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Poland: Background and U.S. Relations

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Poland: Background and U.S. Relations

Over the past 30 years, the relationship between the United States and Poland has been close and cooperative. The United States strongly supported Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999 and backed its entry into the European Union (EU) in 2004. Poland has made significant contributions to U.S.- and NATO-led military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Poland and the United States continue to work together closely on a range of foreign policy and international security issues.

Domestic Political and Economic Issues

The 2015 Polish parliamentary election resulted in a victory for the conservative-nationalist Law and Justice party (PiS), which won an absolute majority of seats in the lower house of parliament (*Sejm*). Mateusz Morawiecki (PiS) is Poland's prime minister and head of government. The center-right Civic Platform (PO) party led the government of Poland from 2007 to 2015. Since winning the election, Law and Justice has made changes to the country's judicial system and enacted other reforms that have generated concerns about backsliding on democracy and triggered an EU rule-of-law investigation.

Poland's next parliamentary election is due to occur in October or November 2019. European Parliament and regional election results indicate that support for Law and Justice remains strong, and the party is favored to win the 2019 election.

Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda won Poland's 2015 presidential election. The president is Poland's head of state and exercises a number of limited but important functions. The next presidential election is due to occur in May 2020.

Poland was one of the few EU economies to come through the 2008-2009 global economic crisis without major damage. As an EU member Poland is obligated to adopt the euro as its currency, but it has not set a target date for adoption and continues to use the zloty as its national currency.

Defense Modernization

Poland has been implementing an armed forces modernization plan since 2013, and it intends to spend approximately \$49 billion on military equipment acquisitions and upgrades over the period 2017-2026. Completed and prospective purchases from U.S. suppliers, including advanced Patriot missiles and F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, have a large role in this initiative. Poland is one of seven NATO members to meet the alliance's benchmark of spending at least 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense, and it plans to reach 2.5% of GDP by 2030.

Defense Cooperation

Under the United States' European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) and the U.S. military's Operation Atlantic Resolve, as well as NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence mission, U.S. forces have expanded their presence in Poland since 2014 and increased joint training and exercises with their Polish counterparts. While U.S. forces participate in these missions on a rotational basis, the Polish government has proposed the establishment of a permanent U.S. base on Polish territory.

Visa Waiver Program

Although relations between Poland and the United States are largely positive, Poland's exclusion from the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) has been a point of contention for many years. Some Members of Congress have advocated extending the VWP to include Poland.

Relations with Russia

Relations between Poland and Russia have long been tense, and Polish leaders have tended to view Russian intentions with wariness and suspicion. Poland remains a leading advocate for forceful EU sanctions against Russia over its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and fostering of separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Energy Security

Poland has promoted European energy integration, including projects to expand pipeline and electric grid interconnectivity in order to decrease reliance on Russia. Poland is a leading critic of Nord Stream 2, a Russian-owned pipeline project that would allow Germany to increase the amount of natural gas it imports directly from Russia via the Baltic Sea.

Outlook and Issues for Congress

Given its role as a close U.S. ally and partner, Poland and its relations with the United States are of continuing congressional interest. The main areas of interest include defense cooperation, energy security, and concerns about rule-of-law and governance issues.

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Introduction and Issues for Congress

Many U.S. officials and Members of Congress consider Poland to be a key ally of the United States and one of most pro-U.S. countries in Europe. According to the U.S. State Department, areas of close bilateral cooperation with Poland include “NATO capabilities, counterterrorism, nonproliferation, missile defense, human rights, economic growth and innovation, energy security, and regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe.”¹

The Congressional Caucus on Poland is a bipartisan group of Members of Congress who seek to maintain and strengthen the U.S.-Poland relationship and engage in issues of mutual interest to both countries.²

Of the Central European and Baltic countries that have joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), Poland is by far the most populous, has the largest economy, and is the most significant military actor. In 1999, with strong backing from the United States, Poland was among the first group of post-communist countries to join NATO. In 2004, again with strong support from the United States, it was among a group of eight post-communist countries to join the EU. Many analysts assert that Poland, more than many other European countries, continues to look to the United States for foreign policy leadership.

Recently, developments related to Russia’s resurgence and the attendant implications for U.S. policy and NATO are likely to have continuing relevance for Congress. A variety of factors make Poland a central interlocutor and partner for the United States in examining and responding to these challenges. Since Poland’s 2015 parliamentary election, some Members of Congress also have expressed concerns about trends in the country’s governance, discussed below.

¹ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Relations With Poland Fact Sheet*, June 10, 2019.

² For the 116th Congress, the co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Poland are Representative Marcy Kaptur, Representative Dan Lipinski, Representative Jackie Walorski, and Representative Chris Smith.

Figure I. Poland at a Glance: Map and Basic Facts



Area: Land area is about 120,728 sq. mi.; slightly smaller than New Mexico.

Population: 37.977 million.

Ethnicity: 96.9% Polish.

Languages: Polish is the official language and first language of 98.2% of the population.

Religion: 85.9% Catholic, 12.1% listed as unspecified.

Gross Domestic Product, 2018 (current prices): \$586.015 billion; per capita GDP \$15,431.

Currency: złoty (PLN), \$1=approx. PLN 3.8, €1=approx. PLN 4.25.

Political Leaders: *President:* Andrzej Duda; *Prime Minister:* Mateusz Morawiecki; *Foreign Minister:* Jacek Czaputowicz; *Defense Minister:* Mariusz Błaszczak.

Sources: Created by CRS using data from the U.S. Department of State and ESRI. Fact information from International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database* (April 2019) and CIA World Factbook.

Domestic Overview

Political Dynamics

The government of Poland is led by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of the conservative-nationalist Law and Justice party (PiS). Law and Justice won the October 2015 parliamentary election with 37.6% of the vote, giving the party 235 of the 460 seats in the *Sejm* (lower house of parliament).³ This was the first time since the end of communist rule in 1989 that a single party secured an absolute majority in parliament. Law and Justice had spent the previous eight years in opposition after leading the government from 2005 to 2007. The center-right Civic Platform (PO) party, which led the government of Poland from 2007 to 2015, came in second place in the 2015

