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KINDRED SPIRIT OR OPPORTUNISTIC ALLY? POLISH ATLANTICISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Elizabeth Schmitz-Robinson

Since emerging from the shadow of communism at the Cold War's end, Poland has undoubtedly been one of the most spirited Atlanticists in Europe. Following its 1999 admission to NATO, Poland's enthusiastically pro-American stance was evidenced by a strong preference for US leadership in defense and security matters, as well as robust support of American foreign policy. This close friendship with America appeared all the more deeply entrenched when viewed against a background of "transatlantic drift" and cooling affinity for the United States among Poland's fellow Europeans. Indeed, some regard Poland's Atlanticism during this period as "instinctual," unconditional and unalterable; something entirely prompted by constant historic, ethnic, cultural and ideological bonds.

The intensity of Poland's pro-US orientation steadily increased during the first years of the 21st century, until reaching its peak in 2003. Despite its strength, a closer examination of the motives behind Poland's pre-2004 Atlanticism points to the conclusion that a great deal of this orientation was neither unqualified nor unthinking, but was heavily driven by strategic calculations of national interest, and thus subject to change. The supposition that Poland's pro-American stance prior to 2004 was transient and conditional, and thus cannot be completely attributed to unchanging factors such as common ties is further supported by the marked decline of this fervent form of Atlanticism after this point.

THE FOUNDATION OF POLISH ATLANTICISM

The roots of Polish Atlanticism can be traced to the end of the Cold War. In fact, the leaders of Poland and other Central and Eastern European states began to discuss the possibility of NATO membership even before the official dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 (Jacoby 236). After overcoming their initial fears of angering Russia with NATO enlargement, the US became the primary proponent for commencing the membership process with Poland, as well as the Czech Republic and Hungary at the 1997 Madrid NATO summit (Yost 104). These proceedings culminated with Poland's 1999 ascension to the Alliance in the first round of post-Cold War enlargement. Thus, the promptness with which Poland pursued NATO membership and the strong American backing for this endeavor

would seem to support the idea that Polish Atlanticism is deeply entrenched and caused, at least in part, by strong historical bonds.

The camaraderie between Poland and the US is further strengthened by ethnic, cultural and ideological ties, which remain a constant contributing factor to Polish Atlanticism. For instance, in an April 28th, 2003 interview in Warsaw, then-President Kwasniewski stated that much of Poland's close relationship with the US could be attributed to the fact that "[a]lmost nine million people in the United States acknowledge their Polish roots. Only Warsaw has more Poles living there than the state of New York. So our feelings for America are very strong" ("Poland's Kwasniewski Views Postwar Iraq, Ties with US, EU, Russia, Own Future," 28 Apr. 03). Additionally, then-foreign minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz stated in a 2003 interview that after September 11th, Poland "supported the people and the values that had been attacked" ("Polish Foreign Minister on US-European Relations, Plane Acquisition, Iraq"). The statements of these Polish leaders would seem to suggest that Poland's friendship with the US is an inherent feature of the national identity due to the ethnic, cultural and ideological ties between the two nations. If these static factors were to be accepted as the sole *raison d'être* behind Polish Atlanticism, it would appear that Poland's robust Atlanticism prior to 2004 was automatic and inflexible in nature.

A BACKGROUND OF "TRANSATLANTIC DRIFT"

The appearance of intransient Polish Atlanticism between 1999 and 2004 is further strengthened by the context of "transatlantic drift" in which it occurred. Scholars have pointed to the presence of "a deep split...developing...between the United States and western Europe" even prior to the fallout over Iraq (Lundestad 25). Two major causes for this increase in conflict are the "the increasing unilateralism of the United States" and an "EU [which] is growing closer together" (Lundestad 16, 26). As European integration has accelerated in the 21st century, the EU has become stronger and more able to challenge the formerly unrivaled influence of the world's current hegemon. The increasing tendency of Europe to look inward for leadership rather than to the US, as well as the heightened frequency of critiques of US unilateralism, point to a net-decrease of European Atlanticism in the years before 2004.

Thus, any demonstration of Poland's Atlantic orientation during this period took place against a prevailing trend of "transatlantic drift." When combined with the foundation of Polish Atlanticism in intransient factors such as ideological, ethnic and historic ties, it may appear to some that Poland's pro-US orientation during the time was fundamental, instinctual and unassailable. This idea is well-illustrated in a May 2003 piece in the *London Times*, which states "Poles and Americans have come to a shared understanding of the world... [A] self-confident East (perhaps lead by Poland) could help to correct ["a wave of post-Atlanticism in Western Europe"]...for the region has never lost its faith in the American dream" (Boyes). However, a closer examination of the motives behind Poland's Atlanticist stance prior to 2004 demonstrates that a substantial part of this orientation was not automatic but was driven by changeable calculations of national interest in terms of political influence, economic concerns and security issues of the time.

