



Poland's approach to Russia Radicalism without policy

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At a time when Polish politicians disagree about almost everything, one subject is hardly discussed at all: policy towards Russia. Amid international shocks and crises, it might seem surprising that Poland's strategy towards its main opponent causes so little controversy. Yet this situation clearly suits most politicians and experts. For various reasons, they prefer the illusion that there is nothing to discuss, that there is consensus on Russia in Poland and that little can be changed, as Warsaw has very little room for manoeuvre when it comes to Moscow.

The belief in a lack of alternatives fits Warsaw's usual way of thinking about relations with Moscow; the idea that Russia is bad and fully to blame for the current situation. This view based on superiority and defensiveness is comfortable, as it frees Warsaw from having to question its actions and take responsibility for its powerlessness, ineptitude and irresponsibility in relations with Moscow.

Not even the opposition challenges this way of thinking now. It prefers to avoid the subject rather than expose itself to accusations of treason or morbid Russophobia. This fear of being labelled a "Russian agent" is stronger than its desire to criticise the government. With the governing Law and Justice (PiS) party's anti-EU and anti-German rhetoric, the opposition has come to fear a pro-Russian turn; the Polish authorities collaborating with the Kremlin against the West. This further supports maintaining the status quo. Every attempt at a more constructive approach to Polish-Russian relations is seen as "falling into Moscow's embrace".

The fear of a pro-Russian turn is difficult to justify nowadays. Continuing the current mindless "drift" is much more dangerous. The lack of a conscious and thought-out policy towards Russia not only deprives Poland of tools, but could lead to serious problems. Warsaw's room for manoeuvre is not that

small, but an effective strategy towards Russia will require a major effort by the authorities. Cultivating animosity is easier than conducting an effective policy towards a difficult partner, which involves constructive and nuanced efforts spanning energy, security, relations with Ukraine and Russian interference in Polish public life.

Geopolitical retreat

This lack of discussion prevents Poland from formulating an effective policy towards its largest neighbour, but also from noticing what has already happened in Polish-Russian relations. Much has changed in recent years. **Poland has carried out a geopolitical retreat, withdrawing from what can be called the fundamental “dispute over the borders of the West”.**

After the fall of communism, Warsaw’s policy towards Moscow focused on the strategic aim of extracting Poland from Russia’s sphere of influence and joining the West.¹ Yet its ambitions were not limited to shifting this geopolitical community’s border to the river Bug. Rather, it sought to “build a West in the East”, in the countries of eastern Europe that Russia considered (and still considers) its sphere of influence.

Today, the Polish government is no longer interested in expanding the West. Relations with Russia are primarily viewed in terms of Poland’s territorial sovereignty rather than defending or promoting a civilizational or systemic model. It believes that Poland does not need to belong to the European civilizational community, as it is currently defined, to defend itself from Russia. This is visible in the following aspects of Polish policy:

- **The Polish authorities have distanced themselves from the “Western model” in terms of institutions and values.** This goes beyond criticism, with them proposing their own, better vision of the “real Europe”. This can be seen in how the government initiated a conflict with Brussels on systemic issues and allowed it to escalate. This conflict involves a conscious decision to locate Poland on the peripheries of European integration. **This strategy can only be dictated by the conclusion that Poland is not a frontline state that must hold on to its Western identity strongly to halt the expansion of the Eastern civilizational model. This means that Poland considers other divisions – those within the Western world – more dangerous than the “dispute over the borders of the West”.**
- This reorientation of foreign policy is reflected in defence, where the government concentrates on developing bilateral relations with the United States, bypassing (or even undermining) multilateral relations with NATO allies and loyalty between EU partners. This is visible in how the government considers a bilateral American base in Poland its utmost security priority. This proposal was submitted without consulting others in NATO. Rather than shared values or responsibility for the alliance of the Western world, Poland cites business benefits when talking to the Americans. It is simply ready to pay for the American security umbrella.
- The change in Poland’s policy towards its eastern neighbours is also key. In recent years, Warsaw has become much less interested in promoting European standards in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine. This has disappeared from the list of priorities in bilateral relations with Kiev. Poland has almost fully withdrawn from the EU’s policy of supporting transition in its eastern

1 K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, “Dokąd sięgają granice Zachodu? Rosyjsko-polskie konflikty strategiczne 1990–2010”, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, 18.03.2010, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/raport-osw/2010-03-18/dokad-siegaja-granice-zachodu-rosyjsko-polskie-konflikty>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

neighbourhood, too. In the Russian context, PiS's policy towards Ukraine concentrates almost exclusively on "hard security". The priority is no longer a broadly understood Europeanization but rather strengthening Ukraine's military resilience against Russian aggression.

