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A LINCHPIN OF REGIONAL SECURITY

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In 1997 in Madrid, NATO invited Poland to join its ranks, partly in recognition of the progress the country had made since 1989 in transforming its political and economic institutions. Less than a decade after the collapse of communism, Poland was arguably the most successful new democracy in central Europe. It had established an effective presidential-parliamentary system, introduced a new constitution, consolidated its political parties, and gone through orderly transfers of political power following three parliamentary and two presidential elections. Saddled under communism with a crushing foreign debt, hyperinflation, and pervasive shortages, Poland by 1998 had become Europe's fastest-growing economy, with a stable currency and a sustained growth rate in gross domestic product (GDP) of approximately 5 percent per year.[1] In 1997 the European Union began negotiating with Poland the systemic adjustments necessary to transform its associate EU membership into full-member status early in the subsequent decade.

Because of its size and its geostrategic location at the heart of central Europe, Poland is the most important of the three new entrants into NATO. It has the potential to become a meaningful political and military contributor to the alliance. At the same time, the dual tasks of modernizing its armed forces and transforming its foreign policy into an effective tool of NATO's relations with the East, especially with Russia, dwarf those of the other two members of NATO's 1999 "incoming class."

In order to evaluate the potential for the successful incorporation of Poland into the alliance, I consider in this chapter three areas that will determine its value to NATO: (1) the record of Poland's response to the changed geopolitical environment following the unification of Germany

and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, with a focus on Polish-German relations, (2) the record and current priorities of Poland's Eastern policy, especially its relationship with Russia, and (3) the current state of Polish military reform in preparation for NATO membership, including organizational changes, equipment modernization, and the defense budget. The discussion concludes with an assessment of the assets and liabilities Poland is likely to bring to the alliance, and the impact of its NATO membership on the regional security environment in central Europe.

A New Central Europe

The current security environment in central Europe has been defined by two watershed events: the unification of Germany and the dissolution of the USSR. A historic change in Poland's security situation came in 1990, a year prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic moved to become one state. From Warsaw's vantage point, the defining moment of that transition was Bonn's commitment to remain within the trans-Atlantic security system, despite earlier Soviet pressure for a neutral Germany. From Bonn's vantage point in 1990, the emergence of a stable, democratic, and secure Poland became a vital national interest of the newly unified German state. In the critical early years of the postcommunist transition, the preservation of NATO set the stage for the most dramatic shift in the geostrategic environment in central Europe.[2] The preservation of NATO as the linchpin of the trans-Atlantic security system made it possible for Germany and Poland to reach out to each other in the context of continued American commitment to Europe.

The post-1990 redefinition of Polish-German relations was a sea change in that the rapprochement would modify the legacy of the previous two hundred years. Notwithstanding the alliance-wide implications of the 1990 German unification formula, from Warsaw's perspective the unification presented Poland with a dramatically new geopolitical reality: for the first time the country bordered a NATO member—a democratic German state committed to cooperation with its eastern neighbor.

Historically, beginning with the disappearance of the multinational Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania in the eighteenth century, the

dilemma of Polish geopolitics was that of a medium-size, relatively weak country caught between the competing interests of Russia and Germany. The resurrected Polish state of the interwar period ultimately fell victim to this power dynamic. Between 1918 and 1939, the Second Republic (Druga Rzeczpospolita) sought in vain to square the geopolitical circle by trying to balance itself between Germany and the Soviet Union while it looked to France and Great Britain for security guarantees.[3] The fate of interwar Poland was sealed in 1939 when Berlin and Moscow concluded the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement, a treaty providing for the fourth partition of the Polish state. Even though Germany was subsequently defeated in the war, the consequences of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, including the loss of Poland's eastern territories (*kresy*) and its dependence on the Soviet Union, continued for nearly half a century. During the Cold War the regional security architecture in central Europe was defined not only by the Soviet strategic objectives embedded in the "coalition warfare" doctrine of the Warsaw Pact, but also by the continued hostile relationship between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The strain in Polish-German relations was caused in part by the memory of the wartime atrocities the Germans had committed in Poland, and also by the fact that after the war Poland was compensated with German territory for the land Stalin took from it in the east. The 1945 border adjustment literally shifted the Polish state farther west. In the process, it deepened Poland's dependence on the Soviet Union, for in the absence of an explicit German acquiescence to the loss of its territory to Poland, only Moscow could effectively guarantee Poland's postwar western borders.[4] Therefore, although Bonn and Warsaw took limited steps to improve their relations (beginning in the late 1960s with German Chancellor Willie Brandt's *Ostpolitik,* followed by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975), the full settlement of the border issue would not be achieved until after the collapse of communism and the merger of the two German states.[5]

Although most of the debate preceding the 1997 NATO summit in Madrid focused on Polish-Russian relations, in fact it was the Polish-German reconciliation that had laid the foundation for NATO enlargement into central Europe. In 1990, Poland and Germany seized the historic opportunity to redefine their relationship. At the time, Poland's

foreign minister, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, spoke of a unique chance to remake Polish-German relations in the image of those of France and Germany, whereby centuries of hostility could be overcome through economic, political, and security cooperation. The signal that Germany was intent on following a similar course vis-à-vis Poland was Bonn's readiness to negotiate a treaty confirming the post–World War II Polish-German border.

In 1991, Poland and Germany concluded two historic agreements that confirmed the permanence of their existing borders and affirmed the two countries' mutual commitment to good neighborly relations. The treaties were critical to Poland's aspirations to join NATO, because they changed the power dynamic in central Europe. They marked the first step in overcoming the historical burden of the Polish security dilemma, for they were accompanied by Bonn's clear commitment to work for the inclusion of Poland in the existing European institutions, as well as NATO. Without Polish-German reconciliation, Poland's goal of "returning to the West" would have been unattainable.

The treaties were also vital to the future of regional security in central Europe as a whole. Poland's opening to Germany and the desire for eventual reconciliation between the two nations were the first steps toward improved Polish-Russian relations. If any future partnership between Poland and Russia were to develop, and, similarly, if Russia and Germany were to build a stable cooperative relationship, Poland had to feel secure in the region. Without the 1991 treaties, and without Germany's vocal support for Poland's membership in NATO, Poland would have continued to fear that any future collaboration between Bonn and Moscow might ultimately prove detrimental to its security.[6]

The Polish-German treaties of 1991, and Bonn's support of Poland's membership in NATO, reflected a consensus among the foreign policy elites in both countries. For the two societies, however, the treaties marked only the beginning of the process of reconciliation. Both societies recognized that it would take at least a generation to change Polish and German perceptions of each other. In addition to the burden of Nazi atrocities during the Second World War, the Poles would have to come to terms with their residual fear of Germany, which for forty-five years had allowed the Polish communist regime to justify the country's dependence

on the Soviet Union.[7] Similarly, the Germans would need to look beyond the economic disparity between the two countries and start treating the Poles as their partners in the east.

As the 1990s neared an end, for the first time in fifty years Poles and Germans were engaged in open dialogue about their intimate and often torturous common past. The historical record and the rights of the remaining Polish minority in Germany, and of the German minority in Poland, were often argued with an intensity and openness that would have been impossible only a decade earlier. The more conservative segment of the Polish media on occasion raised demands for additional German compensation for wartime destruction.[8] On the German side, organizations of German expellees charged that the postwar eviction of Germans from the territories given to Poland was a violation of international law and hence required compensation to the affected families.[9] Still, no matter how intense the rhetoric, Poles and Germans remained in agreement on the basic premise that a strong working relationship between their two countries was essential to the creation of an effective security architecture in central Europe.

