

## Key mistakes of Polish foreign policy towards Ukraine

In July 2016, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland (the lower house of the Parliament) passed a resolution recognising the massacre of Poles in Volhynia in the 1940s as a genocide, which in turn has affected Polish–Ukrainian relations. A large majority of Polish politicians and intellectual elites remain unaware of the scale of the problem as well as consequences of their own actions. It seems that a change of government has not contributed to the implementation of a new foreign policy approach towards Ukraine. Furthermore, the Government seems to continue the policy of its predecessors, which is flawed by short-sightedness, repeats the same mistakes and lacks a long-term vision.

### New challenges facing Polish–Ukrainian relations

According to the Ukrainian commentators, as a result of the resolution adopted in July 2016, Warsaw lost its 'soft power capabilities' towards Kyiv and favour from pro-Polish left-

wing and liberal circles in Ukraine, which had previously dominated the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue and cooperation for the last few years. The stance and opinions expressed by a large number of Ukrainian intellectuals reflect these statements. The Ukrainian intellectual elite and the current government of Poland are not likely to reach a compromise; instead, preferences and political connections of the Ukrainian elites might be used in a political power struggle in Poland, in order to mobilise voter support, or even as a tool of anti-Ukrainian propaganda.

Polish foreign policy towards Ukraine is shaped by internal and external factors, which are as follows:

To build a long-term policy strategy toward Ukraine, it is crucial to start a series of non-partisan, analytical and expert projects (such as round tables, symposia, conferences and closed meetings) which would involve representatives of various intellectual circles. The results and takeaways from these meetings should be implemented as soon as possible and consequently constitute the foundation of a long-term political strategy towards Ukraine.

- A growing influence of the so-called 'Kresy' (Eastern Borderlands) circles on various levels of governmental structures and adviser positions. These organisations embody different approaches: a) far-right nationalism; b) anti-EU sentiment; c) anti-NATO sentiment; d) pro-Russian stance; e) direct cooperation with pro-Russian individuals, institutions or organisations; f) anti-Semitic, anti-democratic and chauvinistic rhetoric coupled with patriotism; g) are used instrumentally by certain individuals or interest groups. A deep distrust of post-revolutionary Ukraine and raising fear of growing Ukrainian nationalism are the most significant attributes that characterise these 'circles'.
- New, concealed, pro-Russian narratives in the political circles in Warsaw, such as those promoting closer cooperation with the People's Republic of China as an alternative to the 'collapsing' of the European Union, or even to the entire Euro-Atlantic vector (the so called 'new Eurasianism' will require reaching an agreement with Russia).
- Political competition aimed at winning support from right-wing voters is the main reason why Government is involved in ideological disputes which disrupt Polish diplomacy and affect government's employment policy and actions of the opposition.
- Using history for current internal policy purposes and as a foreign policy tool (used primarily for shaping the domestic public opinion), is particularly perilous at a time when an of information warfare is waged by the Russian Federation. Such an approach is characteristic for both countries. However, it is worth emphasizing that Poland is not the most important point of reference for the Ukrainians as far as the discourse regarding their national identity is concerned, and in which the Ukrainians interpret and reinterpret their history.
- The citizens sense of security and their perception of the international order (the attitude towards migrant crisis and a growing threat of terrorist attacks might lead to negative sentiments, which could then be easily manipulated, while the lack of strategic plans for information warfare and countermeasures against 'hybrid threats' might lead to the rise of populist parties).

The following are new external challenges:

- A rise in the number of propaganda actions of the Russian Federation, which are related to: military provocations against the Armed Forces of NATO member states; growing militarisation and authoritarianism; increased funding of political parties, institutions and non-governmental organisations in many European countries.
- Countering disinformation is becoming more and more difficult due to growing chaos in the information space (lack of national strategies and support for institutions and programs related to cybersecurity and information warfare is particularly consequential).
- The European migrant crisis, which affects the public opinion in the states affected by it, the Syrian civil war and the events in Turkey further complicate the internal situation within the European Union and NATO (forcing these organisations to relocate their financial and human resources, e.g. experts; analytical research; intelligence operations and support programs to mitigate these problems; and consequently reduce their capabilities in the East).
- The anti-EU and pro-Russian circles have been strengthened by destructive decentralising tendencies in the EU (the rise of populism, local separatist movements, anti-EU rhetoric and criticism of the European integration process) and the EU membership referendum in the UK.
- The upcoming elections in France, Germany and the USA (especially in relation to Donald Trump's latest concerning statements) together with the current political situation in the UK disrupt the process of developing a long-term strategy towards Russia and Ukraine and, in turn, support Russian government propaganda.