- Poland has shifted the weight of the dispute over historical memory from the conflict with Russia to that with Ukraine. Polish-Russian problems remain but generate far fewer emotions now than a few years ago. Of secondary importance until recently, the historical conflict with Ukraine has become the central issue in the Polish memory policy. The discussion on the amendment to the law on the Institute of National Remembrance completely overlooked that the new provisions would criminalise some statements by Russian politicians and historians (such as denying the invasion of 17 September 1939). This shows that, for the ruling camp, "separation" from the former imperial power in terms of awareness is less important than identity issues linked to the loss of Poland's eastern territories or the Volhynia massacre.

The consequences of these processes are far-reaching. Above all, Poland has lost a clear identity in relations with Moscow. The government in Warsaw lacks the legitimacy to present itself as part of the Western world supported by the "good" civilizational model, in opposition to a world built "the Russian way".

Neglecting the "dispute over the borders of the West" has isolated the Polish government in relations with the Kremlin. On the one hand, Poland is no longer a trustworthy partner for countries with a tough anti-Russian stance, such as the Netherlands or Sweden. These countries place a strong emphasis on defending European values and democracy (from Russia, too). On the other hand, Poland cannot gain partners among forces ideologically akin to itself. Political forces in Europe that PiS considers "related" to itself, like the governments in Budapest, Rome and Vienna, along with the National Front in France, are unambiguously pro-Russian. As a result, Poland is losing its position as the leader of the EU's eastern policy in the region. At odds with Brussels, Warsaw lacks the mandate to call for unity on Russia. It cannot criticise the pro-Russian policy of countries like Hungary either, as it needs their support in its dispute with Brussels over the rule of law.

At the level of verbal diplomacy, the PiS government still upholds the narrative of the "previous era", presenting itself as an exemplary representative of the West. Visiting Minsk on 1 November 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz said: "During the communist era, we were under the influence of the USSR, whereas the process of joining the EU and NATO, and common values with the West, is the right path to ensure stability".² This narrative does not change the essence of Polish policy; it just camouflages the political vacuum that Warsaw has found itself in when it comes to relations with Russia.

Abandoning the geopolitical "dispute over the borders of the West", Poland has withdrawn from a grand policy towards Russia. Rebuilding its position will be very difficult; it would have to rethink its ideology and settle its dispute with Brussels. For now, Poland must face the consequences of this new situation. This requires leaving the comfort zone of belief in a lack of alternatives in policy towards Russia. It is time to start asking uncomfortable questions and seeking answers that go beyond existing models.

² "Czaputowicz w Mińsku: Fort Trump to reakcja na agresywne działania Rosji", TVN 24.pl, 1 November 2018, <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/czaputowicz-w-minsku-fort-trump-reakcja-na-agresywne-dzialania-rosji,880429.html>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

Uncomfortable questions

Does co-operation with the United States increase Poland's security?

The US is rightly considered the only country with the military potential to oppose Russian aggression against Central Europe, including Poland. At the same time, the Kremlin views Washington as its main adversary and the American military presence by its border as a fundamental threat. Russia's interpretation of the situation might seem inadequate but it cannot be ignored.

Calling for a strong American presence in Poland, Warsaw is balancing between two factors: the risk of provoking Russia and the benefit of deterring it. The former is completely overlooked in the Polish debate. Talking about it is treated as yielding to the Russian narrative. In contrast, claiming that the presence of American soldiers in Poland will automatically increase its security is treated as obvious and indisputable.

This approach overlooks two key issues: firstly, the importance of the parameters of American engagement, and secondly, the long-term global context. If we talk about Russian aggression we mean it in the rather distant future as it is highly unlikely right now. Poland's hard security priorities should be established in light of long-term trends, not just in Polish-Russian relations. Aggression against Poland would result more from the US and Russia's global priorities and their bilateral relations than from Warsaw's actions. **Poland must understand that if there were an armed conflict on its territory it would not be a conflict about Poland (e.g. its incorporation into the Russian Empire). Poland would only be the instrument, the chessboard on which the Russian-American conflict would play out.**