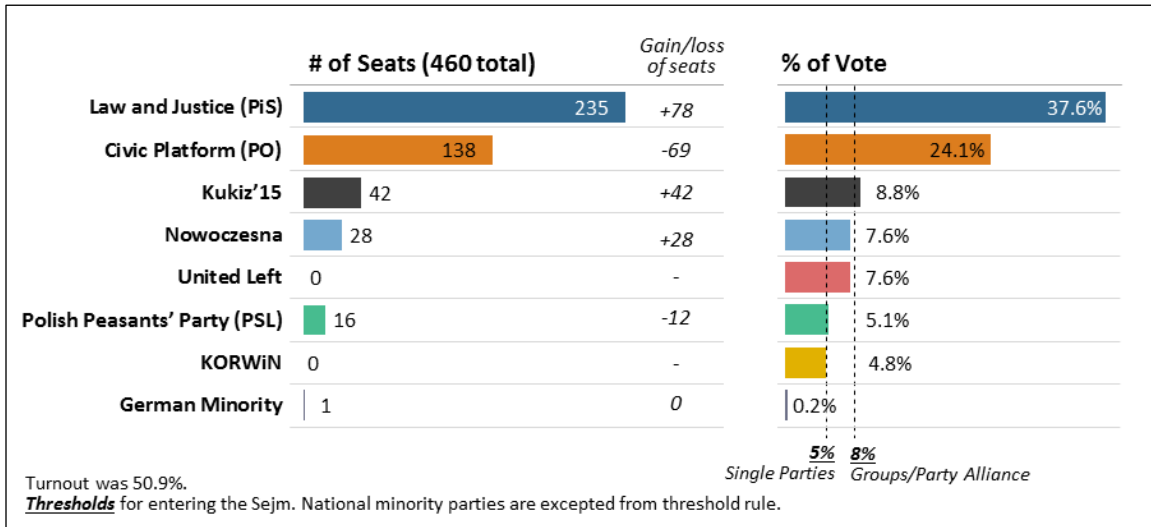
³ Corinne Deloy, *The Law and Justice Party Win the Parliamentary Elections and the Absolute Majority*, Robert Schuman Foundation, October 25, 2015.

election with 24.1% of the vote, dropping from 207 to 138 seats in the *Sejm*. The next parliamentary election is due to take place in October or November 2019.⁴

Poland’s president is Andrzej Duda, who was the Law and Justice-backed candidate in the May 2015 presidential election. Law and Justice gained momentum five months prior to the parliamentary election with Duda’s unexpected victory over the Civic Platform-supported incumbent. The president, who serves a five-year term, is Poland’s head of state and resigns party membership upon election. The president exercises functions including making formal appointments, overseeing the country’s executive authority, influencing legislation, representing the state in international affairs, and acting as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Jarosław Kaczyński is head of Law and Justice and a member of the *Sejm*. Despite his holding no formal post in the government, many observers assert that Kaczyński remains the most powerful politician in Poland who, as party chairman, exerts considerable influence behind the scenes.⁵ Jarosław Kaczyński co-founded Law and Justice with his twin brother Lech in 2001. Lech Kaczyński was the president of Poland from 2005 to 2010, when he died in an airplane crash in Russia that also killed 95 other people, including many high-ranking Polish officials.

Figure 2. Results of the 2015 Polish Parliamentary Election (Sejm)



Source: Created by CRS. Information from Poland National Electoral Commission, http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/349_Wyniki_.

A number of factors contributed to the 2015 election outcome. Law and Justice tapped into public unease over surging non-European migration to Europe by criticizing Civic Platform’s willingness to accept migrants under an EU relocation plan. Law and Justice also appeared to gain support by advocating increased public spending for social support programs benefitting families with children, lower-income citizens, and the elderly. During the campaign, the party argued that the benefits of Poland’s economic development had fallen unevenly across society and failed to reach many ordinary citizens.

⁴ Members of the *Sejm* are elected to four-year terms through an open-list proportional representation system in which there are 41 multi-member constituencies with between 7 and 20 members each. Members of the Polish Senate (upper house) are elected to four-year terms by plurality vote in 100 single-member constituencies (the Law and Justice party currently has 61 seats in the Senate, and the Civic Platform party has 34).

⁵ Henry Foy, “Jaroslaw Kaczynski: Poland’s Kingmaker,” *Financial Times*, February 26, 2016.

At the same time, observers believe there was a sense of voter fatigue toward Civic Platform and, relatedly, public discontent with the country's political establishment. Civic Platform was damaged by a scandal in which secretly recorded conversations led to the resignation of several government officials in 2015. A changeover in leadership with the 2014 appointment of then-Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who co-founded Civic Platform, as President of the European Council in Brussels was also a factor in the party's decline.

More broadly, the 2015 election and its aftermath appeared to confirm the observation that Polish politics have become characterized by an entrenched social divide between national-oriented social conservatives, represented by Law and Justice, and Western-oriented liberals, represented by Civic Platform.⁶

Since taking office, the Law and Justice-led government has implemented numerous reforms that have proved contentious and raised tensions with the EU as well as domestic opponents; these reforms also have elicited some concern from the United States. Many members of Law and Justice maintain that Poland's post-communist development has been based in part on flawed institutions and values, and Law and Justice leaders interpreted the 2015 election results as a mandate to enact substantial reforms to the country's political system and public institutions. Some argue, therefore, that the party seeks to reduce the influence on national institutions of so-called liberal and secular "European" values and to recast those institutions in ways that promote what the party and its supporters view as traditional national-patriotic values, including close ties with the Catholic Church. Law and Justice also fiercely condemns the communist era and those associated with it, and the party holds a nationalist-oriented worldview that includes enduring suspicion toward Russia and unresolved tensions with Germany.

The results of regional elections in October 2018 and European Parliament (EP) elections in May 2019 indicate that support for the Law and Justice party has held relatively steady since Poland's 2015 election.

- In the 2018 regional elections, Law and Justice won 34% of the vote and the most seats in 9 out of the country's 16 regional assemblies (with an absolute majority in 6). Previously, Law and Justice controlled one regional government.⁷ Law and Justice did well among more rural and less affluent voters, while a coalition of opposition parties including Civic Platform did well among more liberal and urban voters. Law and Justice won 4 out of 107 municipal elections. The opposition won mayoral races in Poland's largest cities, including Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, and Gdańsk.⁸
- In the May 2019 EP elections, Law and Justice came in first place, winning 27 seats with approximately 45% of the Polish vote. A coalition of opposition parties including Civic Platform won 22 seats with approximately 38% of the vote.⁹

Despite numerous public protests over the past three years against the government's reforms, critics observe that opposition parties including Civic Platform have struggled to offer an

⁶ Marc Santora, "Poland Marks an Anniversary, Not in Solidarity, but Division," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2019, and Monika Scislowska, "Poland's Democracy Anniversary Exposes Political Divisions," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2019.

⁷ A coalition of opposition parties including Civic Platform won 27% of the vote and the most seats in Poland's seven other regional assemblies.

⁸ Joanna Berendt, "Poland Elections Reveal a Deeply Divided Nation," *New York Times*, November 5, 2018.

