

America's protégé in the east?

The emergence of Poland as a regional leader

MARCIN ZABOROWSKI AND KERRY LONGHURST*

The evolution of the United States over the past decade into a hyperpower means that it now shoulders a far greater degree of responsibility for maintaining international order than in former years. In this context, the US has sought to manage its international relations through a mixture of multilateralism and unilateralism. At the core of this emerging strategy is the concept of 'regional leadership' for those states with which Washington seeks to work or to which it may occasionally delegate some security-related tasks. Clearly, this has not been possible in all parts of the world, given that any such partner needs to share and uphold, to some degree, the same view of the world as the US, including a proclivity to use military force. The US has managed to establish close relationships with a number of states that may be viewed as regional leaders. In western Europe the special relationship with the UK, underpinned by the sharing of common intelligence, has endured, which means that Britain is set to remain the US's key partner in the region. Australia, too, enjoys a close relationship with the US, also based, to a large extent, upon intelligence-sharing. Thus, after September 11, with a very similar threat perception to that of the United States, Australia became a significant regional leader and one of the closest allies of the US following its involvement in the early stages of the US-led operation in Afghanistan. In the Islamic world the situation remains particularly complex, with Egypt and Jordan being close to the US on various occasions; but it is undoubtedly Turkey that remains America's most steadfast and reliable ally in this part of the world, despite disagreements over Iraq.¹

Since the early 1990s Poland has emerged as one of the US's closest allies, arguably, indeed, its protégé, in central and eastern Europe. After Washington became dedicated to pursuing the eastern enlargement of NATO, America became the security guarantor that the Poles had craved since the late eighteenth century. For America, Poland represents a middle-sized power whose successes with building democracy and market reforms after 1990 mark it out from its

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¹ See 'America and Turkey: a friendship on hold', *The Economist*, 29 March 2003, p. 26.

regional peers, and whose significance is magnified by the contrast it represents with the situation eastwards of the Polish borders. The US also sees eye to eye with the Poles on a range of foreign policy issues, a consonance which was illustrated when Warsaw readily contributed troops to Kosovo and Afghanistan and was also evident in Poland's unequivocal support of Washington over Iraq, where Poland has now taken on responsibility for one of the occupation zones.

Consequently, especially since September 11, Poland appears to be closer to the US than many of its long-standing west European allies. Poland has been praised and branded in the US as a 'new European', as opposed to the 'old Europeans'—notably the French and Germans—who opposed US policy on Iraq. This feeling is clearly reciprocated in Poland, where President George W. Bush, by no means a popular figure in western Europe, is the 'most liked' foreign politician.² Whereas American leadership since September 11 has prompted the departure of Paris and Berlin from the inner circle of America's associates, Poland has keenly filled this gap, aspiring to become one of the US's closest allies.

The relevance of Poland as an actor in transatlantic security is arguably of growing importance. It was always easy to see that the country, by virtue of its large population and geographical location, was destined to be a key player in NATO and, once accession was secured, in the European Union too. However, recent developments in relations between Europe and the United States suggest that Poland's role as a regional power will be of even greater consequence. Differences within Europe over the US stance on Iraq have served to expose the weakness of the French and German vision of Europe's role in the world, as seen in their relative isolation. In turn, it is possible to hypothesize that Poland, as one of the most vociferous and consistent supporters of American foreign policy and of solidarity between the US and Europe, is likely to be among the group of states shaping the new Europe and its foreign policy.

This paper will explore the notion that Poland is emerging as a regional leader and has become America's protégé in the east. These themes will be examined first by identifying what will be called here Poland's 'instinctive Atlanticism' in security matters, a predisposition deriving from Polish strategic culture. This instinctive Atlanticism will then be illustrated by detailing the Polish position on two key issues: missile defence and the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The second part of the paper will raise the question of whether Poland can, in the long term, really meet the US's expectations and fulfil the role of regional leader, and thereby remain America's eastern protégé. The essence of what Washington expects from Poland as a regional leader and as its protégé is that Warsaw take all necessary steps to becoming a 'provider of security', which will entail first and foremost the tackling of some tough policy questions. First, Poland's eastern policy—including, crucially, its relations with

² According to the polls conducted in July 2002, 73% of Poles had a positive and only 8% a negative view of George Bush, which made him the most liked foreign politician in Poland. See 'Stosunek Polaków do wybranych postaci ze świata polityki zagranicznej', in *Komunikat z badań*, BS/112/2002, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, www.cbos.pl.

Russia and Ukraine—is an area highlighted by Washington as requiring greater focus and consistency. Second, Washington views it as essential that Warsaw reforms its defence sector and modernizes its armed forces.

The past in the present: Poland's 'instinctive' Atlanticism

Polish–American relations have been consistently vibrant since the end of the Cold War, but particularly since Poland joined NATO in 1999, when the US singled Poland out to be its most cherished partner in the east and began grooming Warsaw for this role in earnest. In summer 2001, during President George W. Bush's trip to Poland, and then in the context of Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski's visit to the US a year later, the idea that Poland had become a regional leader was promoted and fleshed out. In Warsaw, where Bush chose to announce US support for the second wave of NATO enlargement, a policy staunchly supported by Poles, the US president described Poland as 'a bridge and a good example' for its neighbours to the east and the south.³ During Kwaśniewski's three-day visit to the US in July 2002, the notion of a new form of regional security cooperation in central and eastern Europe, to be led by Poland—the so-called Riga initiative—was endorsed by Bush.⁴ In its role as regional leader Poland also contributed troops to operations in Iraq and subsequently took on the administration of one of the four postwar occupation zones in that country.

A further manifestation of this Polish–American closeness with long-term implications came when Warsaw announced that it was to accept a \$3.8 billion loan from the US Congress to purchase 48 F-16s from Lockheed Martin. Not only was this development significant by virtue of its being the largest military loan in memory,⁵ but importantly it demonstrated the unique closeness that has developed between the two states—and illustrates, moreover, the likely path the relationship is set to follow. To begin with, Poland's choice in defence procurement of US rather than European systems is a firm expression of Warsaw's Atlanticist credentials. Furthermore, as noted by the Polish ambassador to the US, Przemysław Grudziński, the purchase signifies Poland's desire to become a 'mature member of NATO'. In the same interview Grudziński commented that the US needed partners in Europe and that 'Poland emerges as an excellent ally of the United States.'⁶ The great symbolic value of the defence contract was also acknowledged in President Kwaśniewski's speech to the West Point Military Academy during his working visit to the US in January 2003. Kwaśniewski applauded the US's leading role in the world, stating both that it is 'unquestionable' and that it 'should be exercised'; moreover, he saw a role for

³ John Reed, 'Warsaw gives a powerful friend a warm welcome', *Financial Times*, 16–17 June 2001;

'Będzie rozszerzenie NATO', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13 June 2000.