POLISH ATLANTICISM: POLAND'S PREFERENCE FOR NATO

Poland's Atlantic tendencies between 1999 and 2004 were manifested in a strong predilection for US leadership in defense and security matters. The most compelling example

of the profundity of Polish Atlanticism on these issues was Poland's strong endorsement of the supremacy and preferability of NATO to the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in the years before 2004.

The ESDP represents the creation of a security force capable of carrying out peace-keeping, peace-making, humanitarian and crisis management tasks, under the jurisdiction of the EU and operational outside of NATO's authority (Haine 44). Development of the ESDP entails the EU "acquir[ing] the capacities and capabilities...to execute [a military] operation ...using European assets...[with] autonomous action" (Boyer 4). Of course, the 1998 St. Malo agreement founding ESDP states that its members must act "in conformity with [their] respective obligations in NATO" ("St. Malo Declaration," qtd. in Haine 43). Thus, in principle, ESDP represents a balance "between the autonomy asserted" by the EU and a continuing commitment to "conformity with the Atlantic Alliance" (Haine 43). However, this fact was often buried under a tangled web of diplomatic, political and economic controversies that arose around this issue.

The primary point of contention over ESDP development was that it was often seen to represent a threat to the integrity and primacy of NATO as the dominant enforcer of European security. As Haine explains in his article on the topic, "this new European structure gave the United States the impression that the ESDP would become a rival," although he states that this impression was not entirely justified (137). This perception was present in 2003, when "in late April, Schroder, Chirac and their Belgian and Luxembourg counterparts ostentatiously met....to start a European defense avant-garde that the United States understood as a challenge to NATO and American leadership" (Pond 49). Whether or not ESDP truly imperils NATO is a point that continues to be up for debate. However, the part of the issue pertinent to a discussion of Polish Atlanticism is that ESDP was often *perceived* as a threat to NATO during this period, both by Polish leadership and by dominant voices in the first Bush administration.

In keeping with this strong Atlanticism, Poland vehemently defended the supremacy of NATO over ESDP in the years leading up to 2004. The Poles' stance on this matter was largely congruent with the Americans'; an "issue where Warsaw's and Washington's positions broadly converged has been the EU's plan to develop ...ESDP...with the capability of undertaking defense and security operations autonomous of NATO authority (Zaborowski and Longhurst 1016). During this period, the Polish government officially "accept[ed]" ESDP; however, any endorsement of it was always qualified with the unconditional caveat that "the EU should never strive to substitute for NATO" (Trzaskowski, "Poland" 20). Illustrative of Poland's stance on the issue are its leaders' 2003 reactions to a discussion regarding ESDP at an October 16–17th EU leaders' summit. These include then Prime Minister Leszek Miller declaring Polish opposition to "any European defense force that would provide an 'alternative' to NATO," as well as Poland's ambassador to NATO stating that "EU defense must 'supplement' NATO instead of 'replacing' it" ("FMA 12 Nov"). In sum, the Polish stance prior to 2004 was characterized by reserve towards ESDP, and a vehement defense of NATO as the principal and dominant mechanism for European security.

As Lundestad puts it, "NATO has been the USA's primary instrument for taking charge in Atlantic affairs" (28). Insofar as America has been the traditional leader of the Alliance, Poland's continued devotion to NATO above all other security institutions does seem to indicate a deep-seated pro-US orientation. To some, Poland's strong preference for the primacy of NATO over ESDP before 2004 could be viewed as illustrative of an

unquestioning Atlanticism motivated solely by respect for the deeply entrenched historic, ideological and ethnic ties which form the unchanging roots of Poland's friendship with the US. However, a more comprehensive analysis of the motivations behind Poland's stance on ESDP points to the fact that the state's Atlanticism on this issue was more strategic than automatic, and was in part driven by calculations of national interest.

The first of these strategic motivations was Poland's desire to assert influence and occupy a position of leadership in matters pertaining to its security and defense. For instance, the 1999 Helsinki meeting establishing the "Headline Goals" for ESDP development resulted in an agreement which stated that any non-EU European nation could contribute to crisis management missions, but would have no decision-making ability within them, which "was consequently viewed by Warsaw as unsatisfactory" (Zaborowski and Longhurst 1017). In contrast, security organizations under the full authority of NATO were seen as "more inclusive, as [they] involved Poland...in their capacities as full members of the Alliance" (Zaborowski 17). Thus, a great part of Poland's initial preference for the primacy of NATO in European security affairs before 2004 was due to the fact that NATO offered Poland, as a full member, the ability to have a say in matters of collective defense. On the other hand, ESDP would have limited Poland, (who was not yet an EU member), to the role of assistant rather than a partner in leadership.