⁹ Aleks Szczerbiak, "Polish Politics after Europe's Election," *Emerging Europe*, June 3, 2019.

effective alternate message.¹⁰ Support for Law and Justice, meanwhile, appears to have been mostly unaffected by controversy over its domestic reforms or by a series of corruption scandals reported in late 2018 and early 2019.¹¹ Given its close association with the Catholic Church, the party came under pressure prior to the EP election with the release of a documentary film about the sexual abuse of children by Polish priests and subsequent efforts to cover up those crimes.¹² After the film was released, the government adopted increased prison sentences for those convicted of sexual abuse of a child.

Controversial Reforms and Tensions with the EU

The most prominent and controversial set of reforms undertaken by the Law and Justice-led government concerns the judicial system. Critics charge that several moves enacted since late 2015 subvert institutional checks and balances, undermine judicial independence and the rule of law, and place the country's courts under political control.¹³ The reforms have significantly increased executive and parliamentary powers to select and remove judges, decisions that previously were determined internally by professional bodies within Poland's judiciary. Law and Justice leaders, who blamed the courts for blocking many of the party's legislative priorities when it previously led the government (2005-2007), maintain that the judicial system needed extensive reform because it was slow and inefficient, judges were not properly re-vetted after the transition from communism to democracy, and procedures for selecting new judges lacked fairness and accountability.

Beyond the judicial system, a law adopted in 2016 granted the government the power to hire and fire management of public broadcasting stations, a function previously performed by an independent media supervisory committee. The government maintained that the move was needed to correct political bias and restore balance in the public media. Critics argue that it compromises the independence of state media and relegates it to publicizing the government's official narrative.¹⁴ The government also has cut public funding to some civil society organizations, particularly those supporting migrants and refugees. Critics charged that this move was intended to stifle opponents of government policies.¹⁵

In 2018, Poland adopted reforms to the country's electoral system. The government asserted that these changes, expected to take effect after the 2019 parliamentary elections, would increase fairness and transparency. Opponents argued that they would politicize the administration of elections and were intended to advantage Law and Justice.¹⁶ The reforms replace seven of the

¹⁰ Daniel Tilles and Tom Junes, "Poland's Opposition Has Nobody to Blame but Itself," *Foreign Policy*, October 26, 2018.

¹¹ Michal Broniatowski, "Banking Corruption Scandal Throws Polish Politics into Turmoil," *Politico.eu*, November 13, 2018, Wojciech Kosci, "Central Bank Pay Scandal Hits Poland's Ruling Party," *Politico.eu*, January 9, 2019, and Monika Scislowska, "Poland's Political Leader on Unprecedented Defensive," *AP*, February 16, 2019.

¹² Magdalena Gwozdz-Palokat, "Documentary on Child Sex Abuse by Catholic Priests Stirs Debate in Poland," *Deutsche Welle*, May 15, 2019.

¹³ For details, see Brittany Benowitz, *Threats to Judicial Independence – Not Discussion of the Holocaust – Are the Real Threat to Polish Democracy*, American Bar Association, January 19, 2019 and Christian Davies, *Hostile Takeover: How Law and Justice Captured Poland's Courts*, Freedom House, May 2018.

¹⁴ Matthew Day, "Poland's President Signs Controversial New Media Law," *The Daily Telegraph*, January 7, 2016.

¹⁵ Claudia Ciobanu and Wojciech Kosci, "Warsaw Grabs Purse Strings of Polish NGOs," *politico.eu*, December 8, 2017.

¹⁶ James Shotter, "Poland's Electoral Reforms Criticised as Return to Communist Times," *Financial Times*, March 25, 2019 and "President Signs Changes to Polish Electoral Law; Opposition Furious," *Radio Poland*, January 16, 2018.

nine members (currently all judges) of the National Electoral Commission (responsible for conducting and overseeing all elections in Poland) with new members chosen by the *Sejm* according to party proportion. The reforms also call for the National Electoral Commission to appoint new local election commissioners, who are no longer required to be independent of political parties.

Overall, domestic political opponents and outside observers have expressed concern that the actions taken by the government amount to a rollback of Poland's democracy and a program to construct an "illiberal" state.¹⁷ Law and Justice leaders and supporters dispute this portrayal, alleging that their political opponents have crafted this narrative in an attempt to undo the results of the 2015 election and block the government's ability to implement its agenda.

In 2016, the European Commission (the EU's executive institution) launched an inquiry into the effects of the judicial and public media reforms on the rule of law in Poland. The EU subsequently set a series of deadlines for Poland to respond to recommended amendments that would address EU concerns about the ability of the executive and legislature to interfere with the independence of the judiciary. In 2016 and 2017, the Polish government consistently rejected the EU's recommended measures, objecting that the EU was interfering with the country's sovereignty and did not fully understand the Polish legal system. In December 2017, the European Commission recommended the EU move toward imposing an "Article 7" sanction, under which Poland's voting rights in the Council of the EU could be suspended.¹⁸ The measure is unlikely to be enacted, however; Hungary, which has similar Article 7 issues with the EU, has said it would veto the imposition of such a sanction against Poland, which requires unanimity in the Council.

The EU also has been developing plans to link the amount of regional funding allocated to Poland (and other countries, such as Hungary) to judicial independence and rule-of-law standards in the next EU budget framework.¹⁹ Poland is the largest beneficiary of funding from the EU budget. In the EU's 2014-2020 budget framework, €106 billion (approximately \$120 billion) was allocated to Poland, with the majority of EU support funding regional and municipal infrastructure development.²⁰

In October 2018, the Polish government complied with a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ordering the suspension of a law that allowed the president to decide whether to retire Supreme Court judges over the age of 65. (The law affected 28 of 72 judges sitting on the appellate panels of the country's Supreme Court at the time it came into effect in July 2018.)²¹ The episode marked the first time Law and Justice backtracked on any major element of its controversial reform program. In April 2019, the European Commission launched a new

¹⁷ See, for example, Melissa Hooper, *Poland in The Anatomy of Illiberal States: Assessing and Responding to Democratic Decline in Turkey and Central Europe*, Brookings Institution, February 2019, pp. 16-20, and "Poland's Ruling Law and Justice Party Is Doing Lasting Damage," *The Economist*, April 21, 2018.

¹⁸ European Commission, "Rule of Law: European Commission Acts to Defend Judicial Independence in Poland," press release, December 20, 2017. The Council of the EU (also called the Council of Ministers) is the EU institution representing the national member state governments. See CRS Report RS21372, *The European Union: Questions and Answers*, by Kristin Archick.

¹⁹ Lili Bayer, "European Parliament Backs Plan to Link EU Funds to Rule of Law," *Politico.eu*, January 17, 2019.

²⁰ See Michał Strzałkowski, "European Funds: What Next for the Polish Economy?," *EURACTIV.com*, October 25, 2018, and Aleksandra Stanisławska, *EU Funds in Poland*, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at <https://polska.pl/economy/investments-projects/eu-funds-poland/>.