Today the main threat to the US is China. The significance of Beijing and East Asia in US security policy will probably grow at the expense of engagement in Europe. Experts are considering scenarios in which a serious conflict in, say, the South China Sea prompts the US to radically reduce its presence in NATO countries.³ These priorities were confirmed by Donald Trump's recent decision to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which aimed to untie the Americans' hands in South-East Asia. The interests of NATO allies, especially those in Central Europe, and the future of European security were almost completely disregarded.⁴

Russia's main security interests – linked to protecting its sphere of influence, the fear of democratic “overthrow” and elites’ “anti-American” fixation – will remain in Europe and, more broadly, the Transatlantic area. Russia's use of military force follows certain fixed rules. Moscow strikes places that it considers significant for its adversaries but peripheral enough to avoid confrontation on a larger scale. This suggests that aggression in Poland's region would be a provocation seeking to change the

3 M. Terhalle, “Can Germans Think Strategically?”, *The National Interest*, 4 October 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/can-germans-think-strategically-32642>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

4 G. Gressel, “To INF or not to INF? How Unilateral Withdrawal Helps Moscow Get Away with Treaty Violations”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 24 October 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_inf_unilateral_withdrawal_moscow_treaty_violation?fbclid=IwAR3oYdSbGdLZZ3HZ4x5yqTrvf9QPXipwn9bN8WMMGsXeMxpFwgRiopaCqQw, accessed: 15 November 2018. D. Trenin, “Back to Pershings: What the U.S. Withdrawal from the 1987 INF Treaty Means”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 24 October 2018, https://carnegie.ru/commentary/77568?mkt_tok=eyJpJjoiWVRKa1pXRmpORGhpWIRKbCIsInQiOij6S3RVZW9pejVMcU9sXC9YR09kR0E0MDJiSVNQUGlnVFY-2SUZoZGg4VIA1MnVNSIBQKys3WjB6dkl4ZzdQVkJyNUljb0pjU3NPQVVSdUhWU0RZMVIZWmVIN3pzSGpYTTJG-V081NFNYN0gxRUxkSUs2WHgrRXJDZfK1WDZuTks3V3MifQ%3D%3D, accessed: 15 November 2018.

balance of power in Europe. It could target a country linked to the US, but not strongly enough for it to mean an all-out confrontation.

This has serious consequences for the Polish security policy. Its image of a country linked to the US, combined with this relationship's lack of stability and credibility, could create a risk in the long term. In this situation, the nature of the American presence in Poland is key. It will be the quality of co-operation with the US rather than the mere fact it is continued that could prove decisive for Poland's security. For Warsaw, the co-operation should be immune to the political climate in the US, based on legal guarantees, lasting institutional solutions and weighty strategic objectives, such as defending the Western model of civilization.

This co-operation should be inscribed in the broader allied system with European countries, which would strengthen Poland's position in relations with the US. Poland alone means much less to the US than Poland co-operating closely with Berlin, Paris and London. Western European countries are much more strongly linked to the US economically and militarily than Poland (see infographics on page 6). For Russia, an anti-American provocation would be less costly if it could be presented as "separated from other European countries" and a reaction to the irresponsible military policy of the US and its "European vassal".

Poland is currently building relations with the US in the opposite direction, emphasising the bilateral dimension and even the personal alliance with Trump. The call for a potential permanent US base in Poland to be named "Fort Trump" raises questions about its durability. To understand how a Trump's successor (for example, a Democrat) might view it, it is enough to picture PiS's attitude to any initiative named after former Prime Minister Donald Tusk. Moreover, co-operation with the US is built without reference to common values and is transactional in nature. It increasingly has an anti-EU edge and does not serve to strengthen NATO allies; instead, it bypasses them.

To conclude: a hard security co-operation with the US does not necessarily improve Poland's protection against Russian aggression in every case. **If it is of tertiary significance for the US and built in isolation from European allies, this co-operation – or what is left of it if the US pulls out – could make Poland an attractive place for a Russian provocation.**

Does freezing relations with Moscow serve Poland?