This position may seem slightly irrational in the later years of this period, as by 2003, Poland's entry into the EU was largely foreseeable. However, membership did not constitute a guarantee for leadership opportunities in the field of European security. For instance, in 2003, "France, Germany and the United Kingdom...[showed] an increasing tendency...to operate...on behalf of their colleagues" in European security policy (Duke 5). It appeared to Poland at the time that this "EU3" constituted most of the drive behind ESDP development, a leadership body which seemed poised to continue in the future. Thus, it is understandable that "Warsaw...reacted with skepticism towards the prospect of an emerging Franco-British-German *directoire* as a leading group in European security matters" (Zaborowski 21). Additionally, events such as Chirac's scolding of Poland's support for the US' intentions toward Iraq in 2003 caused Poland to assume that their voice on defense and security issues would most likely be co-opted by more-established EU countries. In short, the Chirac "incident illustrated...[t]he assumption that the accession countries...should be compliant with the larger Member States...[and] [t]hat the acceding countries should not assume equal weight in...security matters which are viewed primarily as the domain of the larger member states" (Duke 4).

In contrast, the continuation of a US-led NATO as the primary vehicle for European security seemed to promise Poland a leadership role, an issue which will be further explored in the discussion of the Iraq War in the next section. As stated in a 2002 Warsaw Rzeczpospolita article, "as...our position in the European Union is uncertain, Poland has no alternative but to tighten its alliance with Washington. This is the only insurance policy accessible to us" ("Analyst Views Arguments For, Against Polish Involvement in US-Led Strike on Iraq"). Like many other less-powerful European countries, Poland saw a Europe dominated by Euro-giants, such as France, as presenting strict limits on its ability to occupy a position of any significance. America's continued involvement in European politics and affairs represented, to some extent, a check on this trend of increasing domination by European power-poles in this realm. As Roberto Ducci said of the comparable Italian viewpoint regarding US versus French influence in European politics, "the richest and farthest master

is always best” (qtd. in Nuti 177). In sum, even with EU membership in sight, NATO seemed to offer Poland the continued position as a co-leader while ESDP appeared likely to subordinate the nation to the whims of EU giants. Thus, the extent to which Poland’s strategic calculations of how best to exert influence cannot be underestimated as a motive for preferring NATO over ESDP, making their Atlanticism seem slightly less unquestioning and intransigent.

Second, Poland’s preference for NATO over ESDP was in part motivated by variable economic cost-benefit calculations in terms of contributions and expected gains. According to Wade Jacoby, in the first years of the 21st century, Poland demonstrated a “profound reluctance to spend money on military modernization at a time when so many other domestic needs seem[ed] to deserve high priority” (Jacoby 234). Additionally, “high CEE inflation rapidly eroded defense budgets” in countries such as Poland (Jacoby 238). Yet, a nation so historically prone to invasion could not be left undefended. NATO offered Poland the answer. In the years before 2003, “the government of the United States made a considered judgment to...trade away pressure on the newer NATO members to upgrade their military capabilities...in exchange for displays of political loyalty” (Jacoby 232). Thus, the cost for Poland’s protection via NATO was almost exclusively limited to Poland’s support of the United States (such as in Iraq). Prior to 2004, this support seemed a cheap price to pay in comparison to the cost of modernizing their military, and even seemed to promise to bring with it a whole range of benefits, as will be examined in the next section of this paper. Thus, before 2004, Poland and other “CEE governments...found it easier to deliver policy loyalty than military competence” (Jacoby 249).

Therefore, NATO accommodated Poland’s inability to pay for expensive modernization initiatives, while nonetheless guaranteeing its security through the provisions of Article 5. On the other hand, many in Poland “voiced concern about the cost of a separate European defense” (“FMA 12 Nov”). Poland had no reason to expect that the EU leaders would be as accommodating as was the US in terms of expected contributions, such as those outlined in the Helsinki Headline Goals. Thus, the fact that NATO represented a much cheaper way of securing its defense cannot be underestimated as a motive for Poland’s support of the primacy of a US-led NATO in European security, and the depth of their Atlanticism must be assessed accordingly.