²¹ "Poland Supreme Court Judges Return to Work after EU Court Ruling," *EURACTIV.com*, October 23, 2018.

complaint alleging that Poland's process for disciplinary proceedings against judges, enacted in 2017, infringes on EU requirements for judicial independence from political control.²²

Migration policy has been another source of tension between Poland and the EU. Poland has been a leading opponent of EU policies attempting to relocate migrants and refugees throughout the member states. In 2015, the Civic Platform-led government voted to approve a mandatory EU relocation plan, agreeing to take in approximately 4,600 migrants from outside the EU. The agreement became a significant campaign issue in Poland's 2015 election, with debates about the migration crisis highlighting divisions in Polish society and politics.

Law and Justice strongly criticized approval of the plan, and after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, the incoming Law and Justice-led government indicated that respecting the EU plan was not politically possible. Poland subsequently joined Hungary and the Czech Republic in defying the EU by refusing to implement the plan, arguing that it infringed on their national sovereignty and that immigration policy was not a competence of the EU. In December 2017, the European Commission referred the three countries to the ECJ over their failure to implement the relocation plan.

Despite these tensions, Jarosław Kaczyński has stated that Law and Justice does not intend to take Poland out of the EU. Surveys show that a large majority of the Polish public views EU membership as beneficial.²³

The Economy

Poland's economy is among the most successful in Central Europe. Starting with post-communist reform programs in the 1990s and continuing beyond Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, pro-market policies and stable institutions have underpinned strong economic growth, an expanding private sector, and a steady increase in per capita gross domestic product (GDP).²⁴ Poland's economy was hurt by the 2008 global financial crisis and the ensuing Eurozone crisis but was less affected than most other EU members. The Polish economy was the only European economy to sustain growth in 2008-2009, and Poland avoided a domestic banking crisis.

Although Poland joined the EU in 2004, it is not a member of the Eurozone.²⁵ Poland continues to use the złoty (PLN) as its national currency, and the Eurozone debt crisis that began in Greece in 2009 dampened Polish enthusiasm for adopting the euro. Under the terms of its EU accession treaty, Poland is bound to adopt the euro as its currency eventually, but there is no fixed target date for doing so.

Economic growth in Poland remains high compared to most other EU members. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), growth averaged 3.75% per year over the period 2014-2017 and reached 5.1% in 2018.²⁶ Unemployment is low, decreasing from 10.3% in 2013 to an

²² European Commission, "Rule of Law: European Commission Launches Infringement Procedure to Protect Judges in Poland from Political Control," press release, April 3, 2019.

²³ Andrew Rettman, "Kaczynski: No Question of Polish EU Exit," *euobserver.com*, October 18, 2018.

²⁴ For background on Poland's economic development since communism, see World Bank, *Lessons from Poland, Insights for Poland: A Sustainable and Inclusive Transition to High-Income Status*, 2017, and Marcin Piatkowski, *How Poland Became Europe's Growth Champion: Insights from the Successful Post-Socialist Transition*, Brookings Institution, February 11, 2015.

²⁵ Nineteen EU member countries that use the euro as their common currency are collectively referred to as the Eurozone.

²⁶ Unless otherwise cited, economic statistics in this section are from International Monetary Fund, *World Economic*

expected 3.6% in 2019. Forecasts project growth of 3.8% in 2019 and an average of 2.9% annually over the period 2020-2023.

The main drivers of the Polish economy recently have consisted of strong private consumption, investment derived from EU funding, and increased demand for exports. (Nearly 80% of Poland's exports are to other EU countries, with more than a quarter to Germany.²⁷) Near-term risks to growth include a potential reduction in EU funding in the next EU budget framework (2021-2027) and a broader economic slowdown in the EU that could decrease demand for Polish exports.

After the Civic Platform-led government of 2011-2015 sought to consolidate public finances through tax increases and entitlement cuts, the Law and Justice-led government has taken steps to loosen fiscal policy in order to benefit lower-income households and families, encourage higher birth rates, and appeal to older voters.²⁸ Under the "Family 500+" program, families are eligible to receive a tax-free monthly subsidy of PLN 500 (approximately \$132) per month for their second child and every subsequent child, with lower-income families eligible starting with their first child.²⁹ Additionally, the government reversed its predecessor's reform raising the retirement age to 67, returning it to 65 for men and 60 for women. Similar to EU-wide averages, the median age in Poland was approximately 38 years old in 2012 and is expected to be 51 years old in 2050.³⁰ Declining birth rates and net emigration have been the main factors in demographic change in Poland. The aging of the country's population is expected to have challenging implications for Poland's health care and retirement systems.³¹

Concerns that increased government spending on child support and pensions (as well as on planned increases to defense spending) could negatively affect Poland's public finances have largely been balanced by the country's strong economic growth. The budget deficit was 0.6% of GDP in 2018 and is expected to be 2.2% of GDP in 2019. Public debt was approximately 43.6% of GDP in 2018, according to the IMF. (EU rules stipulate that deficits remain below 3% of GDP and that debt remain below 60% of GDP).

Defense Modernization

Poland has repeatedly been invaded by external powers throughout its history. These experiences continue to shape Poland's security perceptions. Territorial defense is the core mission of the Polish military, and Poland's current security strategy is focused primarily on deterring potential Russian aggression. Armed forces modernization, NATO membership, and close ties with the United States are the main components of this strategy. Poland has sought to build a multilayered security policy around this foundation, with participation in EU defense initiatives and

Outlook Database, April 2019. Figures are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

²⁷ Krzysztof Bień, *The Best Polish Exports' Goods*, Central European Financial Observer, October 25, 2017. Top categories of Poland's exports include automobile parts and accessories, products made from synthetic materials, furniture, television and radio equipment, automobiles and engines, and computers.

²⁸ Remi Adekoya, "Why Poland's Law and Justice Party Remains So Popular," *Foreign Affairs*, November 3, 2017.

²⁹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, *First Results of Poland's Family 500+ Programme Released*, May 16, 2018.

³⁰ Xavier Devictor, *Poland: Aging and the Economy*, The World Bank, June 14, 2012.