After 1991, Germany took the lead in Europe in lobbying for the inclusion of Poland in NATO. The improvement in Polish-German relations led to a dramatic increase in Polish-German military cooperation, which by 1998 was second only to that between Poland and the United States. The Polish-German-Danish cooperation, including transfer of the headquarters of the tri-national corps to Szczecin in northwestern Poland (planned for 1999), was indicative of the new spirit of Polish-German relations, as well as of Poland's acceptance by the Danes as a future partner in NATO.

As Polish security in the West began to improve because of the changed Polish-German relationship, it generated a renewed interest in Poland's becoming a "bridge" between East and West.[10] Since 1991, Warsaw has repeatedly affirmed its determination to distance itself from the idea that Poland wanted to join NATO in order to become again a "frontier state"—an alleged outpost of the West against resurgent Russian pressure. Notwithstanding the argument (heard often in the West during the NATO enlargement debate) that by joining NATO Poland would only aggravate

its relations with Russia, in fact the signing of the 1997 Russia Charter and the Madrid invitation to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to begin formal membership talks would in the long run contribute to a better Polish-Russian relationship. Though the Russians had been opposed to the enlargement, in 1998 they demonstrated that they were ready to adapt to the new geostrategic environment in central Europe. Regardless of its often harsh rhetoric, Moscow appeared prepared to live with Poland in NATO. And since NATO provided the Poles with a new sense of security vis-à-vis Russia, it became possible for Warsaw to reach out to Moscow without fear of renewed Russian domination.

Poland's "return to the West" by way of Germany and NATO solved the country's strategic dilemma by changing its relationship with Germany and ending its historical dependency on Russia. The 1991 breakthrough in Polish-German relations altered the geostrategic environment in the region and made Poland's aspirations to join NATO realizable. This in turn set the stage for a new chapter in Polish-Russian relations. Only with Poland outside the "gray zone" of European security—that is, anchored in the Western security system—could Polish-Russian relations eventually evolve away from their historical pattern of hostility toward a partnership in which Poland might serve as a "bridge" across central Europe.

Eastern Policy: In Search of a Paradigm

In contrast to Poland's dramatically changed relations with Germany, for most of the 1990s its relations with Russia remained cold, at times bordering on hostile. In the early years of the postcommunist transition, the issue of Soviet troop withdrawal, as well as the mutual indebtedness of the communist regimes, put a severe strain on the relationship. Tension was aggravated by residual Polish insecurity vis-à-vis Russia and by Russia's sense of humiliation over the loss of its superpower status and its influence with the former satellite. For the Poles, overall uncertainty about the outcome of the revolutionary transformation in the Soviet Union compounded the problem, generating confusion in Warsaw and leading at times to contradictory policy choices. Poland's nervous reaction to the failed 1991 coup against Gorbachev, its equally ambiguous response to the bloodshed in Lithuania in the same year, and tension in

relations with Russia in 1991 over the future of the Kaliningrad District are cases in point.

Until the formal disintegration of the USSR, Warsaw tried to hedge against a possible reversal of the decomposition of its former hegemon. The Poles pursued a "two-track" policy, on one hand dealing with Moscow on such critical bilateral issues as trade or the status of the Soviet military in Poland while on the other attempting to initiate a dialogue with the rising national independence movements of the non-Russian republics. In the end, the policy satisfied no one and alienated both the Russians and the non-Russian nationalists. From Moscow's point of view, the "two-track" formula amounted to de facto interference in Soviet internal affairs; to the leaders of emerging independence movements in the non-Russian republics, Poland could be faulted for timidity in supporting their cause against Moscow.[11] In either case, the "two-track" policy was hardly a recipe for improving Polish-Russian relations or preparing for future relations with Poland's non-Russian neighbors in the east.

Although the policy was effectively nullified by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, by then the damage had already been done. On the Polish side, mistrust was amplified by fresh memories of the country's recent humiliating subjugation by Russia. Taking into account the record of the Second World War, the Cold War legacy, and the early post–Cold War missteps by both Warsaw and Moscow, it should not be surprising that an early improvement in Polish-Russian relations after 1991 was highly unlikely, if possible at all. Rather than moving forward with new initiatives (as was the case in Poland's relations with Germany), Warsaw first had to revisit its past relations with Moscow—something the Russians were clearly reluctant to do. A succession of Polish governments (representing both the right and the left of the country's political spectrum) dealt with Moscow on the premise that a working Polish-Russian relationship could be built only after Poland's continued insecurity vis-à-vis its former hegemon had been taken out of the equation. Likewise, Russia was not yet prepared to accept the reality of an independent Poland tied to the West.

As the design of the European security architecture after the Cold War began to shift away from the early vision of a pan-European system

centered on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (a solution that Russia had supported) and toward a formula based on the existing trans-Atlantic institutions—including NATO enlargement—Moscow's attitude toward Warsaw hardened. To the very end, Russia attempted to halt the enlargement process. As late as 1997 it issued ominous warnings about the consequences of enlargement for its relations with the West and for the arms control regime in particular. Furthermore, since the Polish foreign policy elite across the political spectrum remained unified in the view that Poland's membership in NATO was of vital national interest, until the 1997 NATO summit in Madrid there was precious little room for improving Polish-Russian relations. This was underscored in 1993 when, despite the reemergence of the Polish postcommunist left as a powerful factor in the country's politics, Warsaw continued to insist on its right to aspire to NATO membership, denouncing Moscow's objections as an encroachment on Polish sovereignty.[12] President Lech Wałęsa, with his power base in the Solidarity camp, as well as Aleksander Kwaśniewski, his successor and the leader of the postcommunist Union of the Democratic Left (SLD), remained unanimous in their pro-NATO policy. Moscow's response was predictably hostile, as both sides awaited resolution of the NATO enlargement issue. Though during that period the Poles did not see Russia as a threat, they insisted on entering NATO in part because of the residual fear that a resurgent Russia might pose a renewed threat to Polish sovereignty and security.

Between 1991 and 1997, Poland's Eastern policy was built around a series of limited bilateral treaty initiatives intent on stabilizing the country's eastern periphery. These eventually led to improved Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Ukrainian relations, with Ukraine progressively looking to Poland as its gateway to the West. Polish attempts to enter into a constructive dialogue with Belarus failed once Belarus's President Lukashenka embarked on his quest to restore authoritarian state controls in Minsk. Most importantly, until the 1997 NATO enlargement decision, Russia remained aloof, preferring to deal directly with the United States and NATO in general while still treating Poland as a pawn in a great-power diplomatic game.

In 1998 the Russian attitude toward Poland began to show signs of

change. NATO's decision to invite Poland into the alliance, and the offer to Moscow of a special NATO-Russia relationship, ended the enlargement debate and laid the groundwork for a Warsaw-Moscow rapprochement. In this perspective, NATO's 1997 decision to expand into central Europe can be seen as the beginning of a new chapter in Polish-Russian relations, because it brought about a closure to the early post-1991 transition.

In 1998 there was evidence that Poland was ready to seek a new relationship with Russia and that Russia might be willing to respond in kind. This manifested itself in a series of initiatives from Warsaw to reignite the dialogue with Moscow, including a "private visit" to Moscow by Poland's President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in the summer of 1998. Kwaśniewski went to Moscow allegedly to attend the Tchaikovsky competition, but the real goal of the visit was to meet unofficially with Boris Yeltsin. With the NATO enlargement issue finally behind, there were indications that Moscow might be prepared to explore a new relationship with Poland. Reportedly, during their meeting Yeltsin welcomed Kwaśniewski's visit and suggested that in their bilateral discussions the issue of Poland's NATO membership ought to be set aside.[13] Kwaśniewski's greatest coup was getting Yeltsin's public commitment to visit Warsaw—a veritable breakthrough in Polish-Russian relations when considered against the record of the previous several years.