⁴ 'Poland to take advisory role with new Nato members', *American Forces Information Service*, 24 Sept. 2002.

⁵ 'Polish pride, American profits', *New York Times*, 12 Jan. 2003.

⁶ Quoted *ibid.*

Poland in acting jointly with the United States to ensure that Europe and the US work effectively together in transatlantic security.⁷

Poland's weakness and America's power

Clearly, this intimacy in Polish–American relations is based predominantly on strategic considerations. For Poland, the US presence in Europe provides reassurance against its powerful neighbours, while for the US, Poland is a friendly state located at the strategic boundary between eastern and western Europe. Having said this, these strategic considerations are bolstered if not underpinned by cultural and historical factors shared by US and Polish elites. The American ambassador to Poland, Christopher R. Hill, argued that ‘the Poles and Americans have similar attitudes towards security and foreign policy in general, which is a consequence of our particular historical experiences.’⁸ It is certainly true that recent policy developments demonstrate an affinity of outlook between Washington and Warsaw on defining security policy issues. Polish elites, like their US counterparts, are sceptical about multilateralism and are not afraid to use armed force (or at least threaten to use it). Consequently, both states held similar views with regard to Iraq, arguing that a second UN resolution was not necessarily needed to justify going to war. Interestingly, the sources of this concord are quite different for each of these two states. In the case of America they result from its power; in the case of Poland they are rooted in its relative weakness. This assertion will be explained using the prism provided by Robert Kagan’s notions of ‘power and weakness’ and transatlantic disputes between the US and Europe.⁹

The thrust of Kagan’s argument is that while Europe *needs* multilateral institutions to compensate for its relative weakness, America, given its far greater power, sees multilateral organizations as constraining rather than empowering. While it is not intended to refute this thesis at length here, it is argued that the case of Poland (and indeed those of many other countries in Europe) does not fit with Kagan’s reading. Kagan does not pay enough attention to the diversity of perspectives in Europe; instead, what he takes as representing ‘Europe’ is a description of current French and German policies. While it is true that Franco–German views *vis-à-vis* the US position on Iraq were shared by some other European states, for example Luxembourg and Belgium, such views are far from universal either within or outside the European Union. An obvious consequence of this is that the current Franco–German coincidence of views is not an accurate or a legitimate account of current European foreign policy. A far more unified position emanating from European capital cities, east and west, was that expressed in the letter signed by the leaders of eight European states

⁷ ‘President Aleksander Kwaśniewski pays a working visit to the USA’, www.president.pl/ser/index.php3?tem_ID=5382&kategoria=Last%20month.

⁸ Interview with Christopher Hill in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 22 Dec. 2002.

⁹ Robert Kagan, ‘Power and weakness’, *Policy Review*, June 2002.

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(the UK, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary), signalling their support for the US's Iraqi policy, which was subsequently endorsed by a further group of 16 European states.

It is no surprise that Poland, as well as other ex-communist states, supported the US over Iraq. The reasons why these states pursued this line are partially the same as those that apply for states like Britain and Spain, namely that they do not share the Franco-German view of the world. But they are also partly specific to the region and need further elaboration here. Kagan's dichotomy of America's power and Europe's (France's and Germany's) weakness is in fact quite useful here inasmuch as it is clear that the Atlanticism of Poland and other former communist states is largely a result of their 'weakness' being even greater than that of west European states. The region's weakness derives from its geopolitical vulnerability and its recent history as part of the Soviet sphere of influence, as well as from the fact that the states of central and eastern Europe remain outside the European Union and have yet to become influential members of NATO. Consequently, unlike west European states, Poland does not seek to constrain American hegemony; in fact, Warsaw conceives as being in its own interest that the US maintains and pursues its power position, as seen in Kwaśniewski's speech at West Point.

The Poles, like many other central European nations, are reconciled with the notion that they are unable to provide for their own security; consequently, they accept a hegemonic international system, so long as the hegemon is liberal-democratic and is not a nearby state. While for western Europe an all-powerful America may also be preferable to, say, a hegemonic Germany or Russia, it is also clear that American power is living proof of the region's lack of effectiveness as a collective in security matters (or, as Kagan argues, of its actual decline). Conversely, for Poland to become America's protégé represents an improvement both for its security and for its status.

Poland's strategic culture

To understand this difference it is necessary to grasp the essence of Poland's strategic culture, as rooted in its geopolitical history. Poland's position between Germany and Russia/the Soviet Union was in the past a source of threat to the Polish state and a major reason for its collapse in the late eighteenth century and again in 1939. This turbulent history, marked by inherent insecurity and vulnerability to external aggression, coupled with its current position as a state bordering the former Soviet Union, means that Poland's security policies remain strongly concerned, if not fixated, with the issue of territorial defence. Consequently, Warsaw decided to apply for NATO membership as early as 1992—a policy which quickly became underpinned by a broad political consensus, including the former communists.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, there remains a strong

¹⁰ Stuart Croft et al., 'The enlargement of NATO', in *The enlargement of Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999).

preference in Poland for an American-led NATO which is able to execute Article 5.

Warsaw's eastern policies are also shaped by historical experience, and thus on occasion appear quite distinct from those of its west European partners. In particular, Poland's policy towards the east is characterized by strong support for the newly independent states between itself and Russia. Poland has been the major advocate of efforts to anchor Ukraine and Lithuania in the West; it supported the pro-independence movement in Belarus and promoted NATO's enlargement beyond its eastern borders. On all of these issues Poland was supported by Washington. A further defining tenet of Polish strategic culture, which chimes with current American security thinking, is a disposition to favour proactive engagement when confronted with the threat of regional instability. This predilection derives from an enduring facet of Polish identity as victim of west European pacifism—in the case of France and Britain, of their appeasement of Hitler and subsequent failure actively to defend Poland in September 1939. This disposition translated clearly and directly into Polish policy and public opinion, which unambiguously supported NATO's engagement in Kosovo and the US's operation in Afghanistan.¹¹ The Polish view on military action in Iraq was admittedly more split (as was opinion in the UK), although, as noted earlier, elite support in Poland for Washington's policy on the issue and the role of the UN remained strong throughout the conflict and continues to endure.