Growing support for political parties and organisations which spread pro-Russian, anti-EU and anti-NATO sentiments in Europe.

## Major mistakes of Polish policy towards Kyiv – conceptual sphere

Inadequacies affect not only the sphere of diplomacy and its political environment, but also other state functions. However, these inadequacies have a particularly negative impact on the foreign policy. The biggest mistakes of Polish foreign policy towards Ukraine are:

1. Limited commitment of experts and elites to work for the common good beyond the boundaries – an internal power struggle in Poland is becoming more violent and can be considered as a factor undermining Poland's soft power, its potential and the image.
2. A lack of long-term, multilayered strategy towards Ukraine – it is necessary to analyse several dimensions regarding this issue: a limited number of experts in this field and a lack of conceptual frameworks for expert community; a lack of willingness to discuss current issues beyond the political boundaries; the use of foreign policy for domestic policy purposes; insufficient knowledge of Ukraine among decision makers, which determines the quality of political decisions; a lack of specialisation and coordination between ministries, as well as a lack of PR strategies and media support for the Polish projects in Ukraine; and finally, a lack of proper funding in particular (a limited budget at all levels of the administration: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and Administration, voivodeships; and a limited number of EU funding opportunities).
3. A lack of continuity in foreign policy – diplomatic actions of governmental and non-governmental actors are determined by their political agenda and the current political landscape. This has serious consequences for ambitious, successful programs and projects, which are either cancelled or modified. As a result of this policy, the administration loses experienced staff (and thus their contacts and know-how) which affects the quality of foreign policy and an access to information among politicians. Furthermore, the politicisation of non-governmental organisations (main beneficiaries of grants), which are commonly redressing the old projects into new rhetoric, is another major issue.
4. Inadequate HR policy – based on ideological, rather than meritocratic selection. Moreover, political purges can paralyse the functioning of state institutions for several months; decrease the flexibility and rapid reaction capabilities; decrease the staff willingness to show initiative and provide constructive criticism; promote passivity (particularly in case of state institutions and non-governmental organisations which receive state funding). The political circles are not able to cooperate more systematically and benefit from the research provided by the NGOs for the good of the country.

5. A command as a tool to achieve political goals – there is no place for dissent from the management policies; foreign policy goals are adjusted to suit the needs of the domestic policy; highly complex, fragile, delicate diplomatic processes are being disrupted in support of short-term individual interests of politicians.
6. Excessive interference in the functioning of advisory institutions conducting analytical research – this is related to the previous problems (points no. 4 and 5) and to the state approach to experts' duties and the funding (the so-called 'Desktop Researcher' model is becoming more common, meaning that analysts are expected to work at the office and, in turn, the funding of their international and domestic deputations is also limited. This approach has certain negative consequences for the employees: they lose contact with an object of research; they lack the understanding of the problem and its nuances, which will result, in the long term, in doing research in accordance with a given thesis).

A lack of coordination in the information sphere – this is a result of the growing power struggle in Poland, lack of proper funding, government employment policy and political will combined with external disruptions (psychological warfare and information operations). Disputes and antagonisms damage the country's image and in turn, expose Poland to hybrid threats. Journalists and analysts from the 'hostile circles' do not contact each other; therefore, the information circulation remains limited, which allows high-risk individuals and agents of influence to enter the information space. The agents adapt their opinions to the specific narration and consequently act in the public space in order to affect political disputes or promote a specific approach such as: the autarky; relying only on our capabilities; or undermining military credibility of NATO.

### Major mistakes of Polish policy towards Kyiv – factual sphere

1. Ineffective allocation of financial resources – this issue is related to the inefficiency of programs associated with the Polish foreign policy; poor communication between institutions carrying out the projects and decision-making centres; and finally, the question whether those programs are useful for the Government. Furthermore, these failures lead to the competition between NGOs and think tanks, which weakens the synergy effect and consequently causes an overlap in their zones of competence. The organisations become more dependent on state funding and

consequently work for politicians tend to their interests or even write papers in accordance with a given thesis.