In 1998 the Poles also tried to improve relations with the Russian defense establishment, even issuing a standing invitation from Poland's defense minister, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, to the Russian defense minister to come to Poland. Onyszkiewicz's determination to reopen the Polish-Russian dialogue on military and security issues was underscored by his offer to "clear his calendar of any and all appointments to accommodate the Russian defense minister's schedule."[14] These Polish overtures to Russia, especially the unofficial "Tchaikovsky summit" and Yeltsin's declared readiness to move beyond the issue of NATO enlargement and to explore bilateral Polish-Russian relations in other areas, marked the first step in improving Polish-Russian relations after the bruising enlargement argument.

The new assertiveness in Poland's Eastern policy in 1998 stemmed from its new sense of security after the Madrid invitation to join NATO,

as well as from the growing conviction among the Polish political elite that with each passing year, the collapse of the Soviet empire and the rise of the newly independent states became ever more permanent.[15] By 1998 Warsaw had apparently concluded that even if some form of pan-Slavic empire in the east could still be reconstituted, the process would take years. Furthermore, any pressure for a renewed Russian imperial drive in the former Soviet Union would now have to contend with the existence of parliamentary institutions, which should blunt any putative Russian expansionism. Most importantly from Warsaw's vantage point, by the time Russia could again threaten the security of central Europe, Poland would be firmly anchored in both NATO and the European Union.

Although in 1999 it may be difficult to look beyond the most contentious aspects of the 1991–97 Polish-Russian argument over NATO enlargement, one should allow that Poland's membership in NATO may ultimately prove to be the beginning of a future Polish-Russian reconciliation. So long as Poland had remained outside the Western security system, relations between Warsaw and Moscow had focused predominantly on the settling of accounts from the past. Though in the early post-1991 years Polish-Russian relations had been strained, Poland's aspirations to join NATO were reaffirmed by Warsaw and grudgingly recognized by Moscow. Compared with the historical record, this appeared to be a better platform for a serious engagement between the Poles and the Russians on the security and economic interests shared by both.

Russia's apparent willingness in 1998 to reengage with Poland augured well for the future of the dialogue. It was also a vindication of the view that Moscow would eventually reconcile itself to the reality of Poland in NATO, notwithstanding the harsh rhetoric of the early enlargement debate. The apparent thaw in Polish-Russian relations following the 1997 NATO summit in Madrid may also suggest that at the very least, foreign policy issues, including NATO enlargement, were not at the top of Moscow's priorities. For example, despite Moscow's opposition to NATO enlargement, Poland and Russia were able to resolve the Kaliningrad District controversy. The Polish-Russian agreement on cooperation between the northeastern Polish voivodships and the Kaliningrad District was signed on 22 May 1992; it became binding in October of that year and has

been in effect ever since. The agreement successfully neutralized a potentially explosive issue of territorial access and bilateral relations along the only remaining stretch of the Polish-Russian border.[16]

Another important step that showed promise for the future of Polish-Russian relations was the resolution of the mutual indebtedness issue that both countries had inherited from the communist era. During a visit to Moscow in November 1996 by Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz—when Russia's stated opposition to Poland's membership in NATO was at its peak—the Poles managed nevertheless to reach an agreement that allowed the Russian central bank to license Polish banks to operate in the Russian Federation. In fact, already in 1995–96 (at the height of the NATO enlargement controversy) one could discern an increase in the Polish-Russian dialogue on trade and other bilateral issues. Finally, one should not discount the importance of personalities: the 1995 election of Aleksander Kwaśniewski and the 1996 reelection of Boris Yeltsin as presidents of Poland and Russia, respectively, eased the personal animosity that had marked the earlier relationship between Lech Wałęsa and Yeltsin. Kwaśniewski, fluent in Russian and a former communist party functionary, could find common ground with Yeltsin much easier than Wałęsa, the founding father of Solidarity.

Military Reform

Since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the Polish armed forces have undergone a series of organizational and personnel changes. Like all postcommunist transitions, military reform in Poland was often contentious and painful; at times, it spilled into domestic politics, causing bitter infighting between the parliament and the president. In 1995 it even threatened a constitutional crisis over the issue of civilian control over the military. By 1996, however, the argument over the proper relationship between the military and the government in democratic Poland was settled in the new *Law on the Office of the Defense Minister,* which unequivocally reaffirmed civilian control over the military. The replacement of General Tadeusz Wilecki with General Henryk Szumski as chief of the General Staff marked an end of turmoil within the defense ministry.

The first phase of military reforms between 1991 and 1997 included

substantial cuts in manpower, the decision to replace the three Soviet-era military districts (the Silesian District, the Pomeranian District, and the Warsaw District) with four (the Silesian, Pomeranian, and Warsaw Districts and the new Cracow District), the successful development of the foundations for a new NATO-compatible civil-military air traffic control system, and several efforts (largely failed) at equipment modernization. In addition, during that time Poland became an active participant in the Partnership for Peace program (it was the first partner to turn in the "Presentation Document" in Brussels), it continued to contribute to peacekeeping training and operations, and it participated actively in NATO's Bosnia operations.[17]

The current phase of military reform in Poland began with the passage on 9 September 1997 of the program *Army 2012: The Foundation of the Modernization Program for the Armed Forces 1998–2012*.[18] In mid-1998 the program was augmented by the additional "65 itemized objectives" to be achieved in preparation for Poland's formal inclusion in NATO in 1999.

Compared with the earlier reform program, the biggest changes introduced by Army 2012 fell in the areas of command structure and budgetary process. Also, Army 2012 began for the first time to address in earnest the urgent need for reforming the Polish defense industry, with an eye to preserving the residual research-and-development (R&D) potential of the Polish defense sector. Most importantly, the program was viewed from the outset as the key step in adapting the Polish armed forces and the country's entire defense system to NATO standards.[19] This was a radical departure from the earlier reform package, in which planners had attempted to hedge their decisions in order to retain the largest autonomous defense potential possible in case Poland failed in its effort to join NATO. The plan in the early 1990s to develop a new generation of the Polish main battle tank, Goryl, was indicative of that approach. In contrast, Army 2012, along with the "65 objectives" added to the program in 1998, fully reflected Poland's anticipation of impending membership in NATO. Army 2012 was a short-term plan and a long-term forecast in one package. It allowed fifteen years for its implementation, but by design it limited the specifics of the programs to between five and seven years, beyond which the plan outlined only long-term forecasts.

Army 2012 prioritized the phases of reform, beginning with the organizational structure and personnel levels of the armed forces, followed by training and finally by equipment requirements. The program stipulated that the armed forces would be reduced in size to 180,000 persons by the year 2004—below the level called for in the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty (234,500). By mid-1998, however, it became clear that even that number might prove unsustainable in light of projected budgetary constraints; instead, it seemed more realistic to plan for a force no larger than 160,000 persons.[20] The planned personnel reductions would be accomplished primarily by cutting the number of draftees serving in the Polish army and by increasing the ranks of professional personnel. As outlined in the program, the new emphasis on recruiting professional NCOs, warrant officers, and soldiers was to be accompanied by a further shortening of the compulsory military service to twelve months.