A third characteristic of Polish strategic culture, already alluded to above, is a rather ambivalent position towards multilateral security institutions (with the notable exception of NATO), which are viewed in Poland with a degree of scepticism and utilitarianism not dissimilar to the US perspective. There remains a strong Polish conviction that the League of Nations not only proved unable to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War but effectively strengthened German revisionism in central Europe. The UN is perceived in more favourable terms but is charged with having been unable to prevent the emergence of the Cold War status quo which left Poland on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. This Polish scepticism about the primacy of international law and the UN was clearly demonstrated during the NATO operation in Kosovo. Unlike Germany or France, Poland did not see a serious debate about the illegality of NATO action without a UN mandate. It was simply assumed in Warsaw that although it would be better to act with a UN mandate, international law was less important than preventing the spread of instability in the Balkans.¹²

Since Poland joined NATO in 1999 these strategic cultural predispositions—a preference for a strong US-led alliance; a commitment to reforms in Ukraine and Belarus and in turn a further eastward enlargement of NATO; a lack of faith in multilateral security institutions save for NATO; and a proclivity to use force

¹¹ Olaf Osica, 'In search of a new role: Poland *vis-à-vis* Euro-Atlantic relations', in M. Zaborowski and D. Dunn, eds, *Poland: a new Atlanticist in Europe*, special edition of *Defence Studies*, 2: 2, Summer 2002, pp. 21–39.

¹² *Ibid.*

proactively—have rendered Warsaw a firm member of the Atlanticist wing of the alliance and a feisty adherent of the US position on almost all recent foreign policy issues. Two particular areas on which Warsaw either came to support Washington's position or found its own position in accordance with that of the US were the missile defence programme and the ESDP.

Poland and the missile defence initiative

Warsaw was among the few European states that since at least mid-2001 have unreservedly supported Washington's missile defence programme, despite the fact that any possible benefits of the programme for Poland are anything but apparent.¹³ Warsaw's position on the issue evolved from quiet reticence at the beginning of the debate to a public declaration of support for missile defence delivered by Kwaśniewski during Bush's visit to Warsaw in June 2001. There is little doubt that the country's underlying political Atlanticism and its desire to prove itself as a loyal ally were crucial in shaping Warsaw's position on the issue.

Initially, clearly reluctant to get involved in a dispute between the US on the one hand and Russia on the other, with west Europeans being largely sympathetic towards Moscow's concerns, Warsaw was slow to react to the missile defence proposal. It thus chose a 'wait and see' strategy—partially a result of a conscious decision not to participate in a debate which 'could not be influenced by Poland anyway'.¹⁴ While the governments in Berlin, Paris and other NATO European capitals expressed their (mostly critical) views on Washington's initiative, no official reaction came from Warsaw until February 2001 at the earliest.¹⁵ Privately, Polish politicians were largely sceptical about Washington's initiative, arguing that it could lead to the decoupling of the US from Europe and that it would be detrimental to Poland's eastern policy. However, none of these concerns were officially voiced, which is probably unsurprising given that the overwhelming view in Warsaw was that Poland should do nothing that could be seen by Washington as 'uncooperative behaviour'.¹⁶

The first official Polish position on missile defence was an ambivalent statement from the president's National Security Council, issued in February 2001. This document underlined that the proposed missile defence programme should be extended to all NATO members and that care should be taken to accommodate Russia's opposition to the programme.¹⁷ This position has subsequently evolved towards a full expression of support for the programme. Shortly before President Bush's visit to Warsaw in June 2001 the Polish chief of staff, General

¹³ Reed, 'Warsaw gives a powerful friend a warm welcome'; 'Bedzie rozszerzenie NATO'.

¹⁴ Authors' interviews in the Polish foreign office, Department of European Security, Warsaw, Jan. 2001.

¹⁵ On US-European differences over National Missile Defence, see 'Clinton faces European flak for "son of star wars"', *Guardian*, 3 June 2000.

¹⁶ Authors' confidential interviews, Warsaw, Jan. 2001.

¹⁷ Zbigniew Lentowicz, 'Tarcza dla sojuszników', *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 Feb. 2001.

Piątas, told his colleagues from other NATO countries that Poland was ready to offer its territory and even some degree of finance for the installation of missile defence radar and launch pads in Poland. This was confirmed by the then defence minister, Bronisław Komorowski, who pointed out that owing to its geographical location Poland was ideally placed to become part of the missile defence system. Both Piątas and Komorowski stressed that the installation of parts of the system on Polish territory would not only serve to enhance Poland's security but also strengthen its political importance within NATO.¹⁸ Although this position was subsequently watered down by the Polish foreign office, traditionally less Atlanticist than the defence ministry, Poland officially endorsed the programme during the NATO Brussels summit in June 2001, with President Kwaśniewski confirming this support during Bush's subsequent visit to Warsaw.

Polish and American agreement over ESDP

Another issue where Warsaw's and Washington's positions broadly converged has been the EU's plan to develop a European defence an ESDP and to establish a European 'rapid reaction force' together with crisis management mechanisms. Like Washington, Warsaw has taken a largely sceptical and unenthusiastic attitude towards the EU's defence initiatives.¹⁹ Having said this, in more recent times, and given the progress made towards EU enlargement, the Polish position has become more constructive, though it remains heavily flavoured by its Atlanticist, pro-American predisposition.

With the first wave of NATO's post-Cold War enlargement in March 1999, by which time Poland had already secured the status of an associated member of the Western European Union (WEU), it seemed that the days when Poland was excluded from core decisions concerning European security were finally over. However, only three months later it seemed that the goalposts were being moved when EU leaders met in Cologne and decided to embark upon creating a security and defence policy, which would leave non-EU NATO states, like Poland, 'consulted' but crucially 'excluded' from the actual decision-making process. Unsurprisingly, Warsaw did not like the idea and was not shy of saying so. Some commentators went so far as to argue that the ESDP would lead to America's withdrawal from Europe and the return of Europe to a state of instability like that which prevailed between the world wars.²⁰ Rather more calmly, but clearly without enthusiasm for the whole enterprise, the Polish defence minister remarked that 'there is no point crying over spilt milk.'²¹

Warsaw's reservations about ESDP were based on two types of concerns. First, like Washington, Warsaw argued that Europeans should develop their

¹⁸ 'Parasol antyrakietowy nad Polską?', *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 May 2001.

¹⁹ 'NATO: Otwarty konflikt między USA i Europą', *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 Dec. 2000.

