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Polish-American Security Cooperation: Idealism, Geopolitics and Quid Pro Quo

On the unseasonably warm evening of October 5, 2004, hundreds of Poles crowded into a Warsaw University auditorium to attend a speech by Paul Wolfowitz, then United States Deputy Secretary of Defense.[i] Wolfowitz's remarks, on "the theme of courage and freedom," began with a quote by the Polish hero of the American Revolutionary War, Kazimierz Pułaski, who informed Benjamin Franklin in 1777 that "We Poles have a hatred for all forms of tyranny, especially foreign tyranny; so no matter where in this world someone is fighting for freedom, we feel it is a personal matter for us as well."[ii] The influential American neoconservative then proceeded to detail the long history of Poland's struggles against foreign tyranny, from Tadeusz Kosciuszko's role in the American Revolution and the thousands of Polish pilots and soldiers involved in the Battle of Britain and the storming of Monte Cassino during World War II to the anti-Soviet campaigns waged by Jan Nowak, Lech Wałęsa, and Pope John Paul II. For Wolfowitz, the latest act in this storied history is Poland's involvement in the 2003 invasion and subsequent reconstruction of Iraq, as evidenced by one anecdote in particular:

Last October, when I [Wolfowitz] met Maj. General Tyskiewicz in Hilla, where he was responsible for the area called the Shia heartland, which is one-quarter the size of your country – a huge area of responsibility, and a huge mission. He told me that when Iraqis come to him to complain about electricity shortages and unemployment, he tells them about the challenges that Poland faced after throwing off the Soviet yoke. I think that maybe one of the reasons that Poles are doing so well in this delicate mission is that they understand better than most what Iraqis are facing. What they can also tell them, as General Tyskiewicz did, is that Poles did not lose heart, that you have made continuous progress, and that you are incomparably better off than you were under tyrannical rule. Poles have credibility when they say it's possible to leave totalitarian oppression behind. And Iraqis are listening.[iii]

Taking into account a certain graciousness for the speaker's host that evening, it is nonetheless clear that Washington, D.C. has put a great deal of stock in the Polish-American partnership in Iraq and beyond, and as a result Poland has come to be known as "America's protégé in the east,"[iv] as "America's new model ally,"[v] and a "stalking horse for US interests within the EU,"[vi] all in addition to being a "linchpin of regional security."[vii] Poland's transformation from a struggling Central European post-Soviet state to a key actor in Transatlantic security (and of course a reliable American ally) has been momentous, and the following pages aim to provide Poland's rationale, and the implications of its behavior. As will be shown, there are concrete geopolitical motives for efforts undertaken by the government in Warsaw, and expectations of reciprocal considerations, but, as Wolfowitz eloquently alluded to, there is more to the story than merely quid pro quo. Historical tendencies, and an enduring idealism, are also factors in Poland's new Transatlantic stance, and must be taken into account in understanding this new and ever-solidifying political partnership.

Poland's answer to the France's Jean de la Fontaine, Ignacy Krasicki, wrote the fable "The Lamb and the Wolves" in 1779, in the aftermath of the first partition of Poland by western European powers. In this cruel allegory, Krasicki informed the reader that
You will always find a reason if you want something enough:
Two wolves suddenly fell upon a lamb in the wood.
They were about to tear it apart;

It asked: "By what right?"
"You are tasty, weak, and in the wood." Soon they had eaten it all.[viii]

After two further Eighteenth Century partitions, and two more centuries serving the role of "God's Playground,"[ix] it is safe to say that Krasicki's fable (wherein the lamb was the beleaguered and tyrannized Polish Rzeczpospolita) has been borne out. Given Henry Kissinger's trenchant observation that the "principle cause of conflicts in the past 150 years has been the existence of a no-man's land between the German and Russian peoples,"[x] with Poland one of the chief prizes of Mitteleuropa, it is little wonder that post-1989 Poland has sought after national security via the European and Transatlantic integration process, be it in the European Union, NATO, the Central European Initiative, the Central European Free Trade Area, or the Mare Nostrum Council of Baltic Sea States Initiative.