Although the program was being tailored to a predominantly draftee-based military force, it also reflected the direction in which the Polish army ultimately wanted to go. Army 2012 projected that in fifteen years the professional component of the armed forces would stand at 61 percent of total personnel, including a reduction in the size of the officer corps from 46 percent of total personnel in 1997 to a projected 30 percent by the year 2004, and an increase of NCOs from 23 percent to 40 percent. The reductions within the officer corps, especially among the most senior personnel, would be accomplished through retirement and through retraining and reassignment. This was an especially urgent issue for the senior officer corps: in 1998 the Polish armed forces had approximately 3,500 colonels and 120 generals. A proposal mooted in mid-1998 suggested that for the Polish officer corps sufficiently to open up the career advancement path for the younger, Western-trained, junior officers, cuts in the senior officer corps would have to be as high as 2,000 colonels and 100 generals.[21]

After Madrid, Polish defense priorities were no longer driven by the need for an "all around" defense, as they had been in the early 1990s. Hence, the 1997 reorganization program did away with the recently established four military districts, replacing them with two districts: the Pomeranian District and the Silesian District, which corresponded

better to the restructured national air defense system. The cities of Bydgoszcz and Wrocław were selected as headquarters for the two new districts. Also, in a departure from the previous model and in keeping with the introduction of the Ground Forces Command structure, the new districts were limited to providing administrative and logistical support to the army; their command authority would be limited to the envisioned Territorial Defense Forces (Siły Obrony Terytorialnej).

The two new districts, plus the Air-Mechanized Corps with its command headquarters in Cracow, were established as an interim solution. In addition, by mid-1998 the Ministry of Defense began to work on a new structure for local military administration, based on the proposed fifteen or sixteen new administrative regions (*województwa*)—as envisioned in the state administration reform debated by the Sejm (parliament)—to serve as the logistical and support centers of the armed forces.[22] This aspect of the restructuring betrayed a degree of confusion, especially in light of the fact that the final shape of Poland's new administrative map was still being debated in the parliament, with no clear indication at the time as to how many of the new consolidated *województwa* would replace the preexisting forty-nine administrative units.[23]

Army 2012 envisioned three phases of reform: 1998–2002, 2003–2007, and 2008–2012, with most of the structural changes concentrated in the first two phases. The single most important change in the structure of the Polish armed forces, already introduced in 1997, was the establishment of the Ground Forces Command, which would control all the existing military districts—close to two-thirds of the entire Polish army. The most urgent objectives identified in the Army 2012 program were those articulated in anticipation of Poland's NATO membership and appended to the plan after Madrid. To meet one of these additional "65 objectives" for NATO integration, Poland committed itself to making approximately thirty thousand soldiers from its operational forces available for NATO missions. The Poles will contribute forces to both NATO's Main Defense Forces and to its power projection missions within the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) or the Immediate Reaction Forces (IRF). The Twelfth Mechanized Division in Szczecin and the Eleventh Armored Cavalry Division are to be part of NATO's Main Defense Forces, with select units

assigned to ARRC duties. The Polish units assigned to NATO's projection missions are the Twenty-fifth Air Cavalry Brigade, the Tenth Armored Cavalry Brigade (part of the Eleventh Armored Cavalry Division), the Twelfth Mechanized Brigade (part of the Twelfth Mechanized Division), and the Sixth Air Assault Brigade, including the Eighteenth Air Assault Battalion and the Sixteenth Paratroopers Battalion (which had served within SFOR in Bosnia and was already fully interoperable with NATO forces).

Another short-term goal for NATO membership was Poland's preparation of two naval bases, one in Gdynia and one in Świnoujście, as well as airfields in Malbork and Poznań-Krzesiny (with three additional airfields to be selected at a later date), for use by NATO forces. In addition, storage depots in Przewóz-Potok and Cybowo would be made usable for NATO operations, including support for reinforcements and stock replenishment. In order to make these facilities suitable for NATO use, the Polish government promised to upgrade its air traffic control and communications equipment, as well as its refueling and docking systems.

Military training was another area in which the Polish armed forces needed to improve in their preparation for NATO membership. In 1997–98, the existing training programs (especially in the Polish Air Force) were below NATO requirements. Warsaw was aware that in order to bring its armed forces more in line with NATO's, it had to begin a vigorous effort to train more NCOs while limiting the commissioning of officers. The increase in the NCO corps, in addition to the retirement or reassignment of a large number of older senior officers, was critical to transforming the Polish army into a Western military force. In order to make the training and educational systems more responsive to NATO requirements, Army 2012 made three officer academies directly subordinated to the Ground Forces Command; these were the Tadeusz Kościuszko Officer School in Wrocław (Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska im. Tadeusza Kościuszki), the Stefan Czarniecki Officer School in Poznań (Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska im. Stefana Czarnieckiego), and the Józef Bem Officer School in Toruń (Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska im. gen. Józefa Bema).

The defense ministry also needed to limit its nonessential expenditures. In 1997 it became clear that it was no longer able to support the

infrastructure inherited by the Polish armed forces from the Warsaw Pact era, nor was there any need for it in light of the new missions for the Polish army in NATO. Considering how critical some of the Polish army installations were to the economic survival of Poland's smaller, less-affluent communities, efforts to close them down between 1991 and 1997 had met with only limited success. In 1998, almost a decade after the collapse of communism, the defense ministry still maintained airfields, railroad ramps, barracks, storage depots, and medical facilities that could easily support an army of half a million.[24] Army 2012 finally targeted specific sharp cuts in the infrastructure, calling for a 35-percent reduction by 2012, with 20 percent of the cuts to fall before 2003.

In 1998 the equipment modernization program remained the most hotly debated issue within the Polish defense establishment. The argument centered on the question of "offset contracts" to be awarded to Polish defense manufacturers by Western suppliers as a condition of military contracts. In the Polish defense sector, where the Solidarity trade union was still a potent political force, the needs of the armed forces and the interests of the union often clashed. In 1997 the Polish government identified eleven weapons programs that it considered central to its planned equipment modernization program, including communication and command systems, air defense systems (including the Loara program), anti-tank systems, helicopters (the Huzar program), and armor (especially a wheeled personnel carrier).[25] Other programs, including naval ships, additional ground forces equipment, small arms, and support vehicles, were given lower priority. In fact, considering the budgetary constraints under which the defense ministry operated, most of the "second priority" items outlined in the modernization program constituted a wish list rather than realizable goals.

A glaring omission among the eleven weapons programs identified in the Army 2012 equipment modernization plan was the acquisition of a multipurpose fighter aircraft (F-16 type). Although Polish defense officials frequently declared the purchase of F-16s or F-18s as one of their highest priorities, the prohibitive cost required a separate budgetary authorization by the Sejm, which as of 1998 was not forthcoming.

Regardless of the ultimate size of the restructured Polish armed forces,

it was clear that Army 2012 assumed the preservation of the existing three services: the ground forces, the air and air defense forces (consolidated after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact), and the navy. The ground forces would include the operational forces and the territorial defense forces. Among the "65 objectives" for NATO integration appended to the program, the most important were improvements to communications, infrastructure, and quality of staff.[26] In 1998 the Poles focused their resources mainly on modernization of the communications systems and on training the personnel who would operate the equipment.

Defense Budget

No matter how sophisticated long-range plans for military reform may be, budgetary allocations ultimately determine their success. The Polish military modernization program in preparation for NATO membership is no exception. The ability to implement the proposed reforms even partially, and hence Poland's ability to contribute substantially to the military potential of NATO, hinges ultimately on the size of the defense budget.

The Army 2012 program stipulated Poland's ability to develop forces interoperable with NATO based on a projected increase in military spending equal to 3 percent of GDP annually. This was based on a commitment the government had made in 1994 and which had been confirmed by the Sejm on 16 February 1995. The government subsequently revised the 1995 projections, with the proviso that whereas between 2003 and 2012 defense expenditures would grow at the overall rate of increase of the state budget, between 1998 and 2012 they would average 3.2 percent of GDP.