²⁰ Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, 'Czy NATO jest zagrożone', *Rzeczpospolita*, 15 May 2001.

²¹ Quoted in Olaf Osica, 'CESDP as seen by Poland', *Reports and Analyses 5/01* (Warsaw: Centre for International Relations, 2001: www.csm.org.pl), p. 8.

defence capabilities within NATO's European security and defence identity (ESDI); otherwise, the EU would be duplicating the existing structures and this would weaken the alliance. Second, and mirroring Washington's argument about discrimination, Warsaw argued that the planned ESDP excluded those European NATO members that, like Poland, remained outside the EU.²² It was argued in this context that NATO's ESDI was far more representative than the ESDP as it involved Poland and other non-EU Europeans in their capacities as full members of the alliance and associates of the WEU.²³

The European Council meeting in Helsinki in December 1999 resulted in the EU15 setting headline goals for the creation of a 50,000–60,000-strong rapid reaction force to carry out 'Petersberg tasks'. However, while Helsinki marked considerable progress in the EU's security ambitions, it did nothing to alleviate the concerns of Warsaw and other non-EU NATO members. True, the summit's conclusion stressed that non-EU NATO states, the so-called six, would be able to contribute militarily to EU crisis management missions; however, this formula lacked any decision-making implications and consequently was viewed by Warsaw as unsatisfactory.²⁴ In addition, the summit failed to differentiate between the six and other 'interested states', specifically mentioning in the latter context Russia and Ukraine.²⁵ Not only, therefore, were Polish fears of exclusion seemingly confirmed, but also the wording of the presidency's conclusions gave rise to speculation that the ESDP could become a platform for Russian influence in transatlantic relations.²⁶

Poland's generally unfavourable view of the ESDP was reflected in governmental statements. Defence Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz criticized the EU plan as unclear and lacking in military and operational viability.²⁷ In his annual address to the Polish parliament, Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek expressed disappointment with the EU for not considering Warsaw's proposals on involving the six in ESDP decision-making mechanisms. Geremek also called for a further strengthening of transatlantic ties, to which end, he argued, Europeans should concentrate on the actual 'requirements of security' rather than on creating new institutions.²⁸ A similar criticism also came from the Polish military, who assessed the EU's plans to create a rapid reaction force as either unrealistic or, worse, jeopardizing NATO's military cohesion.²⁹

²² Rafal Trzaskowski, 'Poland', in Antonio Missiroli, ed., *Bigger EU, wider CFSP, stronger ESDP?*, occasional paper no. 34 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, April 2002): www.iss-eu.org.

²³ Osica, 'CESDP as seen by Poland', pp. 12–13.

²⁴ Authors' interview in the Polish foreign office, Department of European Security, Warsaw, Jan. 2001. See Roman Kuzniar, 'Nadmiar wizji, brak konkreów', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 41, 2000.

²⁵ See 'Presidency progress report to the Helsinki European Council on strengthening the common European policy on security and defence', annex IV.

²⁶ Nowak-Jeziorański, 'Czy NATO jest zagrożone'.

²⁷ Osica, 'CESDP as seen by Poland', p. 14.

²⁸ Speech given by Bronisław Geremek at the 78th session of the Parliament on 9 May 2000: www.msz.gov.pl.

²⁹ See Trzaskowski, 'Poland', p. 20.

In the first few months following the Helsinki summit, disagreements between the EU and the group of six grew deeper. On the one hand, France was pushing for the EU to develop a planning capacity independent of NATO, which confirmed Warsaw's fears that the ESDP might eventually duplicate NATO; on the other hand, Turkey, a member of the six, vetoed any possible use of NATO assets by future European forces. This standstill was not tackled until the Feira summit in June 2000, for which occasion Poland submitted its own proposal envisaging the more comprehensive involvement of the six in the ESDP.³⁰ With active support from the UK and a fair amount of arm-twisting by the US, most of the Polish proposals were agreed in Feira and shortly afterwards.³¹ As a result, a 15+6 committee was created with the purpose of discussing ESDP issues between EU member states and non-EU European NATO members. The six were also given an opportunity to take part in the Political and Security Committee—a liaison mechanism between the ESDP and CFSP.³² Poland was also able to establish channels of communication with the EU military committee (EUMC) and military staff (EUMS), both of which are more concerned with actual military capacities, acting as links between the EU and military resources of member states.³³

Overall, the atmosphere around the ESDP has substantially improved since Feira. With Turkey's unconstructive behaviour in the background, the EU seemed to appreciate that Warsaw made an effort to bridge the gap between the EU15 and the non-EU six. And Warsaw has indeed been anxious not to alienate the EU, with membership negotiations entering the most intensive period from 2001.³⁴ Yet despite this change of emphasis and mood in Warsaw, there is no doubt that Atlanticism continues to form the backbone of contemporary Polish strategic culture, and by implication shapes the Polish attitude towards ESDP. Poland's specific historical and geopolitical conditions, as discussed at the beginning of this article, clearly continue to underlie the importance attached to hard security guarantees in Poland; and of course these are embodied in NATO's Article 5, while they remain absent from EU defence initiatives. A further factor contributing to this stance is that the debate in Poland on security issues is dominated to a large extent by pro-American foreign policy elites. It is, for example, significant that the two authors most prominent in the debate within Poland on matters of transatlantic security, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański and Zbigniew Brzeziński, have both been linked to various American administrations and both take a sceptical approach towards the EU's security ambitions.³⁵

³⁰ See also 'Propozycje praktycznego rozwinięcia postanowień z Feira w zakresie współpracy pomiędzy UE i non-EU European Allies', www.msz.gov.pl, 2002.

³¹ Confidential interviews, Warsaw, Jan. 2001. See also 'Poland feels torn between 2 alliances', *International Herald Tribune*, 6 June 2000.

³² 'Propozycje praktycznego rozwinięcia postanowień z Feira w zakresie współpracy pomiędzy UE i non-EU European Allies', www.msz.gov.pl.

³³ See Kerry Longhurst, 'From security consumer to security provider', in Zaborowski and Dunn, *Poland*, pp. 50–62.

³⁴ Authors' interviews in Warsaw, June 2001. See also 'Poland feels torn between 2 alliances'.

³⁵ See e.g. Nowak-Jeziorański, 'Czy NATO jest zagrożone'; Zbigniew Brzeziński, 'Jak żyć z nową Europą', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 24–25 June 2000.