Finally, the Polish position on ESDP and NATO before 2004 was to some degree motivated by strategic calculations of the relative viability and effectiveness of the two security regimes, especially with regard to Poland’s continued perception of a Russian threat. According to Zaborowski and Longhurst, “Poland’s position... bordering the former Soviet Union means that Poland’s security policies...remain...fixated with the issue of territorial defense... Unsurprisingly, there remains a strong preference in Poland for an American-led NATO which is able to execute Article 5” (1013-1014). Thus, Poland’s geopolitical situation as a state very vulnerable to attack does seem to necessitate its having the strongest form of security available. Poland’s objections to ESDP included concerns that “the EU would be duplicating existing structures and this would weaken the alliance” as well as the fact that “Defense Minister Janusz Onyszkiewicz criticized the EU plan as...lacking in military and operational viability” (Zaborowski and Longhurst 1017). Thus, it is no surprise that Poland was less than enthusiastic about a policy which seemed to them to both threaten the weakening of existing defense structures while offering something less effective in exchange. As stated in a 2003 *Gazeta Wyborcza* article, “the US...[is] the only real guarantor of Poland’s

security, as common foreign and security policy remains largely on paper, and Paris and Berlin's attempts to develop a policy aimed in fact against the US weaken...NATO" ("Iraq to Prevent Alienating EU partners, Poland Has to Become Involved in Building a Common Foreign and Security Policy"). Thus, at least until 2004, the Polish seemed to view ESDP as something more aspirational than functional.

This perceived lack of viability was unacceptable in the face of what the Poles felt to be the continued threat of Russian aggression, however unlikely. For instance, among the reasons provided by one Polish journalist for Poland to "tighten its alliance with Washington" on security matters was that "Russia is regaining its balance" ("Analyst Views Arguments For, Against Polish Involvement in US-Led Strike on Iraq.") In short, Poland did not feel it had the luxury at the time to take its chances on a security system less established and robust than NATO.

Thus, in the years leading up to 2004, it is clear that variable calculations of opportunities for leadership, economic cost-benefit analysis and viability were far from absent in influencing Poland's decision to vehemently advocate the primacy of NATO over ESDP. Consequently, the Polish stance on the matter was not solely a result of intransient ethnic, historic and ideological bonds. Therefore, Poland's support for US leadership in security and defense matters, *vis a vis* NATO, does not enable its classification as an unquestioning, unshakable Atlanticist, but as a savvy and deliberate one.

POLISH ATLANTICISM: SUPPORT FOR US FOREIGN POLICY IN IRAQ

The second most visible way in which Poland demonstrated its Atlanticist tendencies between 1999 and 2004 was through its near-faultless support of US foreign policy. The most compelling example of this is Poland's vehemently pro-US position on the issue of Iraq. However, as with ESDP, a closer examination of the motivations behind this orientation will once again reveal that Polish Atlanticism was not so blind nor so automatic as it may have seemed, and was in part driven by strategic motivations rather than solely by intransient bonds.

During this period, Poland favored a world in which the United States led, a preference which extended even to explicit endorsements of US hegemony. For instance, in a January 2003 visit to West Point, President Kwasniewski "applauded the United States's [*sic*] leading role in the world, stating that it is both 'unquestionable and that it should be exercised'" (Zaborowski 7). Additionally, in the years following September 11th, Poland was "one of the very few European countries prepared to unconditionally support American foreign policy" (Zaborowski 8). This pro-US alignment on issues of global politics peaked in 2003 in the context of the Iraq conflict. Indeed, at this moment in history, never had Poland's relationship with the US been so close, support been so strong nor the contrast with other nations been so drawn. In light of this, 2003 can be viewed as the peak of Poland's Atlanticism.

While the US battled to gain acceptance for their proposed invasion in Iraq, Poland's backing on this divisive issue was vigorous. In 2003 Poland "famously joined Britain, Spain, Italy, Portugal [the Czech Republic and Hungary] and Denmark in publishing an open letter in support of President Bush's policy toward Iraq" (Jacoby 249). This loyalty was all the more noticeable when contrasted with the outright opposition the US encountered from other Atlantic allies. "France and Germany, which had led the resistance to US and British policy in Iraq, interpreted this...[letter] as contrary to the European and, indeed, the

EU line...French president Jacques Chirac...fumed that the CEE states ‘could hardly have found a better way’ of [diminishing] their chances of entering Europe” (Jacoby 249). Thus, to some extent Iraq represented a dilemma in which Poland had to choose between pleasing the power-players of an EU in which they were in the process of joining, and remaining true to their historic Atlantic ties. The fact that Poland chose to back the US on this issue, especially at a time when their place within the EU was being determined, would seem to emphasize their strong Atlanticism.