Just as historical forces have shaped Poland's foreign policy arrangements, so too have Polish ideals concerning responses to tyranny been similarly shaped. The statement made by Kazimierz Pułaski to Benjamin Franklin quoted by Paul Wolfowitz in Warsaw is but one example. In 1795, during the Polish insurrection against Russia led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the Polish aristocrat Jósef Sułkowski pronounced that "Poland is wherever people are fighting for liberty," before theorizing that "If the Poles are to become capable of effective resistance, they must first learn to be free, and in order to become free, they must learn to die."[xi] It was during this formative period of Polish nationhood that the motto "Za wolność waszą i naszą" ("For your freedom and ours") came into use. To what extent these ancient pronouncements impact modern public opinion and policymaking cannot be easily demonstrated. What can be stated for certain, however, is that the Polish historical record, from Krasicki's time, through Munich and Yalta, and on to the present day, allows for a popular receptiveness to the sort of American attestations on tyranny and liberation that might otherwise prompt skepticism in another, more cynical nation.

A special relationship with the United States adds another layer to this Polish enthusiasm for the (admittedly rather broad) themes of freedom and democracy. Poland's European integration project, the so-called Powrót z Europy ("Return to Europe"), has been described by Roland Freudenstein as "largely explicable in terms of Poland's specific history, and the widespread feeling of having suffered for Europe (in 1920, 1939-45, 190-81) while never having got anything in return."[xii] In other words, Poland has certain expectations of redress. With the Polish-American relationship, there instead exists substantial gratitude on the part of Poles for the stand made by the United States against global communism, as evidenced by, amongst other things, the 2004 renaming of the main square of the Krakowian suburb of Nowa Huta to "Ronald Reagan Square." This has meant high approval ratings for American foreign policy (52% approval in a July 2006 poll, higher than anywhere in Europe and higher even than in the United States itself),[xiii] and a popular commitment to free market principles, with a 2005 GlobeScan poll showing 63% approval of a free enterprise and free market system in Poland, with 19% opposed (as compared to 71% in favor and 24% opposed to economic liberalism in the United States and 36% in favor and 50% opposed in France).[xiv] At the moment, elected representatives in Warsaw and Washington, D.C. are very much in tune. As of the Spring of 2006, the two most powerful Polish political parties are Lech Kaczynski's Law and Justice Party, which is socially conservative, and Donald Tusk's Civic Platform, which has an economically liberal and business-friendly platform, meaning that Poland's rightward puts it in more of a political step with the United States than many of its European allies.

Culturally, Poland may find more in common with America than with many of its European neighbors. Eighteenth Century Poland was famously described by Jean-Jaques Roussea as be-

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si bizarrement constitué a pu subsister si longtems…[et] différente de naturel, de gouvernement, de moeurs, de langage, non seulement de celles qui l'avoisinent mais de tout le reste de l'Europe (so strangely constituted to be unable to last for long… [and] differing by nature, government, customs, and language not just with neighboring countries but also with the rest of Europe.)[xv]

Twenty-first Century Poland may seem likewise to the observer. Poland's new president, Lech Kaczynski, made waves while mayor of Warsaw when he banned gay pride marches, and has campaigned for the reinstitution of the death penalty in Poland, causing the European Commission to warn the new Polish government that such behavior is "not in line with the basic values on which the EU is based."[xvi] This may very well be the case, and it means that Poland and its government will not be inclined to look askance at the United States over the socio-cultural issues that have been bemoaned in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and elsewhere.

Thus, we see Poland in many ways apart from Europe, historically, politically, and socially, despite its enthusiasm for the European Union integration effort and the "Return to Europe." At the same time, there are strong historical ties between American and Polish political ideologies, as well as very real socio-political similarities between the two nations. This historical, political, and cultural context is necessary to understand why bilateral relations between the United States and Poland have become so prosperous. The following sections will show the evolution and concrete manifestations of these bilateral relations, especially with regard to peacekeeping and intervention within the context of the Transatlantic alliance.

By the mid-1990s, the preponderance of Polish political parties, and according to opinion polls roughly 60% of the population, supported a diplomatic effort to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.[xvii] This key move in the "Return to Europe" resulted, it has been said, from "the strong presence of history in Poland's security policy,"[xviii] for the geopolitical insecurities detailed above. Poland's accession to NATO on March 12, 1999 thus represented a sea change in Polish security policy. For the first time in centuries, Poland was in a robust security alliance with clear collective security guarantees.