In sum, Warsaw's approach towards the ESDP depends on its assessment of whether or not it is complementary to strengthening transatlantic relations. So far, despite the progress that has occurred since Feira, it is clear that Warsaw remains concerned about the ESDP's impact on NATO and the transatlantic link more broadly. In May 2001 Polish foreign minister Władysław Bartoszewski delivered a speech at Warsaw University presenting Poland's view on EU security policy. The speech was part of a series of addresses intended to present Poland as a nation committed to European integration and to alleviate the concerns of some EU member states. With this objective in view, the foreign minister called for Poland's active engagement in European security and argued that failing to do so had cost Poland dearly in the past. He also denied that Warsaw's approach to the ESDP has been sceptical. Subsequently, however, Bartoszewski recalled the well-known catalogue of postulates, arguing that the word 'defence' should be dropped from ESDP, that the policy should complement but never duplicate NATO, that all non-EU European NATO members should be fully integrated in ESDP structures and that EU member states should concentrate on enhancing their military capabilities.³⁶ The speech was about as pro-ESDP as one can get in Poland.

The process of shaping Warsaw's position on missile defence and the ESDP demonstrates that Atlanticism has become a dogma for Poland. Some of its benefits have already been discussed here; most importantly, it seems that Atlanticism has liberated Poland from its geopolitical puzzle and has thus enhanced its security. Related to this is the paradigm of exclusion and inclusion, which is of particular importance for a nation that for centuries remained an object rather than a subject of international relations in Europe. While Warsaw's 'gut feelings' about the missile defence programme were far from enthusiastic, it chose not to voice its concerns, mainly for fear of excluding itself or risking damaging its rising status as a regional power and loyal ally of the US. When the programme started to look inevitable Warsaw endorsed its principles but asked to be a part of it, and was consequently assured by Washington that it could indeed join the system. A similar logic, but with a different outcome, can be found in Warsaw's position towards the ESDP. While Warsaw's reticence towards the initiative originated chiefly in its concerns about the ESDP's implications for the cohesion of transatlantic relations, it was only strengthened by the EU's decision to exclude Poland and other central Europeans from the policy.

In short, developments in these two policy areas strengthened popular belief in Poland that the US is prone to include central Europeans in its transatlantic security initiatives, while west Europeans tend to stick to their exclusive practices. Consequently, the experience of participating in these transatlantic disputes did nothing to diminish and indeed quite a bit to strengthen the pro-American predisposition of Polish elites.

³⁶ See speech given by foreign minister Władysław Bartoszewski, 'Europejska polityka bezpieczeństwa. Polski punkt widzenia', Warsaw University, 11 May 2001: www.msz.gov.pl.

Clearly, Poland's loyalty to the US and adherence to its core foreign and security policy goals has been rewarded by elevation to the role of the US's key ally and protégé in eastern Europe. The purchase of American F-16s bears testimony to the fact that this has already occurred, as does the intense high-level diplomacy between the two capitals over the past decade. A convergence of perspectives and endless state visits is, however, not enough to sustain such a relationship in the long term and to take it beyond what is still perhaps a 'honeymoon' period.³⁷ There remain a number of vital areas in which Washington requires Poland to undertake further work if it is to realize the full potential of becoming a 'security provider' and a meaningful and able regional leader upon which the US can truly depend. Two specific areas stand out here. First, Poland must become an important player in the European successor states of the former Soviet Union, with the capability and will to shape the region. Second, Poland must put every possible effort into 'modernizing' its security thinking and reforming its armed forces and defence sector so that it can, when called upon, contribute to the security of the transatlantic area.

Becoming a security provider

Poland's eastern policy

The view emanating from Washington is that Poland is expected to play a key role in developing NATO's policy *vis-à-vis* the former Soviet Union. It is usually argued in this context that by virtue of its geographical location, its history and its linguistic kinship, Poland is ideally located to act as a transmitter of reforms and a bridge between East and West. However, there are some considerable obstacles in the way of Poland's meeting these expectations, of which the most important are historical reasons and—ironically—Poland's overt westward orientation.

Although it is true that in the past Poland was strongly involved in the East, the history of this engagement has been anything but short of controversy. From the seventeenth century onwards the Polish–Lithuanian commonwealth was in constant conflict with the Russian empire over the division of influence in the lands 'in between' (Ukraine and Belarus), which ended in the defeat and collapse of the Polish–Lithuanian state at the end of the eighteenth century. When Poland was subsequently wiped from the maps of Europe until 1918, its gentry retained a dominant economic position in Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, a factor which solidified anti-Polish sentiment within these nations. The post-1918 Second Polish Republic was a highly heterogeneous entity, its eastern provinces heavily populated by Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belarusians, all of whom were subjected to the policy of forced assimilation leading to the further growth of anti-Polish feeling among these nations. The anti-Polish orientation

³⁷ David Dunn, 'Poland: America's new model ally', Zaborowski and Dunn, eds, *Poland*, pp. 63–86.

of eastern Slavic and Lithuanian national movements were still present after the end of the Cold War and have been apparent in the dispute over the status of the Polish minority in Lithuania and the discussion over the renovation of the Polish cemetery in Lviv in present-day Ukraine.³⁸

It is therefore clear that, while acting in the East, Poland must be cautious not to tread on anybody's toes and in particular not to give the impression that it is projecting its own self-interest under the umbrella of NATO and the EU. It appears that after the initial post-Cold War period, which was marked by some nationalistic overtures from both sides, Warsaw has been on track towards establishing a genuine partnership with Lithuania and, with less success, Ukraine. Most importantly, in both cases Warsaw served as an advocate of these states' closer ties with the West. For example, Poland became a strong supporter of Lithuanian membership of NATO,³⁹ and also supported Ukraine's closer ties with the EU and its inclusion in various central European institutions, such as the Central European Initiative, the Central European Free Trade Area and the regular meetings of Central European presidents.⁴⁰

However, although Poland's eastern policy has been relatively successful in Lithuania and Ukraine (albeit with reservations, discussed below), the same is not true in respect of its relations with Russia and Belarus. As far as Belarus is concerned, the dictatorial rule of the country's eccentric president, Alexander Lukashanka, and his evident nostalgia for the Soviet Union has served as a major barrier to Warsaw playing an active role in this country. No corresponding justification can be offered to explain why Polish–Russian relations have suffered since the end of the Cold War. To be sure, Warsaw is not solely responsible for the current ambivalence in its relations with Moscow. In the eyes of Poles, as well as those of other central Europeans, Russia has been painfully slow in coming to terms with the past and acknowledging its historical wrongdoing towards the nations it subjected to communist rule. In addition, contemporary Russia's constant meddling in the internal affairs of what it described as its 'near abroad', and particularly in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, was often seen in Warsaw as further proof of Russian imperial ambitions in eastern Europe. All these factors affected the Polish elite's ability to set aside historical arguments and start perceiving Russia as a potential partner rather than an unreconstructed bully and a threat. It is in this context that Warsaw's occasional oversensitivity and clumsiness in its relations with Moscow needs to be seen. Probably the most spectacular manifestation of this history-laden approach was the expulsion from Poland of nine Russian diplomats who were accused of spying in January 2000.⁴¹

³⁸ See Katarzyna Wolczuk and Roman Wolczuk, *Poland and Ukraine: a strategic partnership in a changing Europe?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2002).