Poland’s support was not confined to the diplomatic realm. The Poles showed early on that they were willing to back their words with military commitments. “Poland was clearly the most stalwart supporter of US policy; the Polish foreign minister had indicated by late January 2003 that Poland would take part in a war with Iraq even without a UN resolution” (Jacoby 250). Poland’s promises were actualized in the months that followed. The nation’s contribution included the deployment of “Polish special units fighting under US command during the combat operation” as well as its subsequent acceptance of “responsibility for one of the four occupation zone in south-central Iraq...[in] September 2003” (Zaborowski 11). Again, this support was all the more conspicuous given the fact that the “coalition of the willing” backing the US militarily was by no means a broad collection of allies. In fact, “the level of Poland’s support for US action in Iraq surprised many of its European allies... earning [it] the dubious title of ‘America’s Trojan donkey’” (Zaborowski 11). The fact that Poland was willing to risk so much politically to support the US would seem at first to give credit to its portrayal as an unfailing Atlanticist.

It was this intense loyalty, tangible military support, and background of western Continental criticism which caused many leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to posit that America was shifting the nexus of its Atlantic ties from its historic allies in the west, to a more-receptive east. In 2003, “Poland [had] been praised and branded in the US as a ‘new European,’ [by Rumsfeld] as opposed to the ‘old Europeans’...who opposed US policy on Iraq” (Zaborowski and Longhurst 1010). Poland undoubtedly stood out as the poster child of this “new Europe.” As President Bush stated in 2003, “Washington had ‘no better friend in Europe’” (“Analysts Expect New EU Members’ Support for US to Wane”).

In view of both the trend of western Continental detachment from Washington as well as overt condemnation of its supporters, the intense friendship kindled between Poland and the US during this time could lead some to characterize Poland as an unquestioning and uncompromising Atlanticist. However, as was the case with ESDP, a closer scrutiny of some of the more strategic motives that prompted Poland’s stance reveal that its pro-US orientation on Iraq was significantly influenced by calculations of how best to maximize national interest at the time, rather than being solely driven by intransigent historic, ethnic and ideological ties.

The first of these transitory motivations was Poland’s economic cost-benefit analysis of involvement in Iraq. To at least some extent, Poland was influenced by consideration of the financial benefits their support would entail. For instance, Jacoby states that “several Polish elites...spoke candidly about their desires to see Polish firms win lucrative contracts in the reconstruction era” (253). In 2003, Polish leaders were definitely cognizant of the possibility that their diplomatic and military support for America would be rewarded with profitable opportunities for Polish companies. Additionally, then-foreign minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz went so far as to say that when deciding to become involved in Iraq, the Polish government “wanted Polish petrochemical companies to finally gain direct access to sources

of petroleum” (Cwieluch). These expectations were enough that had they been met, the initial Polish expenditure in support of their ally would have yielded very high gains instead of losses. The image of Poland “act[ing] as a loyal, consistent alliance partner”⁷¹ out of completely altruistic motives is further marred by the fact that “the Americans pa[id] for everything” in the way of logistics, troop transportation, quartering cost and even the cost associated with financing the reconstruction of the stabilization zone (Cwieluch). Finally, as was mentioned earlier in regard to security matters, Poland’s support for US foreign policy in Iraq also entailed decreased American expectations of Poland’s contributions to NATO, in terms of expensive modernization measures and military upgrades (Jacoby 232). Thus, supporting the US in Iraq seemed to represent a minimal short term cost while promising a very large payoff in both the near future and long run. It is no stretch to say that these considerations were a significant factor in Poland’s decision to support the US, making its alignment seem less automatic and driven by a regard for historic bonds.

A second factor that points to Poland as less than unconditional in its support was that this backing was to some extent motivated by a desire to assume a position of leadership. In order to secure their position in the world, states must accumulate power. Poland is no exception; “[o]nly 15 years after regaining its sovereignty, Poland continues to be uncertain of its place... and [is] determined to be recognized as a major European player” (Zaborowski 8). The rift between traditional European power poles such as France and Germany, and the US over Iraq represented to Poland a rare and valuable chance to differentiate itself from western Continental Europe and to align with a somewhat isolated hegemon. As a Warsaw Rzeczpospolita article states, because “of this split...the rank of Poland as a US partner increased beyond all expectations” (“Article Discusses Impact of Alliance with US...”). Poland’s heightened importance to the US, its leaders presumed, would translate into tangible opportunities to assert influence and practice leadership (as well as strengthen norms of mutual defense with the US). As a result of its support, Zaborowski and Longhurst state, Poland “is likely to be among the group of states shaping the new Europe and its foreign policy” (1010). By some accounts then, Poland believed the US would reward Poland’s loyalty by sponsoring it in becoming a leader in its region. In contrast, European power-players such as France seemed poised to limit any movement on the part of the Poles to exercise initiative and leadership, as is evidenced by Chirac’s demeaning remonstrations of Poland’s diplomatic support of US foreign policy in Iraq in 2003. Jacoby emphasizes the fact that Poland saw Iraq as a means to expand its influence and show leadership when he states that, in reference to Poland’s involvement, “being a policy-maker on the world stage was more rewarding than being a policy-taker on the European one” (233). Participation in Iraq, then, seemed to Poland to offer the opportunity to shed its cloak of an oft-dominated nation and assume a mantle of responsibility in the world.