Consequently, the North Atlantic Treaty's Article 5 collective self-defense provision is taken especially seriously in Warsaw. During a Sejm debate in April 1999, the Polish Foreign Minister, Bronisław Geremek, insisted on Poland's wish to "preserve the power of its Article 5, the power of a defensive alliance that it has held for 50 years," which has been interpreted by Olaf Osica as understandable in the following terms:

First, in view of its geographic location (bordering Russia (Kaliningrad) and Belarus), Poland has a continued interest in preserving the traditional understanding of collective defence, that it, defence of the territory of the allied states. The mistrust of Russia, which from the outset treated NATO enlargement as a political attack on its sphere of influence, has continued. Indeed Russia's military build up in Kaliningrad and Belarus has further impeded any change in the Polish perception of security, which the elites still perceive through the prism of military force.[xix]

With these longstanding security considerations dominating the decision-making process in Warsaw ministries, it is hardly surprising that Poland would wish to pursue a strong alliance with the United States, and make certain sacrifices to maintain good relations.

The Polish government has not only voiced concern regarding Kaliningrad and Belarus, and throughout the 1990s consistently spoke out over deteriorating conditions in the Balkans. At the height of the Bosnian crisis, in May 1993, Poland's first post-Soviet president, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, at the time serving as a UN rapporteur on human rights, blasted the British government for opposing military intervention. "Any time there was a likelihood of effective action, a particular western statesman [British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd] intervened to prevent it."[xx] Tellingly, Mazowiecki later bemoaned NATO efforts, asking "If NATO cannot even protect Srebrenica, what can it do?"[xxi] and "Can I, in Poland, feel secure in the wake of these events? The towns of Srebrenica and Zepa have been abandoned. Who says Poland won't also be abandoned one day?"[xxii] Meanwhile, David Warszawski, editor of the Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza, "saw Bosnia as a test-case for the functioning of the international community" and claimed that the Partnership for Peace provided Poland with "far weaker guarantees than those which the UN promised the inhabitants of Sarajevo, Zepa, Srebrenica and Bihac."[xxiii] Poland, then, sees its own security bound up in that of the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, and the inability of the international community to effectively deal with the Bosnian crisis in the mid-1990s meant two things: firstly, that NATO membership (and thus the Article 5 guarantee) was an absolute necessity, and secondly that the United States represents the sole guarantor of international peace and security, even in Europe.

The same principles applied to the 1999 Kosovo crisis, this time with Poland an official member of NATO. During which Foreign Minister Geremek announced that the best way to do it [intervene militarily in Kosovo] is when a mandate for such missions is issued by the Security Council on behalf of the United Nations. At the same time, however…given the entire veto technology in the Security Council, one must not make NATO's moves contingent on the votes either of Russia or China, or both, and that NATO's missions going beyond Article 5 in emergencies may be pursued by NATO when they are consistent with the principles of the United Nations Charter and are in the service of the values enshrined therein.[xxiv]

This skepticism of certain international legal norms has been echoed by Poland's position of United States policy regarding ballistic missile defense. Even before September 11, Poland had been "more forthcoming than most European allies in its support for this initiative."[xxv] The extent to which Warsaw policymakers are truly in favor of American missile defense policy, as opposed to avoiding a fruitlessly contentious issue, is unclear, but what is clear is that this issue is one more wherein Polish-American relations have been less divisive than in other Transatlantic partnerships.

With regard to Polish policy during the 1990s, we see three key factors informing Polish security policy: the geopolitical and security concerns felt strongly by Warsaw, the honest and forthright concern over human rights abuses, and a willingness to go along with United States-led out of area NATO involvement. All of these factors would play an equally important role in Poland's later support for American-led military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia after the terrorist attacks of September 11. The enormities committed that day threw into sharp relief American alliances, as would long-range decisions made by American policymakers in the months and years after. An editorial in June 2001 in the Polish daily Rzeczpospolita asserted that "Poland has a tragic historic experience behind it, and it needs to have an ally on which it can depend,"[xxvi] that ally being the United States. When the United States found itself on the receiving end of its won tragic experience, Poland found itself in a position to prove that it, too, was a dependable ally.