³⁹ See e.g. a speech by President Kwaśniewski given during George W. Bush's visit to Warsaw, published as 'Wystąpienie prezydenta Aleksandra Kwaśniewskiego', *Rzeczpospolita*, 16 June 2001.

⁴⁰ 'Poland: eastern relations', *Oxford Analytica–East Europe Daily Brief*, 8 Aug. 2000.

⁴¹ 'Dyplomaci rosyjscy szpiegami', *Rzeczpospolita*, 21 Jan. 2000.

This continuing lack of trust in Polish–Russian relations has had a significant impact on Polish security and defence policy, which, as argued above, continues to be grounded in the primacy of territorial defence. It therefore appears that the condition of Poland’s relations with Russia is of direct importance for the organization of its security (including the practice of conscription) and, as a consequence, for Poland’s political and military position in transatlantic relations. While, as argued above, Warsaw can hardly be accorded all the blame for this state of affairs, it is also true that there is an urgent need to re-examine the perception of Russia in Poland as a potential aggressor. Not only is such a perception increasingly seen as anachronistic in the West, particularly in the aftermath of September 11, it also affects Poland’s ability to embark on a comprehensive review of its security and defence policies and consequently to play a more constructive role in the region.

Warsaw increasingly recognizes that the importance it is accorded, and the respect in which it is held, in the West are directly linked to its relations with the East and with Russia in particular. It is, perhaps, with this in mind that, following the events of September 11, Warsaw intensified its efforts to improve relations with Moscow, a task eased by the pro-Western shift that transpired in Russian foreign policy under President Putin. It is not insignificant that Polish–Russian relations were discussed during the visit of Leszek Miller, the Polish prime minister, to Washington in January 2002.⁴² Putin’s subsequent visit to Warsaw demonstrated that Russian attitudes towards Poland are changing for the better.⁴³ All of this indicates that Poland and Russia seem to be approaching a much-delayed breakthrough in their relations. However, it is clear that there is still a long way to go before historical sensitivities stop obstructing Poland’s ability to exercise regional leadership. Another issue with similar implications for Poland’s regional role is the growing domestic and international incompatibility between Poland and its immediate neighbours to the East: Belarus and Ukraine.

As argued above, Poland’s influence in Belarus has been limited since Lukashenka became president and embarked on a policy of preserving the remnants of the Soviet Union within Belarus. However, with Ukraine’s attainment of independence hopes ran high in both Kiev and Warsaw for the establishment of a genuine partnership between these countries. Poland was keen to offer Ukraine its help (often sponsored by the US) to aid its integration with the West, assistance which Kiev willingly accepted. When the prospect of NATO membership for Poland came over the horizon in 1994, Warsaw’s policy towards Ukraine intensified as Washington made it plain that a clear manifestation of Poland’s regional role would strengthen its application to the alliance.⁴⁴

⁴² ‘Miller u Busha’, *Trybuna*, 12 Jan. 2002.

⁴³ See ‘Gesty rosyjskiego prezydenta’, *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 Jan. 2001; ‘Dobra atmosfera, mało konkretów’, *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 Jan. 2001.

⁴⁴ Roman Wolczuk, ‘Polish–Ukrainian relations: a strategic partnership conditioned by externalities’, in Zaborowski and Dunn, eds, *Poland*, pp. 143–50.

Since the late 1990s, however, it has become apparent that Poland's engagement in Ukraine has suffered as a result of the increasingly divergent paths of development in the two countries. Poland joined NATO in 1999 and will join the EU in 2004. Ukraine's relations with these institutions remain distant, and there is no indication that this will change in the foreseeable future. In addition, Poland's role as a bridge to the West for Ukraine will be severely handicapped when, following the EU requirement, Poland imposes visas and other travel restrictions for Ukrainians in 2003.⁴⁵ Reinforcing this divergence, recent developments have seen Ukraine slipping into semi-dictatorship and its economic transition stunted. In contrast, Poland's transitions to democracy and the market economy are largely complete.

This growing domestic incompatibility between Kiev and Warsaw proved to have significant consequences for Poland's engagement in Ukraine. In September 2000 the Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma was accused by his former bodyguard Major Melnychenko of plotting political assassinations as well as breaking the terms of the UN embargo and selling Ukrainian arms to Iraq. Kiev never convincingly denied these allegations, and as a result American aid to Ukraine was frozen. Consequently, Poland has been faced with the dilemma of either cutting off its relations with Kiev (and by implication undermining its regional role) or continuing to court Kuchma and risking a rift in its relations with the US. Eventually, possibly following consultation with Washington, Poland took upon itself the role of facilitator between the Kuchma regime and the Ukrainian opposition, hoping for a peaceful change of guard in Kiev. To this end a conference called 'Ukraine in Europe' was organized in Warsaw in October 2002, bringing together the Ukrainian government and opposition as well as EU High Representative Xavier Solana. While this conference confirmed Poland's centrality for the westernization of its eastern neighbour, it is clear that Poland's ability to exercise its regional role towards Ukraine will be limited as long as the latter does not itself embrace western principles.⁴⁶

'Modernizing' Polish grand strategy

A second vital area in which Warsaw must act if it is to assume the role expected of it by the US is that of defence reform. The US (and other key allies) expects Warsaw not only to undertake the detailed practical work of modernizing its armed forces, but also to reappraise its grand strategy and to make the switch in security thinking required by the post-Cold War, post-September 11 environment. While both the US and NATO as a whole recognize that the Polish defence sector has been considerably transformed since 1989 and that the reform programme for 2001–6 goes beyond mere cosmetics, there are a number of serious obstacles in the reform process that stand in the way of Poland's becoming

⁴⁵ Visas will, however, be free and provide for multiple entry.