In 1998, the key to the projected defense spending levels was an anticipated average GDP growth rate of 4.2 percent. In addition, the Ministry of Defense expected to net 120 million new Polish złotys (PLN) annually (approximately 35 million dollars) from the sale of assets no longer needed by the armed forces, to be spent directly on equipment modernization;[27] the total value of such assets was estimated at close to 2 billion PLN ($570 million). According to the defense ministry's 1997 projections,

the structure of defense expenditures would shift from the currently dominant personnel costs (personnel, 51 percent; training and maintenance, 33 percent; equipment purchases and R&D, 16 percent) to a pattern in 2012 in which personnel and maintenance costs would be substantially curtailed while equipment purchases were increased (personnel, 34 percent; training and maintenance, 29 percent; equipment purchases and R&D, 37 percent). Notwithstanding these projections, the structure of the Polish defense budget for 1998 saw a further increase in personnel costs (to 63 percent) and a further decrease in equipment modernization spending (to 12 percent).[28]

The lower-than-expected budgets remained a serious constraint on Polish planners, putting in question the equipment modernization program, especially the ambitious plan to purchase modern Western aircraft and to develop the Polish attack helicopter Huzar and the indigenous mobile anti-aircraft platform Loara. As of 1998, the Poles had not reached the recommended 3 percent of GDP level; in 1997 the defense budget stood at 2.3 percent of GDP, and in 1998 it was projected at 2.26 percent (possibly as high as 2.29 percent).[29] In real terms, however, the budget for 1998 was 4.9 percent larger than that for 1997—an encouraging development in the first year of implementation of the Army 2012 program (tables 2.1 and 2.2).[30] More importantly, Poland's defense expenditures as a percentage of GDP (2.3 percent of the GDP averaged by Poland from 1995 through 1997, as well as the projected 2.26 percent of GDP for 1998) placed it at the higher end of the European average, among the major contributors to NATO (table 2.3). In effect, although the budget fell short of the promised 3 percent of GDP, it still allowed Poland sufficient resources to develop an effective—if carefully targeted—modernization program.

By the second half of 1998, as the date for Poland's formal inclusion in NATO approached, the reform had achieved significant progress in transforming the organizational structure of the country's defense establishment, especially by resolving the issue of civilian control over the military—an issue that had raised serious concerns in the West during the last years of the Wałęsa presidency. In addition, despite continuing delays in the area of equipment modernization and a budget that consistently fell

TABLE 2.1
Ministry of Defense (MOD) Budget Expenditures Relative to GDP and Total State Budget, 1991–1998, in Millions of PLNs (Current Prices)

Year	GDP	State Budget Expenditures	Total MOD Budget	National Defense Budget
1991	80,882.9	24,185.8	1,821.2	1,807.1
1992	114,944.2	38,189.0	2,564.4	2,536.5
1993	155,780.0	50,242.8	3,846.5	3,309.2
1994	210,407.3	68,865.0	5,117.0	4,127.5
1995	286,000.0	91,169.7	6,594.4	5,249.4
1996	357,200.0	108,661.3	8,313.2	6,003.3
1997	437,300.0	127,919.8	10,076.7	7,275.0
Budget bill for 1998	511,100.0	143,440.8	11,550.3	8,263.9
1998	511,100.0	143,440.8	11,678.7[a]	8,345.1

Source: *Budget MoND 1998* (Warsaw: Budgetary Department Press and Information Office, Ministry of Defense, 1998), 14.

[a] Includes additional monies for pay raises for MOD employees (approximately 100 million PLN), costs related to NATO enlargement (15.8 million PLN), and the cost of the Polish contingent in Bosnia (12.6 million PLN).

short of the promised 3 percent of GDP, the Poles had made good progress in modernizing their communications and coupling their analog technology with NATO's digital systems. The complete reequipment of the Polish armed forces that would bring them up to NATO standards remained a task that by Warsaw's own admission would take at least fifteen years to complete and would cost an estimated US $7.76 billion.[31] This meant that the Poles would have to spend at least 20 percent of their defense budget on new equipment each year for the duration of the Army 2012 modernization program—a goal that in 1998 the defense ministry already recognized as unrealistic. In the final analysis, Warsaw and Brussels will have to reach a decision about the extent to which additional NATO resources might be necessary to complete the Polish equipment

TABLE 2.2
Ministry of Defense (MOD) Budget Expenditures as Percentage of GDP and Total State Budget, 1991–1998

	Percentage of GDP		Percentage of State Budget	
Year	Total MOD Budget	National Defense	Total MOD Budget	National Defense
1991	2.25	2.23	7.53	7.47
1992	2.23	2.21	6.72	6.64
1993	2.47	2.12	7.66	6.59
1994	2.43	1.96	7.43	5.99
1995	2.31	1.84	7.23	5.76
1996	2.33	1.68	7.65	5.52
1997	2.30	1.66	7.88	5.69
Budget bill for 1998	2.26	1.62	8.05	5.76
1998	2.29	1.63	8.14	5.82

Source: *Budget MoND 1998* (Warsaw: Budgetary Department Press and Information Office, Ministry of Defense, 1998), 14.

modernization program, or whether a more suitable approach might be one that selectively targets areas in which NATO's mission and Polish needs converge.

Still, even within existing budgetary constraints, in 1998 Poland was capable of increasing its contribution to NATO by further streamlining its organizational structure and better managing its available resources. This point may be illustrated by looking at Warsaw's 1998 per-soldier expenditure compared with those of other states. Although Poland's expenditure—the equivalent of US $13,682—was nowhere near the expenditures of developed European NATO members or of other major European militaries (for example, Germany was spending $93,750, Denmark, $97,264, Holland, $126,783, and the United Kingdom, $146,903), the Poles were still outspending Turkey ($10,642) by more than $3,000 and were almost on a par with Switzerland ($13,759).[32] Taken in the

TABLE 2.3
Defense Expenditures of Poland and NATO Member States as Percentage of GDP, 1985–1997

Country	Average 1985–89	Average 1990–94	1995	1996	1997
Belgium	2.8	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.6
Denmark	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.7
France	3.8	3.5	3.1	3.0	3.0
Germany	3.0	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.6
Greece	5.1	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.6
Italy	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.9
Luxembourg	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8
Netherlands	2.9	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.9
Norway	2.9	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.2
Portugal	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.6
Spain	2.2	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4
Turkey	3.3	3.8	3.9	4.1	4.3
United Kingdom	4.5	3.8	3.1	3.0	2.8
NATO Europe	3.3	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.2
United States	6.0	4.7	3.8	3.6	3.4
Poland	3.1	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3

Source: *Budget MoND 1998* (Warsaw: Budgetary Department Press and Information Office, Ministry of Defense, 1998), 16.

context of the country's overall GDP, the figure represented a considerable commitment of resources, especially in light of the relatively low pay scale in the Polish army.

In 1998 the statistical Polish soldier "cost less" than his NATO equivalent. This led some in the General Staff to argue that Poland would be able to achieve disproportionately higher qualitative results by further reducing the size of its armed forces and thereby increasing per capita spending.[33] The most radical proposal, mooted in mid-1998, was to consider reducing the size of the Polish armed forces to as few as eighty thousand

personnel and simultaneously to begin the transition to a professional army. Under this plan, money would have been spent on the ground forces, the air force, and the support infrastructure necessary for cooperation with NATO; the navy would have been limited to coast guard functions. The proposal was based on the premise that the current size of the Polish armed forces made the available resources per soldier too low to train and retain quality professionals. Therefore, unless the army were reduced by at least 50 percent of its 1998 total, it would have no choice but to rely on the draft system for the foreseeable future, notwithstanding official assertions that it intended to increase its professional ranks down the line. For example, in 1998 the monthly pay for a private in the Polish army was 1,160 PLN (approximately $330). Even more poignant was the virtual absence of a real pay differential between privates and NCOs; a section commander, for example, made 1,320 PLN ($377) per month, and a company quartermaster sergeant, 1,511 PLN ($431). Even at officer rank, pay levels were low: in 1998 a company commander made 1,690 PLN ($482) per month, a battalion commander, 1,899 PLN ($542), and a regiment commander, 3,002 PLN ($857). In 1998 the highest paid officer in the Polish armed forces, the chief of the General Staff, earned 7,052 PLN ($2,014) per month.