Before the enormities of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent War on Terror initiated by the American administration of George W. Bush, Polish military deployments abroad had

been strictly in peacekeeping capacities. Indeed, these endeavors has been quite extensive, with involvement in some 46 United Nations and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) missions since 1946, including those to Haiti in 1994, Bosnia from 1992 to 1995, and subsequent deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania.[xxvii] Yet the post-9/11 world, for the government in Warsaw, called for a different kind of defense policy, one in which the Polish military would cooperate more closely with American military missions as well as the overall goals of the War on Terror.

US-Polish cooperation in counter-terrorism made headlines in late 2005 as newspapers reported claims made that "black sites" in Eastern Europe, specifically in Poland and Rumania, had been used as secret detention facilities for terror suspects, potentially in contravention of European Union human rights provisions.[xxviii] The US Central Intelligence Agency remained silent on the matter, while the Polish Defence Minister Jerzy Szmajdzinski maintained that "We [Poland] aren't detaining terrorists, or interrogating them, or doing anything else with them."[xxix] This left open the possibility that United States officials were the ones doing the detaining and interrogating, but the European Union's anti-terrorism coordinator, Gijs de Vries, announced on April 21, 2006 that "There has not been, to my knowledge, evidence that these illegal renditions have taken place."[xxx] For lack of information, a veil must be drawn over this particular example of US-Polish counter-terror cooperation. Other examples remain, however, including the American donation of $120,000 worth of radiation pagers to Polish border guards, in order to detect illicit nuclear materials.[xxxi]

Polish involvement in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan has been considerable. Though Polish military forces did not play a critical role in the operation that overthrew the Taliban in late 2001 and early 2002, the Polish government was quick to offer troops to the Coalition, with the decision taken on November 22, 2001, to provide, it was reported, "a company of GROM commandos, a platoon from the Logistic Brigade in Opole, a platoon from the Mine Disposal Brigade in Brzeg, a platoon of chemical-warfare troops from the 4th Chemical Regiment in Brodnica, a biohazard reconnaissance group from the Military Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology in Puławy and the logistic support ship Kontradmirał (Rear Admiral) Ksawery Czernicki."[xxxii] All inall, the Polish contingent amounted to troops. In the aftermath of the war against the Taliban, Polish forces have been active in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and as a relatively new member of NATO, Poland has shown eagerness to participate in this venture, with its strong role within NATO's North East Multinational Corps (situated in Poland) providing the forum.[xxxiii] The number of Polish troops actually deployed in the peacekeeping mission has been limited, typically around 100 soldiers rotated every six months since 2002, and stationed in Bagram.[xxxiv] Merely looking at the numbers of troops deployed to Afghanistan, however, may not reveal certain concrete impacts made by Poland's forces, especially in the field of landmine clearing.[xxxv] Furthermore, when Poland takes over command of the ISAF mission to Afghanistan in 2007, it will up its contingent to 1,000 troops, it was announced during NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's visit to Poland in February of 2006.[xxxvi] Nonetheless, the Polish involvement in Iraq has been the most dramatic form that the new US-Polish partnership has taken.

Polish support for the US-led efforts in Iraq were voiced early and often, most profoundly in the letter of the so-called Vilnius 10, published in the Wall Street Journal on January 30, 2003, in which Poland's Prime Minister, Leszek Miller, along with prime ministers and presidents from Spain, Portgual, Britain, Italy, Hungary, Denmark, and the Czech Republic affirmed that "The trans-Atlantic relationship must not become a casualty of the current Iraqi regime's persistent attempts to threaten world security."[xxxvii] The letter also stated that the UN "Security Council must maintain its credibility by ensuring full compliance with its reso-

lutions. We cannot allow a dictator to systematically violate those resolutions. If they are not complied with, the Security Council will lose its credibility and world peace will suffer as a result."[xxxviii] This is precisely the sort of skeptical rhetoric seen in Poland in the aftermath of the Bosnia crisis, in which the Security Council was found wanting for its inability to confront Serbia.