2. The state structures are hermetic to independent experts – it is necessary to implement an open door policy and allow experts who have a different point of view to participate in the public and internal institutional debate (including foreign opinions). In the long term, this policy will allow to prevent further failures and dangerous trends, increase the accuracy of forecasts and react in more flexible way. This approach is particularly important due to lack of specialists in the public administration, ministries and state institutions.
3. An insufficient number of scientific, expert, cultural, social and economy-related events – this issue results from an inefficient funding mechanisms and the fact that such events have a limited impact on the decision making process. Poland is still not able to effectively support investors, scientists and experts on issues related to Ukraine; therefore Poland's influence and economic profits related to the political transformation in Ukraine are limited.
4. Too few projects linked to the economic cooperation with Ukraine – the biggest failures and shortcomings in this field are as follows:
  - Border crossing waiting times and the general situation at the Polish-Ukrainian border – border checkpoints are overburdened due to a low number of crossings (according to the current estimates, it is necessary to build from 20 to 25 new border checkpoints, however the only one such crossing is under construction currently, with the estimated date of completion in 2020). Given the number of Ukrainian citizens who live, work and study in Poland, as well as the opportunities related to potential investment, science, technology and tourism, the queues on border checkpoints are not acceptable.
  - Polish-Ukrainian cooperation in the energy sector – it is worth mentioning the case of the Odessa-Brody-Płock-Gdańsk pipeline and Rzeszów-Khmelnyskyi power line, where a lack of political will stalled development of the Polish-Ukrainian project. On top of that there exists an opportunity to strengthen cooperation with Ukrainian biofuel companies which might supply Polish power plants.

- Polish investments in Ukraine – limited intergovernmental contacts and a lack of significant lobbying presence of Polish state institutions in Ukraine are not encouraging the Polish investors. This also undermines Poland's soft power in Ukraine (particularly in terms of cooperation in the banking sector, IT, defence and military industry, technology, industry, farming and also privatisation of Ukrainian state companies in the long term).
5. The visa policy failures – the Ukrainians have to face common difficulties related to visa procedures. This issue concerns not only retailers, but also students, employees, scientists, journalists, experts or even holders of the 'Polish Card' (*Karta Polaka*). These problems result in worsening the image of Poland; foster corruption in Polish consulates in Ukraine; and increase the risk of employing individuals who work for the Russian Federation. The perpetual changes in the legal code, and an overgrowth of bureaucracy, which, however, is not to be blamed on the Polish diplomatic personnel. Nevertheless, a change in Polish Ambassador in Kyiv might be an opportunity to reconsider the issue of Polish representatives (particularly in the overburdened consulate of Poland in Lviv) in the country which perceives Poland as a case study in reforms.
  6. Inadequacies of the Polish immigration policy towards the citizens of post-Soviet states – this matter is related to mismanagement of the officials who issue the 'Polish Card'. In Ukraine, it is a well known fact that it is easy to meet the requirements for 'Polish Card', however, it might pose certain threats and worsen Poland's image. The instrument, which was expected to integrate Poles living abroad, may instead be used as a tool to obtain EU citizenship by people who have nothing in common with Poland (on the other hand, people who graduated in Poland and can speak Polish fluently, live here with their families, pay taxes and identify themselves with Poland are in much worse situation). A long-term strategy that could help fix this problem is also missing. The example of Romania, that issued approximately 200,000 passports for Ukrainian citizens, particularly those living in Chernivtsi Oblast, is worth a mention.
  7. Unused human potential – it should be noted, that a growth in the number of Ukrainians studying and living in Poland did not increase the awareness of the current situation in Poland or understanding of the European Union among Ukrainian

citizens. Ukrainian population living abroad does not, as of now, provide a feedback loop on how their own society is organised, and thus does not help facilitate a domestic change. This issue results from a lack of vision, cooperation between various circles, political willingness and state funding in this field. All of this is compounded by a negative impact of the resolution recognising the genocide of Poles in Volhynia.

