has been decided and, albeit less likely, is uninterested in further reinforcement.

However, some Polish experts are less charitable and ascribe Poland's quiescence after the Warsaw Summit to the government's domestic focus and its lack of serious thinking about defense. These experts believe that the current Polish government does not have a long-term vision for what it wants to achieve in the defense realm and is primarily only reactive in this sphere. Although the Warsaw Summit itself occurred during the Duda government, the process started under the previous Komorowski government. It was the previous government which set the goals of the conference, and which the Duda government merely adopted once it came to power. Now that the greatest diplomatic task for the Polish foreign and defense policies has been concluded, the Duda government may be somewhat adrift⁴⁰.

³⁸ Witold Waszczkowski. "Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2017".

³⁹ "NATO decisions enforcement among Polish president's 2017 policy goals", Polish Presidency Press Release, 8 January 2017, <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,332,nato-decisions-enforcement-among-polish-presidents-2017-policy-goals.html>, accessed 11 July 2017.

⁴⁰ Interviews with Polish defense experts, 4 and 5 September 2017.

Conclusion

Between the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, Poland expended a significant amount of diplomatic effort in an attempt to strengthen NATO's presence in Eastern Europe. The frenetic effort culminated with the summit in Warsaw, and has since then all but vanished. The cumulative effect within NATO of all this effort, however, was limited when compared to the consequences of American and even British diplomacy within NATO, which pushed toward similar ends. Poland ultimately achieved the end result which it desired, but Poland's own efforts were insufficient to lead to such a conclusion.

Despite the simple fact that it is the United States and not Poland which is capable of moving NATO, Poland could not afford to sit still and be quiet. It had to demonstrate publicly its concern with Russia and defense in Eastern Europe, lest NATO's Western European members think that Central and Eastern Europe was not worried about Russia and not interested in a greater NATO presence. Poland, as well as NATO's other frontline states, had only one real task within alliance diplomacy. This task was simply to be worried, to show it, and to motivate certain others to do so as well, so that greater diplomatic forces within NATO could finally move the rest of the alliance. This role was played successfully by the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland's diplomacy during the two years between Crimea and Warsaw was exemplary in maintaining the cadence of frontline concern for the rest of the alliance to hear, and on which larger and weightier states such as the United States and Great Britain could base their own diplomacy.