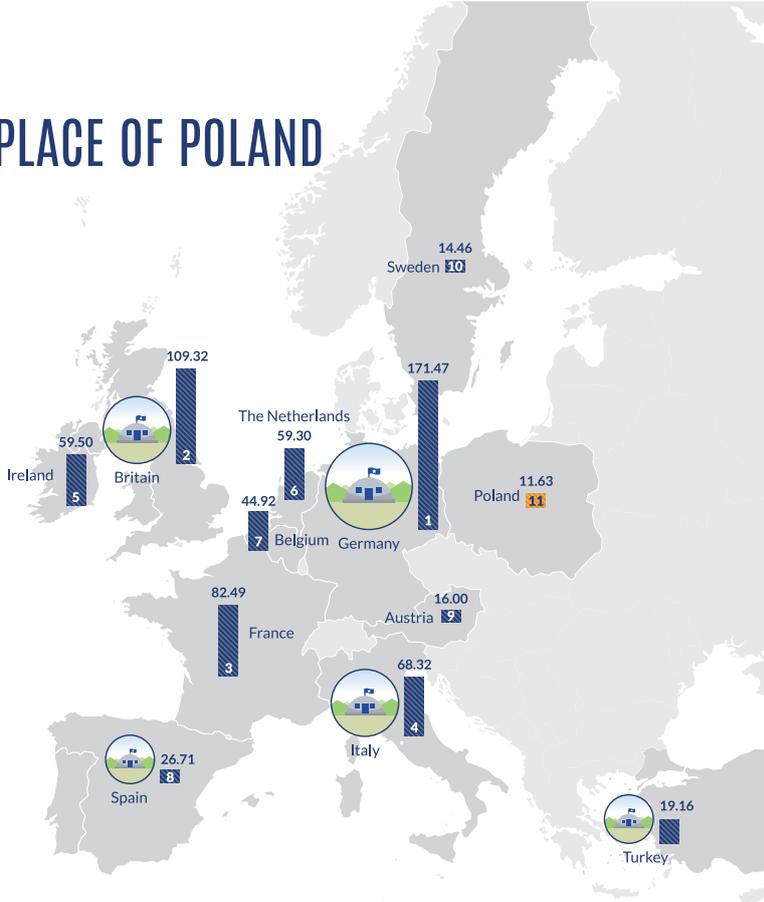
After the annexation of Crimea, Polish-Russian relations froze almost completely. Warsaw rightly joined the policy of international ostracism meant to signal the lack of acceptance for Russian aggression in Ukraine. With time, individual European countries and the US returned to selective co-operation with Moscow. Sanctions against Russia were maintained and even deepened, but political dialogue (even at the highest level) resumed.⁵

Poland's policy towards Russia went in the opposite direction. In 2016, small border traffic with the Kaliningrad region was suspended due to the NATO summit in Warsaw and the World Youth Day in Kraków. After that, the government announced that it would not be reinstated, citing unspecified security threats. During the four years after it was introduced, Polish institutions unanimously agreed that small border traffic benefits the local economy and is not a threat to security. It educates and increases awareness, showing Kaliningrad's inhabitants what life in an EU country looks like. On its own initiative, Poland got rid of a mechanism for strengthening pro-European attitudes in a key,

5 In recent months, Putin has met with the leaders of France, Germany, Austria and Italy, among others.

US ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE - THE PLACE OF POLAND

MAJOR BASES AND TRADE WITH THE US

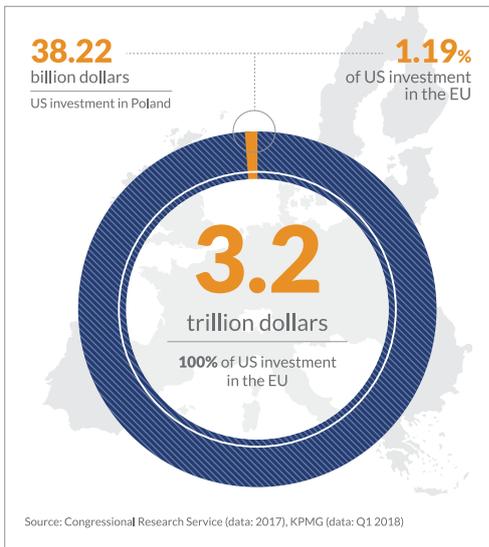


Sources: Heritage Foundation (data: 2014)
US Census Bureau (data: 2017)

US TROOPS IN EUROPE



US INVESTMENT IN THE EU



Infographics by Polska Grupa Infograficzna (Infograficy.pl)

neighbouring region of Russia. Economic co-operation, which was profitable at the regional level, was also cut off. From the Russian authorities' perspective, this is a good solution; the Kremlin did not want Kaliningrad's inhabitants to visit the EU more often than Russia.

Poland also cut off contacts with Russia by dismissing graduates of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGiMO) from management posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and announcing that they would be dismissed from the diplomatic corps). These decisions will not harm Russia or decrease Russian intelligence's influence in Poland, but they will make Polish diplomacy less competent in a key area. In a country bordering Russia, the value of knowing the language, Russian reality and how its diplomatic service operates, along with contacts developed while studying, cannot be overstated.