Poland's outspoken support for the US, together with other nations in what US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dubbed "New Europe," prompted outrage in Paris and Berlin. Famously, French President Jacques Chirac called the above letter "infantile" and "dangerous" before chiding the Central and Eastern European nations that they had "missed a great opportunity to shut up," even adding that Bulgaria and Rumania had "diminish[ed] their chances of joining Europe."[xxxix] This diplomatic (if one can even use the word) tussle stressed European internal relations nearly to the breaking point, and a longstanding Polish penchant for Francophilia was dealt a body blow.

These episodes in public relations did nothing to slow the drift towards war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and Poland's readiness to stand alongside the United States was undiminished. When the military operations began on March 19, 2003, Poland was a stolid member of the Operation Iraqi Freedom's "Coalition of the Willing." Polish involvement in the first stages of the war was far more dramatic than was expected. Polish GROM commandoes, the most elite of Poland's special forces, were involved in operations at the port of Umm Qasr. Fifty-six GROM commandoes captured strategically vital oil installations, and a mini-controversy arose in Poland as the force's commander, Colonel Roman Polko, was photographed afterwards against the backdrop of an American flag.[xl] The controversy was not over Polish involvement, however. Rather, it was that the GROM commandoes were not receiving their due acclamation; a Polish flag would have been more appropriate. The story of GROM's involvement in Iraq did not end with the successful operations at Umm Qasr. In September 2003, the head of the Polish army's general staff, General Czesław Piątas, announced that GROM soldiers were involved with the efforts to apprehend members of the defunct Baathist regime.[xli] Furthermore, it has been reported that a number of GROM commandoes have sought employment with private military contractors like Blackwater after their tours of duty were over.[xlii]

After the Hussein regime was overthrown, the long process of rebuilding the country began, but the growth of an insurgency and the subsequent decline in the security situation meant for a stronger peacekeeping contingent than has been necessary in Afghanistan. Poland was again prepared to shoulder a disproportionate amount of the burden (in comparison with its previous peacekeeping deployments), and was assigned the command of the Central-Southern Zone, south of Baghdad. This is a multinational zone, with 2,500 peacekeepers (1,500 of which are Polish) drawn from countries as diverse as Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Rumania, and El Salvador. Aside from providing security, various reconstruction projects have been implemented, as well as support for archaeological expeditions, and altogether there have been some 2,000 aid projects with a value of $84 million.[xliii]

One of the most prominent aspects of Polish involvement in the Iraq coalition has been its unflagging nature. Although the deployment has been whittled down to 1,500 troops, and could be reduced to 900 by the end of 2006,[xliv] it has been routinely redeployed while other coalition members have withdrawn their forces. Indeed, another letter to the Wall Street Journal, entitled "Iraq's Future, Our Past," was penned by the Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak ambassadors to the United States, in the aftermath of a round of parliamentary elections in Iraq, and reaffirmed that "the experiences of the Multinational Division Central-South prove

that transformation in Iraq can be completed with success."[xlv] This success was attributed to Poland's sensitivity towards victims of state oppression by Paul Wolfowitz (see above); alternatively, Polish Defense Minister Radek Sikorski (an ardent pro-American and erstwhile analyst at the American Enterprise Institute) suggested that "We [Poland] are a religious country. Maybe the Iraqis pick up the fact that we respect their religious sites perhaps more than some others, and we seem to have good relationships with the local people."[xlvi] Whatever the reason, the Polish contingent in Iraq, the fifth largest after the US, Great Britain, South Korea, and Italy, has represented a welcome addition to the Coalition.

The valuable nature of the Polish contribution, well beyond anything attempted in Poland over the last fifty years, has not prevented a minor flap between L. Paul Bremer, the head of the provisional government in Iraq in the aftermath of the US invasion, and the Polish Ministry of Defense. In a recent memoir, My Year in Iraq, Bremer asserted that "Former Warsaw Pact forces looked good on paper, but they were neither as well trained nor as well equipped as U.S. or British forces," before attacking the Polish Division commander Andzej Tyskiewicz for not intervening against Muqtada's militants in Karbala.[xlvii] The Polish Ministry of Defense reacted strongly to these claims. Its press spokesman, Piotr Paszkowski, responded that "Polish soldiers went to Iraq to help the Iraqi nation to stabilise the situation after decades of bloody dictatorship, and not to impose its own order by force. The Ministry of National Defense in defense of the good name of the Polish soldier will undertake the steps necessary to counter unfair assessments."[xlviii] Indeed, as Paszkowski pointed out, Polish peacekeeping "arrangements are in accordance with the contingent's mandate based on the resolution of the United Nations Security Council no. 1483 confirmed by Polish authorities, which explicitly provided for the stabilization character of our mission." Meanwhile, a Polish officer, Lieutenant Colonel Sylwester Michalski, dismissed the claims by Bremer as "absurd."[xlix] Seeking to assuage bruised Polish feelings on this matter, the US ambassador to Poland, Victor Ashe, assured Polish officials that the claims in the book did not reflect American attitudes.[l]