⁴⁶ One demonstration of the improvement in Ukrainian–Polish relations is the recent deployment of some 2,000 Ukrainian troops to the Polish-controlled sector in Iraq.

a security provider. While Washington appreciates that the defence of Polish national territory remains a preoccupation for Warsaw, the current round of defence reforms shows that Poland's thinking on security remains too heavily grounded in a 'defence' rationale. Consequently, in military terms, Poland is not yet considered by the US or NATO as a whole to be an asset.⁴⁷ The thrust of the US expectation is that Warsaw will move to embrace a 'security rationale' in its grand strategy, which would boost the defence reform process and subsequently help equip Poland for a broader range of deployments.

The extent to which Poland has transformed its defence sector over the past decade is seen most vividly in the efforts to downsize the armed forces from some 400,000 in 1989 to the present figure of around 165,000, which is due to be further reduced to 150,000 by 2006.⁴⁸ Considerable change has also been apparent in the relocation of troops, from a former concentration on Poland's western borders towards a new focus on its eastern borders. Progress was also made in the reconfiguration of Polish civil-military relations, especially during the mid-1990s when the prospect of NATO membership became more tangible. After a period of ad hoc reforms, significant advances occurred in 1995 when President Kwaśniewski signed a law subordinating the general staff to the defence minister. This move was bolstered two years later through the 'large constitution', which, *inter alia*, fully institutionalized the democratization of Polish civil-military relations through reaffirming the presidential prerogative and making the defence minister the commander-in-chief of the armed forces in peacetime. As noted by Andrew Michta, once the overall democratization of civil-military relations had been institutionalized, the broader transformation of the defence sector in preparation for NATO membership could proceed with greater effect.⁴⁹

The current reform programme for 2001-6 represents the most comprehensive effort to date and, as mentioned above, involves some tough choices. The programme makes the modernization of equipment a major priority and to this end pledges 1.95 per cent of GDP for defence over the five-year period (rising in nominal terms in line with economic growth), coupled with numerous cost-cutting exercises including base closures, personnel reductions and general cuts in infrastructure. Through these measures, the proportion of the defence budget spent on modernization and research will be raised to 23 per cent from the current figure of 12 per cent. Despite these innovations tight budgetary constraints persist, and were exacerbated in December 2001 when parliament approved a financial package of savings which are set to reduce defence spending by 2.1 billion zlotys.⁵⁰ The 2001-6 plan also proposes changes to the proportion of troops dedicated to territorial defence *vis-à-vis* those prepared and

⁴⁷ Authors' confidential interviews at NATO HQ, Brussels, July 2001.

⁴⁸ Law on military modernization passed by the parliament on 25 May 2001: 'Ustawa o przebudowie i modernizacji technicznej oraz finansowaniu Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w latach 2001-2006 (Dz.U. z dnia 25 lipca 2001 r.)'.

⁴⁹ See Andrew Michta, 'Modernizing the Polish military', in Zaborowski and Dunn, eds, *Poland*, pp. 40-9 at p. 43.

⁵⁰ 'Polish lower house passes budget savings plan for 2002', BBC Monitoring Service, UK, 23 Dec. 2001.

equipped for deployment in crisis management activities out of area. The programme of reforms thus reflects the importance attached to creating more mobile and easily deployable forces, and specifically prescribes that by 2006 at least one-third of the entire force should be interoperable with NATO forces.

Notwithstanding the reforms in progress outlined above and the contract with Lockheed Martin for the delivery of F-16 fighter aircraft agreed in early 2003, the modernization of the Polish defence sector remains incomplete. As a consequence, 'two militaries' exist in Poland: a small 'showcase force' made available for NATO operations, and a far larger component which bears the characteristics of the pre-1989 military and which, in the words of Andrew Michta, 'contributes little and constitutes a drain on limited national resources'.⁵¹ What this illustrates, it is argued here, is that Polish security thinking is trapped between two worlds: there is 'old world' security thinking, which is grounded in the primacy of national territorial defence, and 'new world' thinking, based on an aspiration to become a key member of NATO and most favoured partner for the US in the region.

The inconsistencies and paradoxes that result from the collision of old world and new world thinking plague Polish security policy and present serious road-blocks to the modernization process and in turn to Poland's ability to become a security provider. At the crux of the matter lies the issue of manpower, which has become pivotal. Within this there are two interrelated themes: the overall size of the armed forces and conscription.

Downsizing If the current reform programme is to succeed, it is generally regarded as crucial that even greater efforts are placed on reducing the size of the armed forces to a level even below the current target of 150,000. If this step is not taken, it has been argued, the entire programme of reforms may simply 'unravel'.⁵² Further downsizing would release much-needed finance, which could then be directed towards equipping the armed forces with modern weaponry. This vital and indisputable link between further personnel cuts and the modernization process has already been grasped by the Polish defence ministry, which, in an effort to release funds for new equipment, decided in 2000 to cancel the call-up of some 18,000 conscripts and some 2,750 college graduates who were due to start their officer training.⁵³

Conscription The continuation of conscription in Poland is a strong manifestation of 'old world' thinking and the persistence of a 'defence' rationale steering Polish grand strategy. While Washington has not officially declared that it wishes to see an end to conscription in Poland, there is an assumption that Warsaw will begin the winding down of the practice, in line with the general trend elsewhere in Europe. Moreover, the maintenance of conscription does not

⁵¹ See Michta, 'Modernizing the Polish military', p. 47.

⁵² See *ibid.*

⁵³ See *ibid.*, p. 44.

fit with the modern 'security' rationale that the US wishes to see Poland adopt. Expectations of a change in Poland arose in the wake of the Czech Republic's programme of defence reforms, outlined in summer 2001, which included the announcement that conscription would be abolished by 2007. In contrast, Warsaw still sees conscription as essential and clings to the belief that its maintenance will not hinder the modernization process. In the wake of September 11, the Polish defence minister Jerzy Szmajdziński emphasized the need for the growing professionalization of the armed forces, but also stressed that conscription continued to be vital for Poland, given its position on the 'edge of the NATO bloc'.⁵⁴

As detailed above, this state of affairs in the sphere of defence reforms suggests the persistence of two types of thinking in Polish grand strategy—'old world' and 'new world'; moreover, it demonstrates that Poland's policies are still largely guided by a 'defence' rather than a 'security' rationale. To become a security provider and fulfil its desired role as the US's protégé in the region, Poland will first need to make the full switch to 'new world' thinking and then embrace a 'security' rationale in its grand strategy. To do this Warsaw must hasten the reform process and root out all the blockages to its success, and above all must deal with the obstacles, outlined above, that lie in the way of ensuring better financing for modernization projects and equipping the Polish armed forces for out-of-area missions.