Finally, Poland's strategy on gas supplies is part of the further cooling of relations with Russia. Over the past three years, the idea of diversifying supplies by ending Gazprom's monopoly has been replaced by a policy of ceasing to buy Russian gas completely. In addition to the LNG terminal in Świnoujście completed by the previous government, Poland wants a Baltic pipeline that would deliver gas from Norway. Warsaw's arguments focus on security; the commercial dimension is rarely discussed. Experts doubt whether the project will be completed by 2022,⁶ when Poland's contract with Gazprom expires. If it is not ready, Poland will have to buy Russian gas anyway; it will just be too late to negotiate favourable conditions. The future of the contract for transit via the Yamal pipeline, which expires in 2019, is also unclear. So far, the Polish side has not signed a new contract, despite Gazprom's expression of interest. This is particularly surprising given how one of Warsaw's criticisms of Nord Stream 2 is that it bypasses existing transit infrastructure in Ukraine and Poland.

In the current government's policy towards Russia, co-operation is increasingly equated with dangerous collaboration. Decision-makers are convinced that the best way to protect Poland against Russian influence is to cut off all relations. While links can indeed be used as an instrument of unwanted influence, cutting off all contact is like treating a leg pain with amputation – the pain will end, but the loss is disproportionately big. This approach results from the perceived weakness of public institutions, i.e. the fear that they will be incapable of controlling relations with Russia. However, it is also a conscious choice of an easier path. It is much easier to halt all co-operation than to take the risk of conducting a nuanced policy towards a difficult partner.

Hostility has become a comfortable "camouflage" for neglecting subjects that matter to Polish citizens. One example is the monument to the victims of the Smolensk plane crash, which has completely disappeared from Poland's list of expectations. It is not just about symbolic commemoration; it also means providing decent conditions for people to honour the victims at the crash site in Russia. The selling of the land around the site to a private owner, making it even more uncertain that a memorial will be built there, went unnoticed. It might be said that the chances of reaching an agreement with Russia are currently small. Yet problems that cannot be solved today might be solvable in a few years' time. In fact, abandoning the problem means tacit consent. In the case of Smolensk, the Polish government's policy means accepting that there will be no monument at the crash site.

6 Final decisions were originally expected to be made by the end of 2018, but these deadlines were moved to 2019. "Potential Contractors a Highly Interested in Implementing the Baltic Pipe Pipeline", Biznes Alert, 12 October 2018, <http://biznesalert.com/baltic-pipe-gaz-system-implementation/>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

Does Poland want to counter Russian interference?

Supporters of Warsaw's "total" hostility towards Moscow often cite Russia's aggressive policy towards the EU and NATO, not just militarily, but above all in terms of hybrid activity spanning disinformation, corruption, political provocation and cyber-aggression.

The results of an investigation into Russia's hostile actions in cyberspace were presented at a Dutch-British conference in the Hague on 4 October 2018. Hackers' targets included businesses in Ukraine, media outlets in Britain, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the World Anti-Doping Agency. The agents responsible for the attacks were identified and information on preventative actions presented. The conference was accompanied by a joint statement by Prime Ministers Theresa May and Mark Rutte, who highlighted their determination to defend the international order and international institutions against those that seek to destroy them. The British National Cyber Security Centre published detailed information on concrete attacks.⁷

The decision to reveal the special services' operations followed Russian attacks on an unprecedented scale (as Dutch officials put it). Informing the public about Russia's actions and defensive steps by the special services was deemed an effective way of countering aggression. On the one hand, it shows the attacked countries' strength and ability to act; on the other hand, it humiliates the opponent and demonstrates its weaknesses.

This is just one example of how Western democracies counter Russia's policy of interfering in their politics.⁸ A report by the American Center for Strategic and International Studies provides another example.⁹ Two days before the first round of the French presidential election in 2017, emails from Emmanuel Macron's campaign were leaked.¹⁰ There were fake materials among the real ones. Within a few hours, the prosecutor's office had launched an investigation and pro-Kremlin media outlets Russia Today and Sputnik had lost their accreditation for Macron's campaign. Preventive efforts before the election were extremely significant, too. There was a wide-ranging information campaign, including one addressed to party officials from across the political spectrum. The Ministry of Defence appointed a unit of 2600 "cyber-soldiers". Under pressure from the authorities, Facebook made the unprecedented decision to close 70,000 fake accounts operating in France.¹¹

There are many signs that Poland is a target of Russian "soft aggression", too. According to an F-Secure report, most of the cyberattacks in Poland between October 2016 and March 2017 (65,493 per

7 *Reckless Campaign of Cyber Attacks by Russian Military Intelligence Service Exposed*, National Cyber Security Centre, 4 October 2018, <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/reckless-campaign-cyber-attacks-russian-military-intelligence-service-exposed>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

8 M. Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages its Political War in Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, August 2017, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR228_-_CONTROLLING_CHAOS.pdf, accessed: 15 November 2018.