While Bremer was most likely attempting to transfer blame for any missteps he may have made with regard to the Karbala insurgency, it is doubtless true that, GROM aside, the Polish contingent in Iraq is a force for stability rather than a counter-terror force. Polish military transformation in the future, then, is a pressing issue if it hopes to stay on track to becoming a valuable military partner, and the following pages will examine this transformational process.

Throughout the 1990s, the Polish military was criticized for being overly concerned with "defense" and unable to conform to a "security" policy; in other words, Polish grand strategy was distinctly "old-fashioned."[li] The geopolitical rationale for such a posture has been outlined above. Joining the EU and NATO has necessitated a more integration-ready Polish military capable of involvement in rapid reaction forces, as well as one that can be "more adaptable to the market economy."[lii] That said, Poland's defense spending in 1999 amounted to 2 percent of national GDP, in 2001 amounted to 1.8 percent, and in 2002 had dropped to 1.71 percent,[liii] with only nine percent of the defense budget directed towards equipment upgrades (and only Belgium and Portugal spend less on equipment).[liv] These figures are not necessarily comforting for those expecting the Polish military to play a greater role in rapid reaction forces and warfighting.

Nonetheless, attempts are being made to rectify these shortcomings. One of the key items on the agenda when Poland's President Lech Kaczynski visited President Bush in February of 2006 was to shore up US support for Polish military reforms. Happily for Poland, Bush's budget for the 2007 fiscal year allocated $30 million "to continue defense reform" in Poland, whereas the overall budget cuts military aid flowing to Europe.[lv] In this sense, then, Poland

is already seeing preferential treatment for the various cooperative efforts it has made since 9/11; distancing itself from official policies in Paris, Berlin, and Brussels has been lucrative in this sense at least.

Concomitantly, the new defense minister in Warsaw, Radek Sikorski, has been attempting to amp up the pace of military reform. Seeing the need to conform to US, NATO, and ESDP requirements, Sikorski has revitalized the modernization effort, albeit with the "old-fashioned" rationale that Poland has "too often paid a high price for being weak in the past."[lvi] Thus, Poland has opted to upgrade its air force with American-manufactured F-16 fighters, will increase defense spending to 2 percent of GDP, and will end compulsory conscription within six years, all the while continuing to reduce the number of soldiers in the military from the bloated 450,000 of 1990 to a sleeker 150,000 troop level.[lvii] Additionally, discussions continue within NATO as to the location of possible anti-ballistic missile sites on Polish territory.[lviii] Finally, since 2002 the potentiality for US-Polish marine forces joint training and special forces interoperability programs have been on the table, as well as cooperation on WMD defense measures, and time will tell whether these proposals will come to ruition.[lix]

All of this adds up to a revitalized effort to upgrade military hardware and effectiveness, either within NATO or the EU, or simply as an ally of the United States. The next test will be the 2007 effort in Afghanistan, which will be an important showcase of Polish high-level command. Overall, it must be said that work remains to be done on upgrading Poland's military, but the new center-right government, with its keen interest on close Transatlantic ties, is motivated to pursue military transformation and integration.

Polish public opinion, while not altogether behind the Iraq war effort, has been stable in its pro-American tilt, and Polish policymakers have been even more committed to maintaining troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. Still, there are a few potential pitfalls in this bilateral relationship, though nothing that could lead to the sort of strife America has seen with regard to other European partners. These pitfalls have to do with quid pro quo. Idealism can only carry a nation's foreign policy so far. There must be concrete benefits for Poland's sacrifices (in blood, with 17 soldiers lost in Iraq, and treasure, though the US has maintained military aid).