Limited cooperation in the military industry – the Multinational Joint Commission on military cooperation and planning, which was established to support military reforms and develop modern training programs for the Ukrainian Armed Forces is a perfect case study. The Commission, chaired by the representatives of five states (Ukraine, Great Britain, Canada and Lithuania) coordinates the Joint Multinational Training Group – Ukraine, which is the considered by Ukrainian Government to be the most efficient tool supporting the Armed Forces. Ukrainian soldiers receive a training in accordance with NATO standards, the exercises are over-sought by NATO instructors and are organised in the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre in Yavoriv (in 2016, the instructors from the USA and UK have conducted training courses for 4,000 Ukrainian soldiers). Poland is not involved in this process (despite the presence of Lithuania), nevertheless the presence of Poles from the 21st Podhalan Rifleman Brigade who are stationed in Yavoriv. Another problem is a lack of strong Polish lobbying presence in Ukraine and insufficient support for Polish military companies interested in market expansion into Ukraine. Poland does not lead any international projects as far as military industry is concerned, even though such projects, organised in cooperation with Ukraine, may well turn out to be of benefit to Poland, especially as far as acquiring hands-on experience on the know-how related to combat operations but also new technologies.

### Conclusions and recommendations

1. Polish foreign Policy towards Ukraine requires a long-term, deliberate strategy based on strong and well defined fundamentals. Therefore, the strategy should focus on strengthening the economic, scientific, technological and military cooperation, support for foreign direct investments as well as greater involvement of defence industry. However, this approach also requires readiness to commit on a political level, an increased involvement of state security services and the coordination of actions in the information



space all acting in support of those initiatives. Furthermore, it is necessary to increase the awareness of political circles and strengthen non-governmental sectors as far as specificity of cooperating with Ukrainians is concerned.

2. To build a long-term policy strategy towards Ukraine, it is crucial to start a series of non-partisan, analytical and expert projects (such as round tables, symposia, conferences and closed meetings) which would involve representatives of various intellectual circles. The results and takeaways from these meetings should be implemented as soon as possible and consequently constitute the foundation of a long-term political strategy towards Ukraine. Simultaneously, the society, administration and politicians should acknowledge the role and importance of non-governmental organisations.

3. There is a burning necessity to develop flexible financing lines, which can only be created if the stakeholders are willing to subject themselves to constructive criticism, intragovernmental cooperation, and political will. It is crucial to increase the funding available for analytical and expert institutes, as well as support new apolitical initiatives. These projects should focus on the current needs of Polish diplomacy and its strategic goals, including development of the employment system, invulnerable to political fluctuations, that would allow to build up on and retain the previously acquired experience of as well as ensure the continuity in politics and analytical research. Therefore, it is highly recommended to analyse the current grant competition process at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4. It is necessary to leave the 'stationary' model in Polish science and analytics, however, this process will require a significant modification of teaching strategies, employment of more qualified staff and an increase in funding.

5. It is necessary to develop a new, flexible model of institutional cooperation with non-governmental organisations (an efficient use of apolitical research of experts and know-how of NGOs for the common good).

6. Increasing the funding for the state security services is important as never before (counterintelligence, intelligence, cybersecurity, countermeasures against hybrid threats). It is also important to develop and support the civilian counterintelligence (to unveil, neutralise and fight against propaganda and disinformation by third countries).

7. Principle of pragmatism should be applied in the process of revamping the state funded NGO support programs, which would enhance the synergic effect in research, economy and

science. It is necessary to intensify formal and unofficial networking efforts, not only on a political and academic level, but also those geared towards well defined economic goals, particularly support for Polish investments, and tightening cooperation as far as economy, and industrial cooperation is concerned. Optimisation of border crossing procedure is an important challenge – this entails diagnosing and providing recommendations for the personnel, coupled with anti-corruption measures. Likewise, support of Ukrainian side's efforts aimed at tackling corruption, and an increase in funding for the Border Guard personnel. It is also necessary to review and if necessary reconsider the 'Polish Card' program, visa procedures, which should be accompanied by an increase in staffing, and potentially, find new ways to support Consulate staff.

8. It is also worth thinking how to reinforce feedback loop between the Ukrainian students living in Poland, and the Ukrainian society – this is particularly important from the standpoint of increasing Polish soft-power. The cooperation with Ukrainian military industry should be perceived as one of the priorities of the Polish Government. Polish companies should receive political support for their investments and cooperation with their Ukrainian counterparts, while Warsaw initiates further programs such the Multinational Joint Commission on military cooperation and planning. Another opportunity for Poland are the analytical projects and other programs related to hybrid and cyber threats, which may be developed with Ukrainian non-governmental organisations (possibly with a further participation from the US and Canada). Poland should be involved in each of these projects and initiate all the efforts in these field.

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