9 H. A. Conley, *Successfully Countering Russian Electoral Interference*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 21 June 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/successfully-countering-russian-electoral-interference>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

10 N. Bulckaert, "How France Successfully Countered Russian Interference During the Presidential Election", *EurActiv*, 17 July 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/how-france-successfully-countered-russian-interference-during-the-presidential-election/>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

11 The German government also took preventive action before the 2017 elections. Chancellor Angela Merkel scheduled a special session of the Federal Security Council dedicated exclusively to countering Russian interference, which was attended by key ministers, military commanders and the special services. In this case, the Kremlin did not take any undesirable steps, as reliably measured by the system monitoring Russian activity during the campaign and the election itself run by the Digital Society Institute.

day on average) came from Russia.¹² Little is said in Poland about this and other kinds of Russian interference. Most of the information on the subject comes from NGOs, independent experts and journalists, rather than reports by public institutions.¹³ Interference is also mentioned in statements by politicians. This usually involves enumerating aggressive actions attributed to Russia. The Polish authorities are silent about their own effects to counter Russian aggression. Public opinion only found out about the prosecution of two individuals: leader of the pro-Russian Zmiana (Change) party Mateusz Piskorski, who had never hidden his pro-Kremlin sympathies, and Lyudmyla Kozlovska, a Ukrainian citizen and head of the Open Dialogue Foundation.

Piskorski spent two years under arrest without an indictment and is still awaiting trial. The Polish authorities added Kozłowska's name to the Schengen Information System (thereby preventing her from entering the Schengen zone), accusing her of unspecified pro-Russian activity to the Polish state's detriment. She responded by accusing the Polish government of political persecution. Her arguments were convincing enough (unlike the Polish services' ones) for her to be invited to Brussels, Berlin and London within a few weeks of being "blacklisted". Both situations are highly controversial. Unlike the Dutch or British investigations, it is hard to consider them signs of an effective struggle against Russian interference that would show the state's strength and made citizens feel protected. Likewise, there is no information about preventive measures to protect Poland against interference in the electoral process – even though the analysis after the local elections in late 2018 indicated that there had been disinformation attempts by Russia.¹⁴

Most worryingly, the Polish state remains completely deaf to scandals in which there are serious suspicions that the "Russian trace" has appeared in Polish politics. One example are former Minister of National Defence Antoni Macierewicz's circle's non-transparent connections with Russian politics and business.¹⁵ Yet the most important case is the wiretapping scandal of 2014, in which the conversations of several top Polish politicians were recorded illegally. The leaked tapes contributed to the change of government in Poland in 2015. The main person responsible for the recordings, Marek Falenta (who received a prison sentence), owed Russian entities tens of millions of dollars but was never pursued by them. Although this was raised many times by the media,¹⁶ the Polish authorities have responded with silence and the special services and prosecutor's office with passivity.

The Polish authorities' lack of resistance to Russian information manipulation is equally worrying. People in Poland are convinced that the dominant distrust in the Kremlin makes society immune to Russian propaganda. On the contrary, the Kremlin's manipulation does not always involve self-promotion. One example of Poles being "seduced" by Russian propaganda relates to the support efforts in Ukraine funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project involved support for Ukrainians

12 K. Majdan, *Skąd pochodzą cyberataki na Polskę? Głównie z Rosji, Niemiec i... Polski*, „Business Insider Polska”, 28 March 2018, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/technologie/nowe-technologie/z-jakich-krajow-pochodza-cyberataki-na-polske-f-secure/j26hq6m>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

13 A. Mierzyńska, „Siewcy strachu. 10 dni z rosyjską propagandą w Polsce. To są żołnierze w walce informacyjnej”, OKO.press, 5 June 2018, <https://oko.press/siewcy-strachu-10-dni-z-rosyjska-propaganda-w-polsce-to-sa-zolnierze-w-walce-informacyjnej/>, accessed: 15 November 2018, see also <https://www.facebook.com/RosyjskaVKolumnawPolsce/>, accessed: 15 November 2018, oraz: *Prognoza: główne cele rosyjskiej propagandy w Polsce na 2017 rok*, Centrum Analiz Propagandy i Dezinformacji, 24 March 2017, <https://capd.pl/pl/prognozy/164-prognoza-glowne-cele-rosyjskiej-propagandy-w-polsce-na-2017-rok>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