Even if the 1998 military pay scale did not adequately reflect the military standard of living in Poland, because it did not allow for supplemental benefits, the numbers and their spread reflected a pattern that seemed to have persisted from the communist era, whereby rank rather than pay was used as a reward for service. The communist practice of relying on easy promotions had distorted the Polish army's structure, creating what some officers jokingly referred to as an "army of colonels"—a military force heavily weighted at the top, with weak junior officer and NCO corps. Those in the General Staff and the defense ministry who in 1998 called for a dramatic reduction in the size of the Polish armed forces pointed out that unless resources were freed to "invest in people," the Polish army would continue to fight a losing battle in trying to make the transition to a Western-style military. The logical conclusion of their argument was to eliminate the draft altogether and to create a professional Polish army at the earliest possible date.

The Balance Sheet: Political Contribution

The formation and realignment of alliances are historically significant only insofar as they generate lasting shifts in the power equation. Nowhere has this been truer in recent years than in the case of NATO's enlargement into central Europe, especially the inclusion of Poland as a full-fledged NATO member. Although one should not discount the real, if initially modest, Polish military contribution, the core of Poland's value to NATO will ultimately rest in the political arena.

The redefinition of Polish-German relations in the context of NATO, and its encouraging implications for the future of Polish-Russian relations, may bring about a lasting change in the security environment of central Europe. Poland's membership in NATO has the potential to dramatically change the regional security equation and, ultimately, to do away with a fundamental historical tenet of European geopolitics: German-Russian competition for regional domination.

When viewed from Warsaw, Poland's inclusion in NATO is not only a matter of national security but also a powerful historical symbol. In the eyes of the Poles, the 1997 allied decision to include their country in the first batch of new entrants marks the final break with the legacy of the half-century of Soviet control. It makes real Poland's historical aspirations to reestablish its Western ties and to develop a Western political identity. On yet another level, NATO membership solves the Polish historical dilemma of being a medium-size power caught between two dominant states vying for regional supremacy. It settles the issue of Polish-German relations by locking it into the trans-Atlantic equation. Finally, NATO membership addresses the remaining Polish security concern—Poland's residual fear of Russian resurgence and renewed pressure from the east.

Among the more interesting aspects of Poland's adaptation to the consecutive stages of the enlargement process is its growing appreciation of NATO not just as a defensive alliance but also as the indispensable skeleton of a larger Euro-Atlantic security system.[34] The Poles consider NATO's close links to the European Union, the West European Union, and the Council of Europe to be the essential elements of the emerging Euro-Atlantic security architecture. In the context of NATO's evolving structure and mission, the Poles have set out as their central national

security objective the achievement of full participation in the broadest range of European institutions possible.

The Poles have argued that their country—after Germany—will be the key military partner of the United States in central Europe. Although Germany and Poland will indeed provide the bulk of NATO forces in the east, this belief takes an excessively narrow and one-sided view of Poland's potential value to the alliance. The real significance of Poland in NATO rests in its ability to channel the relationship between the West and Russia. Considering the torturous history of Russian-Polish relations, at a minimum Poland in NATO cannot become a liability to the alliance; at a maximum it should become an asset. Since for NATO the relationship with Russia will for the foreseeable future remain its highest priority in the east, Poland's relative political value in NATO will be measured by its ability to engage Russia effectively.

One of the more promising ancillary effects of Poland's drive to join NATO has been Warsaw's renewed interest in its relations with the East. Admittedly, prospects for Polish-Russian reconciliation (along the lines of the rapidly progressing Polish-German relationship) are still remote; however, they ought not to be dismissed out of hand. As a NATO member Warsaw will find itself more securely tied to the West, and thus it will be more likely to reevaluate the burden of its three hundred years of relations with Moscow. In this way, rather than in terms of a purely military contribution, Poland may indeed become a "special ally" to the United States in central Europe on matters specific to the region.[35]

On a more practical level, it remains to be seen how successfully the Polish public will adapt to the realities of NATO membership and to the new role the Polish armed forces will play in NATO. Although there is broad public support in Poland for NATO membership, it is unclear whether Polish society understands the full implications of alliance obligations. There is also a historically determined sense of unease about changing the traditional concepts of national security. Though anti-NATO sentiments in Poland are rare, the country's historical experience in World War II mitigates against placing excessive confidence in external security guarantees in general. It was that historical determinant that in 1991–95 made the General Staff believe that Poland should preserve a

large indigenous military force, regardless of budgetary constraints and the priority of establishing interoperability with NATO. One should remember that Polish nationalism had endured in the armed forces throughout the communist era. At the time, the Poles had identified military autonomy with patriotism, and only recently have they begun to come to terms with the idea of "de-nationalizing" the country's security policy within NATO.

Not surprisingly, to the majority of Poles today NATO's paramount value still rests in its deterrent function against another aggression from the east. This view argues that Poland must be prepared to resist an attack long enough to allow the allies to move; otherwise, it risks a repetition of 1939, when France and Britain did not act in Poland's defense in part because Poland had been defeated in a matter of weeks. In this view, Poland must give NATO sufficient time to activate Article 5—that is, it must have its own contingency plan to fight a delayed action against the aggressor.[36] It will take time before this view, defined by the experience of World War II and the Cold War, is fully reconciled with NATO's concept of security.

One such alternative conception for Poland was offered by Zbigniew Brzezinski at a conference in Cracow in July 1998. Brzezinski argued that Poland needed both a small professional army and a draft-based "home army"—a territorial defense force that would train to resist in the event of foreign occupation. The first would participate in NATO defense planning and contribute to the fulfillment of Poland's allied defense obligations; the second would plan to continue resisting the enemy on the home territory lost to the aggressor, harassing its forces and keeping the resistance alive.[37] In 1998 it was not yet clear whether the Poles would find a formula that successfully spoke to both their history and the present-day reality of NATO.

Another domestic policy issue that came into focus in 1998 concerned Polish society's support for the kind of allied missions that the new NATO would likely undertake. Support for Poland's membership in NATO has run consistently high, with close to 80 percent of the population in 1997 in favor of it. It is not clear, however, that the level of support would remain equally high in the event Poles were asked to send their conscripts

out of the country not for peacekeeping duties (which have historically enjoyed a very high level of support in Poland) but to fight a war as part of Poland's allied obligations. Throughout the entire process of NATO enlargement, there was little discussion in Poland of the impact NATO membership might have on the country's military ethos. The Poles have a proud historical record of sacrifice and military prowess in defense of the motherland and in fighting abroad for the restoration of their country's independence. Still, the generally accepted concept of the Polish soldier is tied closely to the idea of defense of the national territory. Since in the foreseeable future Poland will have to rely on an army consisting largely of draftees, the procedures under which its army will be deployed outside the country have to be addressed in Sejm legislation.

The Balance Sheet: Military Contribution

Although second to the foreign policy dimension in overall importance, Poland's military contribution to NATO will be significant. In line with the changing concept of national security, the Polish armed forces have been sufficiently reformed to be a meaningful part of NATO, in terms of both territorial defense and alliance-wide missions.[38] In comparison with the political issues, especially the impact of Poland's inclusion in NATO on the region's security, the practical side of Polish military modernization is less important. A broad modernization program that would bring the entire Polish armed forces close to the NATO standard (as defined by the principle contributors) simply cannot be sustained under the present Polish budgetary reality.