³¹ Magdalena Leszko, PhD, Ludmila Zajac-Lamparska, PhD, and Janusz Trempala, PhD, "Aging in Poland," *The Gerontologist*, vol. 55, no. 5 (October 2015).

cooperation with regional partners such as the Nordic and Baltic countries, the Visegrád Group, and the Bucharest Nine.³²

Poland has the ninth-largest army in NATO, with 61,200 active personnel. In all, Poland has 117,800 total active military personnel across all branches of the armed forces.³³ Poland ended military conscription in 2009. Poland is one of seven NATO countries meeting the alliance's recommendation of allocating 2% of GDP for defense spending. According to NATO, Polish defense expenditures were 2.05% of GDP (\$12.156 billion) in 2018.³⁴ The Polish government plans to raise defense spending to 2.1% of GDP in 2020 and to gradually increase defense spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030.³⁵

In 2016, the Polish Defense Ministry announced a revised "Technical Modernization Plan" prioritizing air defense, navy, cybersecurity, tanks and armored vehicles, and territorial defense capabilities. From 2017 to 2022, the plan called for approximately \$14.5 billion in spending on weapons and equipment acquisition, including new air defense systems, helicopters, UAVs, coastal defense vessels, minesweeper ships, and submarines.³⁶ In February 2019, the defense ministry announced that it had revised and expanded the plan to include approximately \$49 billion in spending on armed forces modernization over the period of 2017-2026. Priorities in the revised plan include short-range anti-aircraft missiles, attack helicopters, submarines, cybersecurity, and the acquisition of fifth-generation combat aircraft.³⁷

While foreign purchases continue to play a large role, the Polish government has linked the defense modernization program with efforts to develop Poland's defense-industrial base, seeking contracts and partnerships that include local manufacturing and technology transfers.

Another initiative of the Law and Justice-led government has been the establishment of a new territorial defense force, intended to eventually consist of 53,000 volunteers trained and equipped for tasks such as critical infrastructure protection and unconventional warfare.³⁸

Relations with the United States

Since the end of the Cold War, Poland and the United States have had close relations. The United States strongly supported Poland's accession to NATO in 1999. Warsaw has been an ally in global counterterrorism efforts and contributed large deployments of troops to both the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. Links between the United States and Poland are further anchored by extensive cultural ties; approximately 9.6 million Americans are of Polish heritage.

³² The Visegrád Group (or V4) is a platform for regional cooperation between Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. The Bucharest Nine refers to the countries on NATO's eastern flank (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia).

³³ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2019*.

³⁴ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2011-2018)*, March 14, 2019.

³⁵ "Polish President Signs Defence Spending Boost into Law," *Radio Poland*, October 23, 2017.

³⁶ Jaroslaw Adamowski, "Polish Defence Ministry Unveils \$14.5B Modernization Program," *DefenseNews*, December 5, 2016.

³⁷ "Technical Modernization Plan - A Road Map for the Development of the Polish Army," *Defense-Aerospace.com*, February 28, 2019.

³⁸ Justyna Pawlak and Kacper Pempel, "In Training with Poland's Volunteer Militia," *Reuters*, October 18, 2018.

The Law and Justice-led government has sought to cultivate ties with the Trump Administration. In a visit to the United States in September 2018, Polish President Duda suggested that a permanent U.S. military base in Poland might be named “Fort Trump.”³⁹ On February 13-14, 2019, Poland and the United States co-hosted the “Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East,” a conference attended by Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Michael Pompeo.⁴⁰

President Trump earlier delivered a speech in Warsaw on July 6, 2017. The president’s remarks on NATO, Russia, U.S.-Polish ties, and Poland’s resilience throughout history were well received by many Polish observers, and especially by the Polish government and its supporters. At the same time, critics asserted that the tone of the President’s visit, during which he apparently did not raise concerns about Poland’s domestic policies, emboldened the government to move ahead with controversial new judicial bills shortly afterward.⁴¹

While relations between Poland and the United States remain largely positive, there have been points of tension over the past several years. Following President Trump’s Warsaw speech, the U.S. State Department released a statement expressing concern about judicial independence and the rule of law in Poland.⁴² Some Members of Congress also have expressed concerns about the Polish government’s judicial and media reforms. In February 2016, for example, Senators McCain, Durbin, and Cardin co-authored a letter urging Poland to “recommit to the core principles of the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] and the EU, including the respect for democracy, human rights, and rule of law.”⁴³

U.S. officials (along with many of their European and Israeli counterparts) objected to controversial Holocaust-related legislation (amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance) passed by Poland’s parliament and signed by President Duda in early 2018.⁴⁴ The legislation initially criminalized attributing responsibility for Nazi crimes to the Polish state or nation, potentially punishable by a prison sentence of up to three years, with exemptions for art and academic research. Under continued international pressure, the Polish government amended the law in June 2018, making violations a civil (rather than criminal) offense.⁴⁵

In recent years, Polish officials have objected to instances in which commentators and press articles have referred to Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps on Polish soil as “Polish death camps,” preferring such phrasing as “Nazi concentration camp in German-occupied

³⁹ Alan Cowell, “Fort Trump? Poland Makes a Play for a U.S. Military Base,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 2018.

⁴⁰ See U.S. Department of State, *Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East* and The White House, *Remarks By Vice President Pence at the Warsaw Ministerial Luncheon*, February 14, 2019. Also see Jacek Czaputowicz and Michael R. Pompeo, “Pompeo and Foreign Minister of Poland: A New Solidarity,” *CNN*, February 12, 2019, and Patrick Wintour, “European Powers to Present Cool Front at Warsaw Summit,” *The Guardian*, February 12, 2019.

⁴¹ See, for example, Slawomir Sierakowski, “Poland Turns Away From Democracy, Thanks to the U.S.,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 2017.

⁴² The statement asserted that, “The Polish government has continued to pursue legislation that appears to undermine judicial independence and weaken the rule of law in Poland. We urge all sides to ensure that any judicial reform does not violate Poland’s constitution or international legal obligations and respects the principles of judicial independence and separation of powers.” U.S. Department of State, *Poland: Independence of the Judiciary*, July 21, 2017.

⁴³ “U.S. Senators Urge Poland to Respect Democracy, Rule of Law,” Reuters, February 14, 2016.

⁴⁴ See U.S. Department of State, *Legislation In Poland Regarding Crimes Committed During The Holocaust*, January 31, 2018 and U.S. Department of State, *Recent Legislation in Poland*, February 6, 2018.

⁴⁵ “Poland Holocaust Law: Government U-turn on Jail Threat,” *BBC News*, June 27, 2018.

Poland” (President Obama apologized after using the term “Polish death camp” in 2012).⁴⁶ Scholars agree that the term “Polish death camp” is inaccurate and misleading and that the Polish state did not collaborate in the Nazi genocide against Jews.⁴⁷ At the same time, historical research has documented instances in which some Poles committed atrocities against Jews during and after World War II. Critics fear the 2018 legislation may serve to stifle debate about such issues and whitewash the culpability of individual Poles in such cases.

In November 2018, a leaked letter from U.S. Ambassador Georgette Mosbacher to Prime Minister Morawiecki reportedly angered some Polish officials by raising concerns about media freedom.⁴⁸ The Polish government reportedly had contemplated prosecuting the Polish television station TVN, which is owned by U.S. company Discovery Communications, after it aired footage alleging to show a Polish neo-Nazi group celebrating Adolf Hitler’s birthday.