14 Tweet by Anna Mierzyńska: https://twitter.com/Anna_Mierzynska/status/10608759223243008.

15 T. Piątek, *Macierewicz i jego tajemnice*, Warszawa 2017.

16 G. Rzeczkowski, „Rosyjski ślad na taśmach”, *Polityka*, 4 Setepmber 2018, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1762482,1,afera-tasmowa-kto-stal-za-kelnerami.read>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

growing fruit, including raspberries.¹⁷ The initiative was publicised by Sputnik during the culmination of tensions between the Polish government and raspberry producers demanding better sales conditions for their fruit. To kindle anti-Ukrainian sentiment among Polish farmers, the Russian media outlet insinuated that the Polish government cared more about the development of agriculture in Ukraine than in Poland. The Polish state responded exactly how Russia wanted it to: within a few days, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs withdrew from the project.

The Polish state lacks instruments to handle Russian interference. This helplessness goes beyond the weakness of the Polish intelligence services. Kremlin's actions often blend in with the political dispute in each country. Countering aggression almost always undermines the political class; consciously or unconsciously, its representatives become part of Russian manipulation and corruption.

Protecting the state against Russian interference requires efficient public institutions that act in a non-partisan manner and are perceived as such by the general public. This has never been the strong point of Polish government institutions.. However, the politicisation of institutions in recent years has compounded this problem. Today, the Polish government lacks the institutional capacity to carry out a credible investigation into Russian interference but keeping silent about highly suspicious matters is the worst possible attitude. It sends a clear message to Russia that Poland is helpless and that a potential aggressor will go unpunished. The Polish society and politicians are gradually getting used to the hypocrisy: loud assurances that Poland is defending its sovereignty are mixed with sovereignty not being treated seriously and not protected.

A turn, but not towards Russia

Commentators and opposition politicians often express their concern about a pro-Russian turn by current Polish government. Yet that kind of shift seems unlikely; most of the Polish society has a negative attitude towards Russia and there are numerous conflicts between the two countries. At least some of them would need to be resolved to justify this kind of turn. This would, however, require some political will from Russia. Meanwhile, there are many signs that Moscow is not interested in doing so and is not dreaming of a pro-Russian turn in Warsaw.

Poland has ceased to threaten what the Kremlin considers fundamental: the inviolability of Russia's sphere of influence. The weakening of the PiS government's position in the EU due to the dispute over the rule of law has also reduced Warsaw's ability to shape EU policy towards Moscow. As a result, Russia has ceased to consider Poland a significant player. This does not mean that it is completely off the Kremlin's radar. Poland is no longer a partner, but it remains an important target. It has become an "instrument" in Russia's anti-European, anti-democratic and anti-Ukrainian strategy. To achieve its aims, Russia does not need to make friendly gestures towards Poland. On the contrary, a "Russophobic" Poland, in conflict with Berlin, Paris, Brussels and Kiev, is fully satisfying.

Russia is too important for Poland to remain lost in illusions and helpless isolation. Warsaw must move away from its current (non)policy towards Russia, which need not – indeed, should not – mean cynical co-operation with Putin.

17 L. Sigan, "Czy ukraińscy rolnicy są realną konkurencją dla polskich producentów?", *Sputnik Polska*, 6 July 2018, <https://pl.sputniknews.com/opinie/201807068328287-Ukraina-rolnictwo-wsparcie-polski-rzad-sadownicy-ja-blka-maliny-Rosja/>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