Thus, in the face of the preponderance of economic and political benefits which participation in Iraq appeared to offer Poland, it would be difficult to characterize Polish support on the issue as a manifestation of its unquestioning loyalty to the US. It seems highly likely that the calculations of these expected gains motivated the Polish position to some extent, rather than it solely being driven by an inflexible regard for historic and ethnic bonds. Thus, Poland’s Atlanticism in terms of support for US foreign policy was indeed “instinctual”, but in the sense that it is the fundamental instinct of every state to maximize their interest.

In conclusion, in view of the previously stated motives behind Poland’s pro-US orien-

tation on both security matters and foreign policy, it seems that Polish Atlanticism was more shrewd than it was blind. This evidence points to Polish Atlanticism as being driven to some extent by strategic calculations rather than solely by the oft-cited historical, ethnic and ideological ties. But perhaps the most clear-cut confirmation for Polish Atlanticism being not as inflexible as was assumed is its relative, nuanced decline after 2003. The following section will briefly examine the decrease in Poland's level of support for the US in the security and foreign policy sectors that has occurred in the years after 2004 so as to further solidify the claim that Polish Atlanticism prior to 2004 was more transient than formerly thought.

DECLINING ATLANTICISM: A DIMINISHED PREFERENCE FOR NATO?

As stated previously, Poland's position on the ESDP/ NATO issue has served as something of a bellwether for Polish Atlanticism in the security and defense arena. While Poland still remains highly loyal to NATO, there appears to have been a decrease in the vehement rhetoric from Polish leadership about NATO's supremacy over ESDP which characterized the years before 2004. After this point, "a change in attitude in Warsaw towards ESDP and CFSP became apparent" (Zaborowski 19). While the Polish position has never been so clear-cut as to consist of total condemnation or unrestrained advocacy of ESDP, there does seem also to have been an increase in constructive engagement with ESDP development. Illustrative of this trend is Poland's "[support for] the creation of an EU Armaments and Research Agency (which it has since joined)" (Zaborowski 20).

If a mark of Poland's pro-US orientation in the years leading up to 2003 was its level of devotion to American-dominated avenues of security, then Polish Atlanticism could be said to have suffered a moderate, yet telling, decline after this point. In retrospect, this then suggests that Poland's Atlanticism before and during its 2003 peak was not so inflexible as it may have appeared at the time. Indeed, many of the same transient and more calculating motives that prompted Poland's pro-US stance on security matters in this earlier period can be used to explain Poland's subsequent nuanced shift in alignment.

One such variable influence was Poland's changing calculations of opportunities for influence and leadership within the two security systems. The year 2004 marked the beginning of a new era for Poland as an EU member rather than prospective candidate. At this point,

"Poland's former status as a 'friend of America' but an outsider in the context of the EU [was] transformed, with considerable implications for Warsaw's attitude towards the European project...[which] has been evident in Warsaw's increasingly positive attitude towards...developing the [ESDP]" (Zaborowski 5).

As stated in the previous section, a large factor behind Poland's reserve toward ESDP included concerns that Poland's foreign policy would be dominated by EU power-players, a situation incompatible with "Warsaw[s]...ambition to play a constructive and important role within the EU" (Trzaskowski, "From Candidate to Member State" 37). However, once in the EU, Poland began to realize that it could become one of these very power players. Combined with its position as one of the largest new member nations, Poland's "experience in Iraq has heightened Poland's profile in terms of...ability to carry out a variety of operations" (Duke 9). Because of the role it played in Iraq, "other member states...came to see Warsaw as natural member of the European leading group" (Zaborowski 21). Although at first resented by some EU leaders, Poland's combat participation in Iraq has led these same

nations to recognize it as a promising contributor to European security structures. This then has led EU leaders to extend to Poland the opportunity to be a serious force within ESDP. For instance, a 2004 *Financial Times* article states:

“France must rethink its foreign policy...moving away from an ‘exclusive’ dialogue with Germany and working with other big countries, according to Nicolas Sarkozy, France’s powerful [then-] finance minister...He lists six medium or large countries – France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain and Poland – which need to co-operate” (Gowers).