Following the murder of Gdańsk Mayor Paweł Adamowicz in January 2019 by a mentally ill assailant, Representative Marcy Kaptur, a co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Poland, expressed concern about whether Poland’s divided political environment could have played a role in motivating the perpetrator.⁴⁹ Adamowicz was a well-known liberal critic of the Law and Justice-led government.

In February 2019, Representative Kaptur introduced the Paweł Adamowicz Democratic Leadership Exchange Act of 2019 (H.R. 1270), a bill that would reauthorize the United States-Poland Parliamentary Exchange Program.

Defense Relations

Defense cooperation between Poland and the United States is especially close and extensive. Poland has been a focus of U.S. and NATO efforts to deter potential Russian aggression in the region. In the wake of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine starting in 2014, Polish officials reemphasized their wish to permanently base U.S. forces on their territory, despite concerns by some U.S. and European officials that doing so could violate the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.⁵⁰ In May 2018, the Polish government released a proposal under which it would contribute \$2 billion toward establishing such a base.⁵¹ In a House Armed Services Committee hearing on March 13, 2019, acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Kathryn Wheelbarger stated that the related negotiations with Poland were under way.⁵² Section 1280 of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (P.L. 115-232)

⁴⁶ Justin Sink, “Obama Apologizes in Writing for ‘Polish Death Camp’ Verbal Gaffe,” *The Hill*, June 1, 2012.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Cnaan Liphshiz, “It’s Complicated: Inaccuracies Plague Both Sides of ‘Polish Death Camps’ Debate,” *Times of Israel*, January 28, 2018.

⁴⁸ Vanessa Gera, “U.S. Ambassador Angers Poles with Letter to Prime Minister,” Associated Press, November 27, 2018.

⁴⁹ David M. Herszenhorn, “US Lawmaker Calls for Thorough Probe into Murder of Polish Mayor,” *Politico.eu*, January 15, 2019.

⁵⁰ See NATO, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France, May 27, 1997*. The document states that, “NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.” Proponents of extended permanent basing assert that the “current security environment” with regard to Russia has changed considerably since 1997.

⁵¹ Polish Ministry of National Defence, *Proposal for a Permanent U.S. Presence in Poland*, 2018.

⁵² Kyle Rempfer, “Prepare to Man Fort Trump? U.S. Has Made Poland a ‘Very Serious Robust Offer’ for Base,” *MilitaryTimes*, March 13, 2019.

required the Secretary of Defense to report to the congressional defense committees on the “feasibility and advisability” of permanently stationing U.S. forces in Poland by March 2019. (With discussions between Poland and the U.S. Administration still in progress, the report had not been received as of June 2019.) As part of the United States’ missile defense for Europe, an “Aegis-Ashore” site with radar and 24 SM-3 missiles is to become operational in Poland in 2020. Russian officials have characterized the establishment of U.S. missile defense installations in Europe as a “direct threat to global and regional security.”⁵³

Under the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), launched in 2014 (originally called the European Reassurance Initiative), the United States has bolstered security in Central and Eastern Europe with an increased rotational military presence, additional exercises and training with allies and partners, improved infrastructure to allow greater responsiveness, enhanced prepositioning of U.S. equipment, and intensified efforts to build partner capacity for newer NATO members and other partners. Approximately 6,000 U.S. military personnel are involved in the associated *Atlantic Resolve* mission at any given time, with units typically operating in the region under a rotational nine-month deployment.⁵⁴

The United States has not increased its permanent troop presence in Europe (currently about 67,000 troops, including two U.S. Army Brigade Combat Teams, or BCTs), but it has rotated additional forces into the region, including nine-month deployments of a third BCT based in the United States.⁵⁵ The BCT is based largely in Poland, with units also conducting training and exercises in the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. A combat aviation brigade supports the activities of the BCT.⁵⁶ The 4th Infantry Division Mission Command Element, based in Poznań, Poland, acts as the headquarters overseeing rotational units.

Following a meeting between President Trump and President Duda in Washington, DC, on June 12, 2019, President Trump announced that an additional 1,000 troops would be added to the rotational U.S. deployments in Poland. The additional troops are expected to come from units based in Germany.⁵⁷ The two sides also announced plans for the U.S. military to expand its logistical, administrative, and training infrastructure in Poland, boost the presence of special operations forces, and establish a squadron of aerial reconnaissance drones.⁵⁸

At the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, the alliance agreed to deploy multinational battle groups (approximately 1,100 troops each) to Poland and the three Baltic countries. These “enhanced forward presence” units are intended to deter Russian aggression by acting as a “tripwire” that ensures a response from the entire alliance in the event of a Russian attack. The United States is leading the multinational battalion based in Orzysz, Poland.⁵⁹ NATO continues to resist calls to

⁵³ Andrew E. Kramer, “Russia Calls New U.S. Missile Defense System a ‘Direct Threat’,” *The New York Times*, May 12, 2016.

⁵⁴ See Operation Atlantic Resolve, <http://www.eur.army.mil/atlanticrosolve/>.

⁵⁵ The U.S. Army’s 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division arrived in the region from Fort Riley, Kansas in January 2019 with approximately 3,500 personnel, 500 tracked vehicles, and 1,500 wheeled vehicles. See U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office, *Fact Sheet: Atlantic Resolve Armored Rotation*, January 11, 2019.

⁵⁶ The U.S. Army’s 1st Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Infantry Division arrived in the region from Fort Riley, Kansas in February 2019 with approximately 1,900 personnel, 80 helicopters, and 1,500 pieces of equipment. See U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office, *Fact Sheet: Atlantic Resolve Aviation Rotation*, January 22, 2019.

⁵⁷ “Trump: US to Send 1,000 Troops to Poland in New Deal,” *BBC News*, June 12, 2019.

⁵⁸ C. Todd Lopez, *U.S., Polish Leaders Agree to Increased American Presence in Poland*, U.S. Department of Defense, June 12, 2019.

⁵⁹ See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Boosting NATO’s Presence in the East and Southeast*, January 21, 2019. A U.S. Army armored cavalry squadron accounts for nearly 900 of the approximately 1,200 troops in the Poland-based

deploy troops permanently in countries that joined after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the enhanced NATO presence has been referred to as “continuous” but rotational.