- Above all, Poland should end its single-minded policy of seeking hard security, reduced to a personal relationship with Trump and a quantitative focus on the US military presence in Poland. The claim that a bigger presence means greater security is not necessarily true. The durability and long-term credibility of Washington's engagement is key. Today, this is only possible by incorporating this co-operation into multilateral NATO institutions and the transatlantic community of values while supporting it with good relations with European allies. Divisions between Europe and the US does not mean that Poland needs to pick sides immediately. By ignoring its European partners, Warsaw not only discourages important allies but also condemns itself to vassal-like relations with Washington. Poland should not only talk about armaments, but also contribute to discussions about peacebuilding. It should actively participate in the conceptualisation of a new disarmament strategy like the one announced by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs in response to the US pulling out of the INF.
- Normalising relations with Ukraine, especially a return to high-level visits, is incredibly important. It is wrong to think that bad relations with Kiev do not undermine Poland's security policy towards Russia. How can Warsaw convince the Italians or the Spaniards that Ukraine is worth supporting if it is so at odds with it that neither the Polish prime minister nor the president have visited Kiev in over two years? This lack of visits undermines Poland's credibility when it comes to security on NATO's eastern flank. Warsaw's almost three-year disputes with Kiev create a huge gap in mutual trust, which supports Russian efforts to separate Ukraine from Poland and Europe. Poland needs to maintain at least a minimum of instruments of communication with Russia. It is short-sighted to believe that interactions are not worth the while because nothing can be achieved. Being able to talk to Russia strengthens Poland's credibility in Western countries that, in these tough times, are particularly sensitive to unnecessary escalation and intent on building pragmatic relations with the Kremlin. Poland must also remember that there might be situations in which it will want to (or have to) talk to Russia. Institutional and interpersonal contacts are easy to destroy but take a long time to rebuild. It is worth resuming lower-level contacts and looking after existing forms of co-operation. Warsaw should also try to resume small border traffic with Kaliningrad and stop stigmatising Polish diplomats who studied at MGIMO, as this deprives the diplomatic service of expertise on Russia and discourages younger generations from investing in this specialisation.
- Poland's criticism of Vladimir Putin's regime does not mean that it cannot benefit from having Russia as its neighbour. Given its size and proximity, Poland can benefit from the Russian market. It is advisable that the number of trade representations be increased (reduced from three to one in 2017).¹⁸ The decision to stop importing Russian gas should be rationally assessed; the cost of switching to gas from Norway (including building new infrastructure) could be huge. Meanwhile, the risk of Russia using gas to blackmail Poland is much smaller now, in part due to the LNG terminal in Świnoujście. Poland may not need to halt gas deliveries from Russia completely to protect its energy security, especially since the government does not consider coal or oil imports from Russia such a threat.
- Finally, the Polish government must address the question of Russian interference seriously.
 - For the wiretapping scandal, a Sejm investigation committee seems to be the best solution (proposed on multiple occasions by commentators and experts). Its composition should be

¹⁸ Trade and Investment Promotion Departments were abolished in 2017 and replaced with Foreign Trade Bureaus. There had been three Departments in Russia; in Kaliningrad, St Petersburg and Moscow. After the reform, there was just one Bureau, in Moscow.

as politically balanced as possible. For example, it could be chaired by someone not linked to either of the two biggest parties, Civic Platform (PO) or PiS, which are the most entangled in the affair.

- Poland also needs to prepare a strategy for countering information manipulation, which would provide a clear procedure for responding to provocations from Russia. Poland must avoid a situation in which officials not only fail to alert the public about manipulation, but give in to it themselves. The population should be informed about the existence of a concrete strategy, as awareness of these mechanisms increases the resistance of public opinion and state structures to interference.
- Special arrangements should be put in place to protect critical infrastructure and the electoral process. Poland should draw on the experience of countries that already have mechanisms of this kind, as well as support from the EU and NATO. Both organisations are working intensively to help member states protect themselves against cyberattacks.¹⁹
- Finally, a crucial part of protecting Poland against Russian interference is strengthening its credibility in international co-operation. The conflict over the rule of law does not do Poland's image any favours. Situations like the Lyudmyla Kozlovska case, involving the reckless abuse of common European protection mechanisms by the Polish state, should also be avoided.

Poland is not treating its biggest neighbour and main opponent seriously. Hostility and isolation replace a real Russia policy that would promote Poland's interests and be an adequate response to threats. Rather than noisy declarations of moral indignation, it needs a more constructive and realistic strategy built into EU and NATO policies on security, Ukraine, gas supplies and selected bilateral affairs, among other things. Rather than "swing a sabre" in hypothetical armed conflicts, Poland needs to counteract real Russian aggression. Hypocrisy – failing to notice Russian interference behind a facade of hostility – is the worst possible approach. Let us be frank: our hostility barely hurts Russia; on the contrary, in its current form, it suits it. Moscow does not need a pro-Russian turn in Warsaw. A Poland shouting hostile slogans makes almost all the Kremlin's wishes come true.

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19 S. Besch, *Protecting European Networks: What can NATO do?*, Centre for European Reform, 31 October 2018, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/protecting-european-networks-what-can-nato-do>, accessed: 15 November 2018.

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