Conclusion

US leadership in the western world was extended eastwards after 1989, and as a result of the events of September 11 a strong normative dimension has been added to its mission. A consequence of this is that American leadership is becoming an open hegemony in which the lines of amity and enmity are drawn on the basis of states being either 'with' or 'against' the US. The effects of this upon the transatlantic relationship have been uneven and quite unexpected. Whereas Russia and the US became allies in the war on terror, with Moscow and Washington holding common positions on a range of issues, the radicalization of America's foreign policy has led to a great diversification of responses and a growing sense of unease on the part of some European states, most notably France and Germany. In short, the transatlantic security community has become far larger but also more internally divided. Such divisions do not, however, necessarily fall along the lines once argued by Robert Kagan, separating the US on the one hand from Europe on the other; rather, divisions run through Europe itself, with a new schism emerging between what the US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld called the 'old' Europe and the 'new' Europe.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ 'Szmajdziński's new army model', *Polish News Bulletin*, 19 Nov. 2001, www.ft.com.

⁵⁵ Robert Kagan's book, *Paradise and power: America and Europe in the new world order* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), presents a more nuanced reading of American/European differences and perspectives on the use of force than his earlier work and recognizes some of the innate differences between east and west European states in this respect.

It is clear that Poland belongs to Rumsfeld's 'new Europe', a fact confirmed by Warsaw's active support of US policy towards Iraq and its role in the postwar occupation of that country. The arguments presented in this article show that no other policy stance was likely to emerge from Warsaw. While the UK, Spain and other west European states may be guided in their support for the US primarily by a concern about the danger posed by Iraq, this factor was arguably only a secondary variable shaping Poland's strategy. Warsaw's policy on the Iraq issue, as well as its reservations about the ESDP and its unequivocal support for the US missile defence programme, have all been consistent with the key underlying dogma of the Polish foreign policy—the continuation of US involvement in Europe. This being the case, Poland will undoubtedly continue to aspire to inclusion in the 'inner circle' of America's closest allies and will openly support US hegemony.

A question arising here relates to the likely effects of Poland's EU membership, which is forthcoming in 2004. Clearly, once in the EU, Poland's status—as well as that of other central and east European states—will change, and one of the major rationales for Poland's Atlanticism, its exclusion from west European decision-making bodies, will disappear. Only time will tell whether EU membership will weaken Poland's pro-American foreign policy, but there are at least three factors that suggest a contrary development. First, Poland's eastern frontier will remain the ultimate border of the EU for the foreseeable future; consequently, Warsaw's specific security concerns relating to territorial defence will persist, which will ensure that NATO remains the most valuable security institution for Poland. The experience of the late 1990s and of the first years of twenty-first century show clearly that the EU is not so interested in developing an active policy towards the European parts of the former Soviet Union as the US, which has been much more involved in the region and indeed has often acted in cooperation with Poland. Second, the EU itself remains seriously divided over foreign and security policy issues. This being the case, it is extremely unlikely that Poland would join forces with those states that seek to build an entirely independent ESDP, not only because the Franco-German alliance in the EU continues to be exclusive, but also because Poland sees the French policy of turning the EU into a counterweight for NATO as undesirable. Finally, the role the US played in bringing about the end of the Cold War and nurturing Poland's transition to democracy in the 1990s instilled in Polish elites a great sense of gratitude and loyalty, which will not be instantaneously swept aside once Poland becomes an EU member.

A further factor casting doubt upon any diminution of Poland's Atlanticism is that the EU is itself changing. One of the key arguments outlined at the start of this article was that the Franco-German core has, certainly in the field of foreign policy, apparently been swept aside by a competing approach in European foreign policy towards the US and Iraq, shared by a larger grouping of both EU and non-EU states. The question of who speaks for Europe can no longer be answered by reference solely to the Paris-Berlin axis.⁵⁶ Considering these recent

⁵⁶ 'Who speaks for Europe?', *The Economist*, 8–14 Feb. 2003.

developments, the likely outcome for European foreign policy of the EU's enlargement is not difficult to forecast. The realities of enlargement are likely to bring a far more Atlanticist flavour to any future EU foreign and security policy, which will guard against its development into an entity based on current French and German designs.

While EU membership is unlikely to undermine Poland's Atlanticism, Poland's role as the US's protégé in the east could be undermined by a failure on Warsaw's part to exercise its regional leadership effectively. If Warsaw fails to become a meaningful actor in this part of the world its usefulness will sooner or later be questioned by the US, possibly leading to a reassessment of US involvement in the region. A second source of weakness that may undercut Poland's position in relation to the US would be a failure by Warsaw to enact the necessary defence sector reforms to modernize the armed forces and make the switch to a 'security' rationale in its grand strategy. The expectation placed upon Poland to deliver quickly in these two spheres is heightened by the forthcoming second round of NATO enlargement, which will have the effect of removing Poland's current 'newcomer' status. Once the second wave of enlargement takes place, Poland will be judged on an equal footing with older members and will thus be assessed more stringently on matters of defence spending and deployability of its armed forces.

This article has argued that Poland is fast emerging as the US's key ally and its protégé in the east. The 'instinctive' Atlanticism inherent in Polish strategic culture has meant that Poland's foreign policies have been in close proximity to those of the US over the past decade. Developments since September 11 have only enhanced this closeness between Warsaw and Washington, with Poland showing itself to be a hawk in a deeply divided Europe.⁵⁷ Furthermore, a close fit has emerged between American and Polish standpoints in the context of Iraq. The endurance of this affinity and the success of Poland's graduation to the status of regional power remain, however, to be determined and cannot be assumed.

A protégé is dependent, loyal and reliant upon a leader or 'tutor'; a tutor seeks to mould its pupil according to its own ideals and values. So far this typifies the relationship that has evolved between the US and Poland. The unrestricted commitment that cements relations between protégé and tutor cannot, however, be assured in the complex post-September 11 security environment. The ties that bind Poland to the US are based upon the American security guarantee to Europe maintained via NATO, while for the United States it is Warsaw's loyalty and support for US foreign policy goals, twinned with its willingness to become a 'provider of security', that encouraged Washington to invest in its Polish protégé. If these factors change, then the fabric of the Polish-US relationship may alter.

⁵⁷ 'European leaders divide between hawks and doves', *New York Times*, 31 Jan. 2003.