In recent years, Poland has made a number of significant defense purchases from the United States, and numerous elements of Poland’s military equipment modernization plans are of interest and relevance to U.S. defense planners and the U.S defense industry:

- At a February 2019 press conference unveiling the updated Technical Modernization Plan for the Polish armed forces, Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak indicated that the procurement of fifth-generation fighter aircraft was a top priority.⁶⁰ In May 2019, Poland send a formal letter of request to the United States for the purchase of 32 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, made by Lockheed Martin.⁶¹
- In February 2019, Poland announced plans to sign a \$414 million contract for the purchase of 20 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, produced by Lockheed Martin.⁶² Delivery is expected by 2023.
- In March 2018, Poland signed a \$4.75 billion deal for the purchase of two batteries (four total fire units) of the Patriot integrated air and missile defense system, made by Raytheon.⁶³ Delivery is expected in 2022.
- In December 2017, the U.S. State Department approved the sale to Poland of F-16 support and sustainment services worth up to \$200 million, potentially supplied by a number of U.S. contractors.⁶⁴
- In November 2017, the U.S. State Department approved the sale to Poland of up to 150 AIM-120C-7 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM), made by Raytheon, for an estimated cost of \$250 million.⁶⁵
- In November 2016, the U.S. State Department approved the sale to Poland of 70 AGM-158B extended range Joint Air-to Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSM-ER), an air-launched cruise made by Lockheed Martin with a range of approximately 900 kilometers. The deal was worth up to \$200 million.⁶⁶
- In 2014, Poland purchased 40 AGM-158A JASSMs (also made by Lockheed Martin) and associated Mid-Life Update (MLU) packages for its F-16C/Ds, reportedly worth about \$250 million in total.⁶⁷ The A-variant JASSMs have a range of approximately 370 kilometers.

battlegroup (other contributing countries are Croatia, Romania, and the United Kingdom).

⁶⁰ Jacek Siminski, “Poland Making Steps Towards Procuring 32 F-35 Fifth Generation Jets?,” *The Aviationist*, February 28, 2019.

⁶¹ Jarosław Adamowski, “Poland Sends Formal Request to Buy F-35s,” *DefenseNews*, May 29, 2019.

⁶² Jarosław Adamowski, “Poland to Sign \$414 Million Deal for Rocket Launchers,” *DefenseNews*, February 11, 2019.

⁶³ Lidia Kelly, “Poland Signs \$4.75 Billion Deal for U.S. Patriot Missile System Facing Russia,” Reuters, March 28, 2018.

⁶⁴ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Poland – F-16 Follow-on Support*, News Release, Transmittal No. 17-68, December 19, 2017.

⁶⁵ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Poland – AIM-120C-7 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM)*, News Release, Transmittal No. 17-55, November 28, 2017.

⁶⁶ Jakub Palowski, “70 JASSM-ER Missiles for the Polish F-16 Fighters. US State Department Issues A Consent,” *Defence24.com*, November 29, 2016.

⁶⁷ “Contract for JASSM Missiles for Poland Awarded,” *Defense24.com*, September 16, 2015.

Economic Ties

Trade between the United States and Poland has increased significantly over the past 15 years. In 2004, for example, U.S. goods exports to Poland were valued at approximately \$929 million and imports from Poland were about \$1.8 billion. In 2018, U.S. goods exports to Poland were more than \$5.4 billion and imports from Poland were more than \$8 billion.⁶⁸ Leading categories of U.S. exports to Poland include aircraft, machinery, electrical and medical equipment, and vehicles. U.S. imports from Poland represent a wide range of items, including heavy machinery, chemicals, and agricultural products. In 2017, U.S. services exports to Poland were valued at approximately \$3.1 billion and services imports from Poland were approximately \$2.25 billion.⁶⁹

In 2017, U.S. foreign direct investment in Poland was approximately \$12.6 billion.⁷⁰ U.S. affiliates employ nearly 200,000 people in Poland.⁷¹ U.S. companies with significant investment in Poland include JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Hewlett Packard, UPS, 3M, IBM, United Technologies, General Electric, and Discovery Communications.⁷²

Visa Waiver Program

Many Polish officials and citizens continue to express disappointment that the United States has not made Poland a Visa Waiver Program (VWP) country.⁷³ Current U.S. visa policy requires Poles who wish to travel to the United States to apply for a visa by filling out an application, paying a \$160 nonrefundable fee, and completing an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. These requirements are waived for citizens of most EU countries, since most of the countries qualify to be included in the VWP.⁷⁴ The VWP allows for visa-free travel to the United States for up to 90 days. Under U.S. policy, Poland does not meet the VWP's qualifying criteria because its visitor visa refusal rate (the percentage of applications rejected by U.S. consular officers who cannot overcome the refusal) remains above the 3% limit. The refusal rate for Poland was 3.99% in FY2018 and 5.92% in FY2017.⁷⁵ Nonimmigrant visas issued to Polish nationals increased nearly 60% from 2009 to 2018.⁷⁶

Citing Poland's status as a close U.S. ally, some Members of Congress have attempted to change the law governing the VWP to allow Poland to qualify. In the 115th Congress, Representative Mike Quigley introduced a bill (H.R. 2388, Poland Visa Waiver Act of 2017) that would have authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security to designate Poland a VWP country. Some opponents of extending the VWP to include Poland argue that such a step could allow a

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Trade in Goods with Poland*.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *International Transactions, International Services, and International Investment Position Tables*, October 19, 2018.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Direct Investment and MNE*.

⁷¹ Daniel S. Hamilton and Joseph P. Quinlan, *The Transatlantic Economy 2019*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, p. 141.

⁷² American Chamber of Commerce in Poland, *American Investments in Poland*, April 2018.

⁷³ For more information on the VWP and debates surrounding the VWP, see CRS Report RL32221, *Visa Waiver Program*, by Jill H. Wilson.

⁷⁴ There are currently 38 countries participating in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, including 23 of the 28 member countries of the European Union.

⁷⁵ U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Poland, *Fiscal Year 2018 U.S. Visa Refusal Rate for Polish Nationals is 3.99%*, February 4, 2019.

⁷⁶ U.S. State Department, *Nonimmigrant Visas Issued by Nationality (Including Border Crossing Cards): Fiscal Years 2009-2018*, Report of the Visa Office 2018.

significant increase in the number of Poles who overstay their visas and remain illegally in the United States (i.e., become unauthorized aliens).⁷⁷ Proponents of including Poland argue that such a move would increase U.S. tourism revenue, boost public diplomacy, and strengthen national security by extending the information-sharing elements of the VWP to Poland.⁷⁸

Relations with Russia

Historically, Poland has had a difficult relationship with Russia. Poland's view of Russia remains affected by the experience of Soviet invasion during World War II and Soviet domination during the communist era. In more recent years, Polish leaders have consistently expressed warnings about the nature of Vladimir Putin's government in Russia, tending to view Russia as a potential threat to Poland and its neighbors. This perception predates Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, but events in Ukraine since 2014 have sharpened Polish concerns about Russia's intentions and have put security at the top of Poland's national agenda.

The Law and Justice-led government has maintained a hard line in its approach to Russia and entrenched Poland's position as one of the EU's most hawkish countries on Russia policy. Poland has been one of the leading advocates for adopting and maintaining robust EU sanctions against Russia in response to its actions in Ukraine, although it has been one of the countries most affected by Russian retaliatory sanctions.