The Poles need to invest first and foremost in the training and retention of their military personnel in order to complete the reform program. The administrative changes of the past decade, especially the institutional restructuring of the relationship between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, have effectively dealt with the organizational questions of civil-military relations in Poland. As of 1998 Poland had in place an organizational framework to make its military a full member of NATO. Now it needed to fill that institutional skeleton with personnel who would transform the Polish armed forces into a Western army. This transformation would include the dissemination of such basic skills as the requisite

fluency in English. In the most practical sense, in 1998 the English language proficiency of the more senior officers was generally inferior to that of the junior officers, and senior officers also lacked the experience of being exposed to Western educational institutions. This could be addressed either through additional and time-consuming intensive language training for the senior officer corps or by rapidly promoting the younger officers.[39] Although, as Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz pointed out, more than 90 percent of the officers on active duty in 1998 had been promoted or commissioned after 1989,[40] this did not necessarily mean that the younger, Western-educated generation of Polish officers was moving to center stage.

Equipment modernization is another issue that will have to be approached with an eye to the long-term interests of the Polish army and NATO. So far, it has been hopelessly tied up in the politics of reform in the country's defense industry. By 1998, the early attempt to preserve the defense sector by creating a national military-industries consortium of twelve key plants was clearly failing. In early 1998, two-thirds of forty-five defense establishments in Poland were heavily in debt, owing more than 1 billion PLN (over $289 million at the exchange rate of early 1998). To address the problem, the government was considering declaring thirty of those enterprises "national strategic assets" and bringing them under the National Military Industries Fund. The plan would allow for the privatization of some factories, but it would retain a majority state ownership in the defense sector. According to Deputy Minister of the Economy Dariusz Klimek, the defense industry would begin the process of limited privatization in 2001, but with the stipulation that no major layoffs would result.[41]

In short, as of 1998 the power of the defense industry lobby (*zbrojeniówka*) was proving strong enough to derail a cost-benefit approach to the equipment modernization of the Polish armed forces. Some reductions in Poland's ambitious procurement program had taken place, notwithstanding the political fallout from these decisions. For example, in addition to abandoning the Iryda support aircraft project, the defense ministry also eliminated the Goryl tank program, which would have replaced the currently produced Polish version of the T-72; instead, in a

compromise move intended to preserve employment at the Łabędy tank factory and to maintain a source of spare parts, the production of a modified T-72 version was approved. The decision was intended as a half-measure to facilitate the eventual conversion of the Łabędy tank line to civilian production. In 1998 the Loara program remained active, though like all other Polish R&D and procurement programs, it was virtually on hold pending budget decisions.

The most visible among the procurement issues that continued to polarize the military and the defense industry in 1998 was the Huzar program, which sought to adapt the Sokół civilian helicopter platform to military applications. From the start, the story of the Huzar had been fraught with intrigue and, more recently, with allegations of downright corruption in the choosing of two Israeli missile and electronics systems over comparable American or western European equipment. Arguments over alleged improprieties in the awarding of the Israeli contract obscured the basic weakness of the entire undertaking: the Huzar represented a 1970s technology that was only marginally suitable for use as a military attack helicopter.[42]

In August 1998, a report of an official inquiry into the Huzar program, conducted by the Highest Control Chamber (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli) of the parliament, revealed that the awarding of the contract for the missile and electronic equipment to Israeli firms had been procedurally flawed—the strongest indication to date that the program had been marred by corruption and influence peddling.[43] Still, in 1998 the defense ministry appeared committed to go ahead with the Huzar on the premise that the Sokół platform was viable; the government would concede only that the Israeli contract had become a political liability.[44] This position was also supported by the Bureau of National Security, a national security council to President Kwaśniewski.[45]

There is no question that a reform of the Polish defense sector is badly needed and that Poland needs to preserve its core capacity. However, some defense officials have suggested that instead of attempting to build entire weapon systems "in-house," the Polish defense sector would likely have benefited more by entering into subcontracting agreements with NATO weapons manufacturers. This would have allowed for the transfer

of the necessary technological skills to Poland while also tying the Polish defense industry into the allied system.[46] As Poland assumes its place in NATO, this may ultimately prove to be a better approach to modernizing its defense sector.

Conclusion

Poland clearly has the political will, at the level of both the government and the society at large, to make a contribution to NATO. In the strictly military area, it has shown that it can create a force interoperable with NATO's. Despite the equipment modernization problems, NATO can reasonably expect—judging from the pace of reform and the amount of resources committed to it—that by the year 2003 Poland will have restructured its forces into three corps. In addition, the Ground Forces Command should be fully operational and capable of interacting with NATO commands. Likewise, the Polish navy should have completed its personnel reductions and restructuring and have the degree of integration with the Danish and German navies that will permit joint patrol duties in the Baltic Sea.

As the Polish army becomes part of NATO forces, the equipment modernization program will remain very much a work in progress. Still, this issue is less important than it might appear. The argument that the Polish army is not up to NATO standards and that the cost of its modernization would be an excessive burden on Poland and on NATO needs to be reexamined. Although it is certainly true that the Polish army as a whole is nowhere near the levels of readiness, training, and equipment of the United States armed forces or the forces of the United Kingdom or Germany, one should keep in mind that other members of the alliance (especially those comparable to Poland in size and economic potential) are not necessarily superior. If instead of the United States or the United Kingdom one takes as a point of reference the armed forces of Spain, Turkey, or Greece, the potential contribution of the Polish army looks quite different. In contrast to another case of NATO enlargement into central Europe—the inclusion of the Federal Republic of Germany—the inclusion of Poland does not require a substantial expansion of the allied infrastructure. Indeed, Poland can become a meaningfully contributing

member of NATO with relatively moderate expenditures targeted at the infrastructure and communications to ensure compatibility.

After 1999 the Polish defense ministry and the General Staff will probably revisit the question of how deep the drawdown of the Polish forces should ultimately be. In 1998 only the most radical among the senior officer corps were calling for the transition to a small, fully professional army. Whatever the conclusion, the debate is bound to be a heated one, for it will tackle assumptions about the character of the Polish armed forces that have been in place for generations. Other aspects of the proposed future restructuring, such as the phased-in elimination of obsolete hardware (especially in the Polish air force), are unlikely to cause much dissent. Since the air force expects eventual reequipment with Western aircraft, it can quickly shed its MiG-21s while retaining its Su-22 and MiG 29 aircraft for the transition period. Likewise, the Polish armed forces clearly need to acquire a helicopter for their air cavalry brigade, though it is debatable whether the Huzar program is the best the country can do. A more productive way for the Poles to approach their equipment acquisition program might be to negotiate direct purchases from Western firms while entering into cooperative manufacturing arrangements as part of the contract. Considering the overall state of the Polish defense sector, the best route to its modernization appears to lead through joint-venture manufacturing agreements, even if that means giving up some of its engineering and design capacity inherited from the Warsaw Pact era. Similarly, concerning the need for a high-performance aircraft, the best interim solution might be a leasing arrangement in place of an outright purchase.

In the final analysis, Poland's membership in NATO will be tested first and foremost in its political dimension, especially its role in NATO's relations with Russia and other post-Soviet states. As Poland becomes America's key "new ally" in central Europe, the success or failure of its NATO membership will have far-reaching implications for the future of the alliance enlargement plans. If Poland's membership in NATO becomes ultimately a liability, it may lead to a political backlash in Washington and Brussels and effectively foreclose any prospects for further expansion. If it proves to be a success, the enlargement issue may be revisited early in the next century.

Notes

1. Polish economic reform began in January 1990 with a radical shock therapy program, the so-called Balcerowicz Plan. In 1998, the father of the Polish economic reform, Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, called for replacing the Polish tax code with a flat tax.

2. It is important to note that the Soviet position in 1990 called initially for the simultaneous dissolution of both the WTO and NATO as the prerequisite for the unification of Germany.

3. This interwar Polish attempt to navigate between Germany and Russia was aptly described by the founding father of the Second Republic, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, when he spoke of his country's "sitting on two shaky stools, of which one would eventually have to collapse."