Also, it was announced in 2004 “that Poland would become the major contributor to a[n] ESDP] battle group” formed jointly with Germany (Zaborowski 21), a plan which also speaks to Poland’s increased engagement with ESDP. Thus, the same impulse to exert influence in collective security affairs that led Poland to vehemently defend the primacy of NATO prior to 2004 led to the subsequent relaxation of its hard-line Atlanticist stance on the issue in 2004, after its calculations of leadership opportunities within ESDP changed. Again, Poland’s nuanced retreat from such an uncompromising position on the primacy of NATO and gradual warming to ESDP further substantiates the conclusion that Poland’s pro-US orientation was not so uncompromising as was first presumed.

Additionally, the economic cost-benefit analysis of contributions and gains which drove much of Polish Atlanticism on ESDP was materially altered after 2004. In terms of benefits, cooperation on the issue of ESDP with its biggest advocates, such as France, promised improved rapport between Poland and more established European power-poles. This could only help a new EU member such as Poland, who “needs [the] support and goodwill of the stronger partners. [German and French] assistance is going to be...needed on matters...such as admitting Poland to the Schengen agreement and the monetary union” (“Article Discusses Impact of Alliance with US on Poland’s Position in EU”). After its EU ascension, more constructive engagement on ESDP seemed to carry with it financially lucrative benefits.

Also, as stated previously, America had “trad[ed] away pressure on the newer NATO members to upgrade their military capabilities...in exchange for ...political loyalty” in the years leading up to Iraq (Jacoby 232). This meant that Poland could participate in a collective security system that at the time seemed at the time to be a much lower cost than what contributing to the development of ESDP would entail. However, once this political support segued into Poland’s increasingly burdensome involvement in Iraq, (as the next section will explore), Poland’s calculations of NATO’s costs changed. Additionally, it was stated in 2003 that “once the second wave of [NATO] enlargement takes place, Poland will be judged on an equal footing with older members and will thus be assessed on issues of defense spending and deployability of its armed forces more severely” (Zaborowski, “Between Power and Weakness” 9). After 2004, it was not as clear to Poland whether the US would continue to be so lenient in terms of expected contributions to NATO, especially in the face of America’s decreasing fixation on CEE political loyalty (an issue which will be addressed in the following section). Thus, Poland’s calculations of the financial benefits of increased engagement with ESDP rose while its expectations of the disadvantageous present and future costs associated with NATO increased. Consequently, the same economic motives which demonstrate that Polish Atlanticism before 2004 was not so blind as it seemed also explains some of Poland’s subtle warning toward ESDP after this point.

Lastly, there have been some alterations in Poland's calculations of both the respective effectiveness of ESDP and NATO, and the seriousness of potential security risks, which prompted Poland's zealous preference for NATO prior to 2004. For instance, some analysts have stated that Poland's perception of a Russian threat, which initially led its leaders to favor the more-viable NATO, had diminished by this point. This was due to the fact that "Russia, whilst still being 'a state of concern' from the Polish point of view, [was] just too economically interdependent within the EU...to constitute a 'clear and present danger'" (Zaborowski 25). Thus, Poland may have felt it now had the luxury to lessen its reliance on NATO, especially in light of the political and economic benefits a more open approach to ESDP promised to bring.

Also, there is evidence to support the inference that ESDP may have seemed much more viable and promising to Poland in and after 2004. For instance, in the fall of 2003, the Union completed "the first EU military operation ("*Operation Artemis*") outside the European continent...[t]he success of [which] shows that the EU has at least a small genuine military operational capacity" (Urmach 3). Additionally, "the Europeans are...developing tools that will be of paramount importance in the future to fulfill the goals of strategic autonomy. As an example,...they will have about 15 reconnaissance satellites...in the next 5 years" (Boyer 7). Thus, the prospects of viable and fully operational ESDP increased greatly after 2003. Therefore, it is not at all improbable to presume that Poland's nuanced shift in their stance on ESDP had something to do with improved evaluations of its defense viability, giving Poland the leeway to lessen its uncompromising stance on the preferability of NATO.

DECLINING ATLANTICISM: DIMINISHED SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN IRAQ

Nothing defined Poland's pro-American stance in foreign policy so much as its diplomatic and military support for the US' operations in Iraq. However, as with ESDP, Poland's ability to be characterized as an uncompromisable Atlanticist on the Iraq issue decreased considerably after 2004. As early as March of that year, Poland's apparently unquestioning diplomatic support was already diminishing. For instance, "President Kwasniewski admitted he felt 'misled' by US claims about WMD in Iraq" (Jacoby 253). Military support began to erode not long after. After Polish casualties began to increase in the fall of 2004, then-Defense Minister Szmajdzinski "expressed the view that the entire Polish contingent should withdraw...by the end of 2005" (Zaborowski 14). Although this was not actualized, in 2005, "the Polish Ministry of Defense announced plans to cut their troops to 1,700" (Jacoby 254). Thus, in retrospect, the Atlanticism that initially prompted Poland to support the US in Iraq was not so unqualified as it seemed during its 2003 heyday. The reasons for this subsequent reorientation represent a Polish reappraisal of the more transient and calculated factors that first influenced their involvement.