One area of particular relevance to Poland's security is Kaliningrad, a 5,800-square-mile Russian exclave wedged between Poland and Lithuania (see **Figure 1**). Ceded to Russia by Germany following World War II, Kaliningrad is a key strategic territory for Russia, allowing it to project military power into NATO's northern flank. The territory has a heavy Russian military presence, including the Baltic Fleet and two airbases. Russia has repeatedly deployed Iskander short-range nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, and reports indicated that a 2018 deployment could be permanent.⁷⁹ According to NATO officials, Russia is using Kaliningrad to pursue an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy that involves layering surface-to-air missiles to potentially block off access to the Baltic states and much of Poland.⁸⁰ Kaliningrad's geographic isolation also allows for a scenario in which Russia tries to seize the Suwałki Gap, the 100-kilometer border between Poland and Lithuania that separates Kaliningrad from Russia's ally Belarus.⁸¹

Energy Security

Poland has been a leading opponent and critic of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that would allow Germany to increase the amount of natural gas it imports directly from Russia via the Baltic Sea.⁸² Poland argues that the completion of Nord Stream 2 would allow Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas company, to further consolidate its monopoly over the Central European gas market, as Gazprom would have full control of all gas transmission routes and Russian gas would

⁷⁷ See, for example, Jessica Vaughan, *Senators Vote to Allow Visa Waivers for Poland*, Center for Immigration Studies, June 22, 2015.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Edwin J. Feulner, *Vouching for the Visa Waiver Program*, Heritage Foundation, October 16, 2014.

⁷⁹ "Russia Deploys Iskander Nuclear-Capable Missiles to Kaliningrad," Reuters, February 5, 2018.

⁸⁰ Dominik Jankowski, *Six Ways NATO Can Address the Russian Challenge*, Atlantic Council, July 4, 2018.

⁸¹ LTG (Ret.) Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski, and Peter Doran, *Securing the Suwałki Corridor*, Center for European Policy Analysis, July 2018.

⁸² See CRS In Focus IF11138, *Nord Stream 2: A Fait Accompli?*, by Paul Belkin et al.

dominate the European network hubs in Germany and Austria. Poland maintains that Russia would further gain geopolitical leverage because it could arbitrarily shift supply corridors in Europe, giving it the ability to continue supplying European markets through Germany while restricting or completely halting gas transit through Poland and/or Ukraine. Polish officials have expressed the view that U.S. involvement, including the adoption of sanctions, is crucial for efforts to oppose construction of the pipeline.⁸³

While approximately two-thirds of the natural gas and most of the oil consumed in Poland comes from Russia, Poland continues to rely on domestically produced coal for much of its electricity generation. Russian gas accounts for less than 10% of Poland's primary energy supply.⁸⁴ Successive Polish governments have prioritized efforts to diversify the country's energy sources. Poland has been taking steps to expand pipeline interconnectivity with its neighbors, including plans to develop the Baltic Pipe project, expected to be operational in 2022, which would connect Poland's gas infrastructure via Denmark to Norwegian supplies.⁸⁵ Poland's supply contract with Gazprom expires in 2022, and Poland is unlikely to seek its renewal. Poland also has developed the ability to reverse the flow of gas in the Polish section of the Yamal pipeline, which runs from Russia to Germany via Belarus and Poland, in order to import natural gas from the west in the case of a crisis involving a cut-off of Russian gas from the east. A liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal on the Baltic Sea coast near the German border (Świnoujście) became operational in 2015, and in October 2018 the Polish state energy company signed a 20-year contract to purchase LNG from a U.S. supplier.⁸⁶

The Polish government also has been a leading advocate for a stronger EU energy policy that reduces collective dependence on Russia. Poland has been active in projects that enhance regional energy security by interconnecting national gas networks through the construction of new pipelines. The construction of new connectors with Slovakia and the Czech Republic is underway, and the planned Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania (GIPL), expected to become operational by 2022, would link the natural gas grid of the Baltic countries to the rest of the EU.⁸⁷

Many U.S. officials and Members of Congress have regarded European energy security as a U.S. interest. In particular, there has been concern in the United States over the influence that Russian energy dominance could have on the ability to present a united transatlantic position when it comes to other issues related to Russia. Successive U.S. administrations have encouraged EU member states to reduce energy dependence on Russia through diversification of supply and supported European steps to develop alternative sources and increase energy efficiency.

In the 116th Congress, related bills include the European Energy Security and Diversification Act 2019 (House-passed H.R. 1616 and S. 704) and the Protect European Energy Security Act (H.R. 1081). Introduced by Representative Adam Kinzinger and Senator Christopher Murphy, the European Energy Security and Diversification Act 2019 aims to prioritize and enhance U.S. efforts to encourage European countries to diversify energy sources and supply routes and increase regional energy security. Introduced by Representative Denny Heck, the Protect European Energy Security Act would require reports to Congress by the Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, and the Director of National Intelligence detailing U.S. diplomatic

⁸³ Nick Snow, "US Sanctions Necessary to Stop Nord Stream 2 Pipeline, Speakers Say," *Oil & Gas Journal*, March 15, 2019.

⁸⁴ Statistics from BP Statistical Review of World Energy – all data, 1965-2017, at <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy.html>.

⁸⁵ See Baltic Pipe Project, <https://www.baltic-pipe.eu/the-project/>.

⁸⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Poland Seals Deal To Buy LNG From U.S. To Ease Dependence On Moscow," October 17, 2018.

⁸⁷ Jo Harper, "Polish Gas Terminal Speaks Volumes," *Forbes*, March 31, 2019.

efforts to oppose the construction of Nord Stream 2 and to promote European energy security and decrease European dependence on Russian energy.

Conclusion

Poland appears likely to remain a strong U.S. ally and an increasingly important U.S. security partner in Europe. Many analysts believe that close cooperation between the United States and Poland will continue for the foreseeable future in areas such as efforts to deter potential Russian aggression, the future of NATO, energy security, and economic issues. Statements by Polish leaders suggest that Poland is likely to continue looking to the United States for leadership on foreign policy and security issues.

During the 116th Congress, the issue of establishing a permanent U.S. military base in Poland or increasing the size of the U.S. military presence in Poland may remain of interest to Members of Congress. Contracted and prospective U.S. arms sales to Poland, including major items such as the F-35 and Patriot missile systems, also may be of congressional interest. Some Members may wish to consider Poland's status with regard to the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. Poland is likely to be of continuing importance in the area of European energy security.

Members of Congress also may wish to remain informed about legislative, governance, and rule-of-law issues in Poland, including with regard to the numerous controversial domestic reforms enacted over the past several years. Members of Congress may have an interest in monitoring political developments in relation to the Polish parliamentary election due to occur in October or November 2019.

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