For one, Poland's President Kaczynski campaigned on a platform that he would be better able to win valuable concessions in the form of Iraq reconstruction contracts, and said that his predecessor, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, was unable to gain as much on this matter as he would be able to. As Jacek Kucharczyk of the Warsaw-based Institute of Public Affairs noted, "People think Poland did not get as much out of this alliance as it should have."[lx] This matter was presumably broached at the Bush-Kaczynski meeting in February of 2006, but it is still too early to tell what tangible benefits, in terms of contracts or otherwise, that Poland is set to receive in Iraq.

More troubling is the mass indignation in Poland at the visa regime the US has in place with respect to Poland. It is quite difficult for a Pole to obtain a US visa; the application fee is a nonrefundable $100, which is not the case for French, German, or British citizens seeking a US visa. Regardless of US concerns over potential illegal immigration of Poles to the US, i.e. overstaying a visa, or worries about Poland as a hub of the synthetic drug trade, such a policy will understandably rankle Poles, who see themselves as having proven themselves valuable and loyal allies. US Senators Rick Santorum and Barbara Mikulski have attempted to remedy this situation, proposing an amendment (S.2694) that would designate Poland a "visa waiver country" on the grounds that, amongst other things, "Poland has proven its steadfast dedica-

tion to the causes of freedom and friendship with the United States, exemplified by the brave actions of Polish patriots such as Casimir Pulaski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko during the American Revolution," "Polish history provides pioneering examples of constitutional democracy and religious tolerance," "Poland was a staunch ally to the United States during Operation Iraqi Freedom," and that "On April 15, 1991, Poland unilaterally repealed the visa requirement for United States citizens traveling to Poland for 90 days or less."[lxi] However, this legislation has repeatedly failed to move forward. In the Paul Wolfowitz speech in Warsaw in 2004, the then-Deputy Secretary of Defense, fielded a question from a Polish professor specializing in American foreign policy, who asked why the US had such a visa regime, and why a visa applicant must call a "so-called 700 number, which means that the American Embassy is making money" from the calls, and called the system "petty" and "wrong."[lxii] This was indeed a difficult question to answer, and Wolfowitz replied that he "wish[ed he] had the power" to change the visa system, but that "even much more powerful people in our government, including the President, are constantly defeated by our bureaucracy."[lxiii] While acknowledging that "various aspects of this issue" rub "people's nerves very much the wrong way," Wolfowitz insisted that he was powerless on the matter. The Santorum-Mikulski measure was again introduced on April 5, 2006, but it may be a long time before such an open visa system is in place.[lxiv] The extent to which this issue could impair bilateral relations should not be overstated, and perhaps the fact that this is the most pressing bone of contention speaks well for US-Polish relations. Nonetheless, any headway on easing the visa system would go a long way towards solidifying the goodwill of the Polish populace towards the United States, and would take most of the Polish quid pro quo concerns off the table.

Polish foreign policy vis-à-vis the United States has been a clear-sighted exercise in geopolitical maneuvering, backed up by a strong ideological affinity and certain expectations of recompense. These three elements are present in most any bilateral relationship involving the United States. Yet the intensity and relative weighting of these three components must be understood in order to see where a political relationship is headed. In this case, it is the ideological aspect that seems destined to play a critical role.

Poland's geopolitical position, especially with respect to its eastern borders, is unlikely to change in the short term, though medium and long term alterations are possible. Despite democratic gains in Moldova and Ukraine, Poland still sees intractable situations in Belarus and Russia, giving more credence to those Polish policymakers that see "old-fashioned" solutions to political uncertainties, one of which is a close strategic partnership with the United States. Improvements in relations with Merkel's Germany has lessened the sensation of a new Polish Mitteleuropa dilemma, and further integration within the EU may further reduce the idea that Poland is caught between east and west, in strategic terms at least. At what point Poland, with its long memory, would make the shift to a postmodern, quintessentially "European" foreign policy is unclear, however. The current strategic posturing Poland has undertaken is, if not permanent, for the long-term.

US support for the Polish military transformation project has been continuous, and shows no sign of ending, but the issues of the visa process and the apportioning of Iraq reconstruction projects represents irritants. The extent to which they could undermine public opinion or official policy is likely limited, though. Polish politicians like Kaczynski, Tusk, Sikorski, et al. are firmly in the pro-American camp, and for them issues of quid pro quo, while taken into account, are combined with ideological considerations.