As it did in their initial decision to go to Iraq, economic considerations played a key role in Poland's stance after 2004. Much of their decreased support can be attributed to the rising costs associated with involvement, coupled with the disappointment of unrealized anticipated benefits. The first of these was the political cost of Polish loyalty to the US, which fostered resentment on the part of France and Germany which Poland could ill afford as newcomer to the EU. As Elizabeth Pond puts it, "[t]he Poles...realized...they would need to sell their cherries and computers in Frankfurt, not Houston" (54). The direct costs of Iraq also turned out to be higher than was predicted. "[A]fter a year in the desert, [the Poles] discovered that...they were in over their heads with this magnitude of responsibil-

ity...even with...US funding for their efforts" (Pond 54). To make matters worse, America started to decrease the liberality of this funding. "During the third rotation [of Polish troops] the Americans radically shut off the supply of money," states a *Warsaw Polityka* journalist (Cwieluch). Finally, the economic benefits of Polish involvement largely failed to materialize. When reconstruction began, the contracts which Polish firms had anticipated winning "turned out to be exceedingly hard to come by" (Jacoby 253). To complete this picture of foiled hopes, President Bush rejected President "Kwasniewski's direct personal appeal for an end to visa obligations for Polish visitors to the United States" (Jacoby 253). A decrease in Poland's willingness to maintain loyal support of America in the face of disappointed expectations and rising costs is understandable. However, it also serves as retroactive confirmation that the previous level of Polish Atlanticism on this issue was neither unquestioning nor unequivocal, but was to some extent motivated by transient calculations of national interest.

Also, as discussed earlier, much of Poland's initial decision to support the US in Iraq can be attributed to expectations that this would help them gain the position of a favored ally and leader of a "new" pro-American Europe, entailing expanded avenues for influence. However, this hope could no longer encourage Polish support when US and "old" Europe began to embark on a course of gradual rapprochement. By 2004, "both diplomacy and autonomous events were nudging the two sides of the Atlantic-and new and old Europe-together" (Pond 52). As the damage done to relations by the initial wave of western European anti-US rhetoric began to heal, it became apparent that the rift in which this "New Europe" hoped to insert itself was closing, and with it, Polish dreams for most-favored ally status. In reference to President Bush's 2005 reelection, a Polish journalist wrote "his team...[now] consists ...of internationalists striving to rebuild relations with the "old" Europe. The 'new' one was left in the lurch" (Cwieluch).

CONCLUSIONS

In the years after 2003, the historic, ethnic and ideological foundations of Polish Atlanticism remained unchanged. What had been altered was Poland's political, economic and strategic cost-benefit calculations of a vehemently pro-US alignment in the security and foreign policy sectors. Thus, a not-insignificant part of Poland's Atlanticism prior to 2004 was grounded in evaluations of national interest maximization, and cannot be characterized as an instinctual proclivity to unquestioningly support America due to unchangeable ties. This is further supported by the fact that Poland's Atlanticism suffered a subtle but notable decline after 2004, when this orientation no longer seemed as promising in terms of furthering Poland's influence, economic prospects and security in the world of states.

However, relative to other European nations, Poland remains one of the US's strongest allies. It is simply that its zealous level of support for the US was untenable in the face of divisive challenges, such as Iraq, and massive changes, such as Poland's entry into the EU. The same variable factors of interest calculations which led to the shift in Poland's orientation may change yet again. Therefore, it is not at all improbable to say that a heightened awareness of a Russian threat after the August War could send Poland back to its former position of dedicated and exclusive devotion to NATO with its Article 5 guarantees and US Armed Forces backing. Also, the recent inauguration of an American president more popular in Europe and more inclined toward multilateralism significantly decreases the probability of situations in which Poland will be forced to choose between a Scylla of the US and Charybdis of the EU, as was the case with Iraq. Thus, only time will tell whether Poland's

once-vigorous Atlanticism will experience resurgence to its former heights, or remain at a cordial, yet temperate level.

END NOTES

1. As then-President Kwasniewski describes Polish involvement in “Poland’s Kwasniewski Views Postwar Iraq, Ties with US, EU, Russia, Own Future.”

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