4. Although the Polish communist regime launched an elaborate propaganda campaign claiming that the forcible transfer of ethnic Poles from the areas taken by the Soviet Union in the east to the former German territories in the west was a "repatriation"—a return to the "prehistoric Polish lands"—the fact remained that one-third of the territory of the Polish state reconstituted after the war had previously belonged to Germany.

5. The extent of Poland's concern over the border issue is best seen in the fact that the Mazowiecki government, the first postcommunist government in Poland, was considering delaying negotiation on Soviet troop withdrawal from Poland until after the borders had been explicitly recognized by Germany.

6. Indeed, prior to the signing of the 1991 Polish-German agreements, Polish politicians often privately raised their fears of "another Rapallo"—a reference to the 1922 German-Soviet treaty leading to rapprochement between Berlin and Moscow, which dramatically degraded Poland's security position between the two wars. Source: the author's meeting with Polish parliamentarians, January 1991.

7. A good, concise discussion of the key aspects of Polish-German relations can be found in Hanna Suchocka, "Polsko-niemieckie stosunki dzisiaj," in Mirosław Piotrowski, ed., *Polityka integracyjna Niemcy-Polska* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Katolickiego Universytetu Lubelskiego, 1997), 145–159.

8. "D-marki za zniszczenie Warszawy," *Życie Warszawy,* 9 July 1998.

9. The issue of former German property on Polish territory was joined on account of an exchange of letters between Warsaw and Bonn on 17 June 1991, indicating the German position that the 1991 bilateral treaty did not settle the property question—a position which the Polish side rejected. See Krzysztof Skubiszewski, "Niemcy, nie piszcie historii na nowo," *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 9 July 1998.

10. See Jan Karski, *Polska powinna stać się pomostem miedzy narodami Europy Zachodniej i jej wschodnimi sąsiadami* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Universytetu Łódzkiego, 1997).

11. The leadership of Lithuania's Sajudis in particular appeared suspicious of

Poland's intentions, viewing Skubiszewski's "two-track" Eastern policy as an attempt by Warsaw to leverage the relationship as a means of gaining a stronger position with Moscow.

12. "Założenia polskiej polityki bezpieczeństwa" and "Polityka bezpieczeństwa i strategia obronna Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej" *Wojsko Polskie: Informator '95* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1995), 12–32.

13. Witold Laskowski, "Koncerty prezydenta," *Wprost,* 12 July 1998.

14. The author's conversation with Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Ministry of National Defense, Warsaw, Poland, 6 July 1998.

15. Stanisław Bieleń, "Kierunki polityki wschodniej III RP," *Patrząc na Wschód: Z problematyki polityki wschodniej III RP* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań Wschodnich Universytetu Warszawskiego, 1997), 15.

16. The status of the Kaliningrad District was an early stumbling block in Polish-Russian relations, as well as a factor in Russia's and Poland's relations with Germany. Early post-Soviet plans for the future of the rump territory, including a mooted German proposal to use Kaliningrad as the area of resettlement for the remaining Volga Germans, created considerable concern in Warsaw over the future of Polish-German relations. The Russians subsequently increased the tension by raising the issue of extraterritorial access to their military installations in Baltiysk.

17. For a discussion of Polish military reform, see Andrew A. Michta, *Soldier-Citizen: The Politics of the Polish Army after Communism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

18. *Armia 2012: Założenia programu modernizacji Sił Zbrojnych w latach 1988–2012* (Warsaw: Ministry of National Defense, 1998).

19. Army 2012 was accepted by the Council of Ministers, but the government did not give the document the status of a decree. Therefore, although binding on all government agencies, the program was also left open to future modifications (some introduced in 1998) to accommodate additional NATO requirements that would arise in the process of NATO enlargement.

20. The author's interviews at the Ministry of Defense, Warsaw, July 1998.

21. The author's conversations with senior officers at the Ministry of Defense, Warsaw, July 1998.

22. The author's conversation with Minister of Defense Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Warsaw, 6 July 1998.

23. The question of the new administrative divisions was finally settled in late July 1998 with a compromise between the parliament and the president that established sixteen new administrative regions.

24. At peak strength in the 1980s, the Polish armed forces were 400,000 strong.

25. Despite constant discussion of the need for an F-16 type fighter aircraft, the Polish armed forces appear to have greater need for a wheeled armored personnel carrier. (The author's conversation with General Franciszek Gągor, director of the Department of Foreign Military Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Warsaw, 7 July 1998.)

26. The author's conversation with Ryszard Król, director of the NATO Department in the Ministry of National Defense, Warsaw, 8 July 1998.

27. In mid-1998, 1 US dollar equaled about 3.4 PLN. In all my calculations in this chapter I rounded the exchange rate off at the ratio of 1 dollar to 3.5 PLN to allow for the projected devaluation of the złoty in 1998.

28. *Basic Information on the MoND Budget for 1998* (Warsaw: Budgetary Department Press and Information Office, Ministry of National Defense, 1998), 10.

29. The Polish defense budget includes both appropriations that go directly to the armed forces and additional appropriations that go to health care, social welfare programs, state administration costs, and so forth. Therefore, in order to assess the actual contribution to the armed forces, in the tables in this chapter the figures actually allocated for national defense are separated from the total Ministry of Defense budget. The actual figures remain a subject of some controversy. Since the Polish defense budget contains items not normally found in the defense budgets of other NATO members (such as pre-1990-era retirement payments), it could be argued that in 1998 the Poles would spend about 2.0 percent of GDP, not 2.6 percent as itemized in the budget.

30. *Basic Information on the MoND Budget for 1998,* 7.

31. Data taken from *Estimated Cost of NATO Enlargement: A Contribution to the Debate* (Washington: Embassy of the Republic of Poland, 1998).

32. *Basic Information on the MoND Budget for 1998,* 18.

33. The author's interviews at the Ministry of Defense, Warsaw, July 1998.

34. See Julian Kaczmarek and Adam Skowroński, *Bezpieczeństwo: Świat Europa-Polska* (Wrocław: Atlas, 1998), 146–156.

35. The author's conversation with Minister Maciej Kozłowski, undersecretary of state in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw, 8 July 1998.

36. Jan Nowak Jeziorański, "Słoń i jeż," *Wprost,* 19 July 1998.

37. Ibid.

38. Kaczmarek and Skowroński, *Bezpieczeństwo,* 170–171.

39. The problem of poor English language skills is one of the most difficult issues confronting the Polish armed forces. It goes beyond the planning phases and becomes critical to actual operation on the battlefield, where high levels of emotion and the "noise" of the battle make the ability to communicate effectively and quickly with other NATO units critical to accomplishing a mission.

40. The author's conversation with Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Warsaw, 6 July 1998.

41. "Polish Factories under Threat of Closure," *Jane's Defence Weekly,* 16 July 1998.

42. In conversations with the author in 1997 and 1998, people familiar with the Huzar project (both in Poland and in the US) suggested that the Sokół platform was poorly suited to carry the amount of equipment and armor required for the missions envisioned by the Polish army.

43. "NIK: nieprawidłowości w programie 'Huzar,'" *Rzeczpospolita,* 1 August 1998.

44. The author's conversation with Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Warsaw, 6 July 1998.

45. The author's conversation with Colonel Marek Dukaczewski, Warsaw, 8 July 1998.

46. Another example of defense industry politics prevailing over the needs of the Polish armed forces was the fiasco of the Iryda, a support aircraft the army was forced to accept because of pressure from the parliament and heavy lobbying by Solidarity unionists from the defense sector. Following several spectacular crashes (and the death of two test pilots), the Iryda program was finally abandoned. A subsequent investigation revealed that the funds for the Iryda had not even been properly appropriated in the first place.