It would be unwise to underestimate the power of ideas in international politics, especially at a time when considerable ideological differences have taken the front both within and without

Europe. The New Europe-Old Europe divide may be overly simplistic, but Poland can with all certainty said to have ideological dissimilarities to many of its neighbors to the west. This difference was highlighted during the debate over the Iraq war from 2002-2003. Adam Michnik, one of Poland's leading intellectuals, penned an article for Gazeta Wyborcza, "We the Dissidents," in which he noted that "A German journalist published an article in the paper Die Tageszeitung in which he claimed that Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, and George Konrad, Europe's long-standing moral authorities, had suddenly become undiscriminating admirers of America."[lxv] Michnik responded that "We were united by a dream of freedom, a dream of a world infused with tolerance, hope, respect for human dignity, and a refusal of conformist silence in the face of evil" before concluding that "Saddam Hussein takes part in this just as Hitler and Stalin did before him. He asserts that in the holy war with the "godless West" all methods are permitted. Waiting for this sort of regime to obtain weapons of mass destruction would be plain recklessness."[lxvi] Michnik reinforced this idealistic vision when he later noted that that "It is in our own interest to worry about those who have lost out, those who are excluded and degraded. If not, we will dig a grave for ourselves and our children."[lxvii] Thus, to Michnik, Poland's leading public intellectual, the lessons imparted to Poland, and other Central and Eastern European states, throughout the Twentieth Century has a very real impact on present day policy decisions. These lessons are not lost on policymakers either.

A Poland that stands ideologically apart from many Western European nations, for reasons related to the social, religious, and political ideals detailed above, and which constantly relates its foreign policy decision-making to its prior historical experience, is more likely to take seriously the Bush administrations rhetoric regarding democratization, and thus can commit more willingly to cooperative efforts related to the War on Terror. Poland has attempted to foster democracy within its own miniature near abroad, as seen in its dramatic intervention in Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004 and other endeavors in Belarus, Moldova, and elsewhere within what Poland has traditionally called the region "between the seas," i.e. between the Baltic and the Black Seas.[lxviii] Here, a foreign policy geared towards a democratic transformational approach is pursued with the ultimate goals of geopolitical stability, particularly with respect to "old-fashioned" (at least to post-modern Europe) eastern-facing security concerns. It is a frothy mixture of ideology and geopolitics. Of course, tangible economic benefits could result from this sort of engagement, but these are not necessarily the prime movers.

The same can be seen, on a grander scale, and a dramatic one from both the American and Polish perspective, when it comes to Polish support for US operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and elsewhere. It is not inconceivable that the moral support received by the US from Poland's efforts in these matters outweigh the purely military impact. That is not to say that the Polish-American relationship approaches the Anglo-American "special relationship," but it does seem to be headed in that general direction. The extent to which this alliance can be solidified rests on the Polish willingness to continue to transform its military from a rusting Warsaw Pact-era hulk to a modernized, NATO-integrated force, as well as an American willingness to provide security guarantees to Poland and, if possible, provide tangible instances of the benefits of cooperation for Polish domestic consumption. Poland will, for the foreseeable future, require the US for its Central European balancing act, and desires the quid pro quo from such a relationship as it emerges into a market oriented state. The US is eager for steady strategic partnerships, and the Polish willingness to ascribe to the driving ideology of the War on Terror, for reasons historical and pragmatic, make cooperation all the more advantageous.

In the end, the Polish-American partnership cannot be boiled down to one particular rationale, and the very interconnectedness of the various bases of the energetic relationship makes for

enhanced stability. Still, this diplomatic relationship is a prime example that ideas matter in international politics, and the admixture of history and ideology, which Harold Robert Isaacs eloquently termed "scratches on the mind,"[lxix] has a strong impact on policymakers, journalists, and other elites. With those scratches on the mind mentioned in Wolfowitz's 2004 speech in Warsaw, there is ample basis for a robust Polish-American partnership in the future. The coming years will determine how deep such an alliance can be, and to what extent the ebb and flow of party and elite decision-making affect it.

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