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# Poland: Background and U.S. Relations

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**Derek E. Mix**  
Specialist in European  
Affairs

## Poland: Background and U.S. Relations

Over the past three decades, the relationship between the United States and Poland has been close and cooperative. The United States strongly supported Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 and its entry into the European Union (EU) in 2004. Congress backed Poland's NATO and EU integration on a bipartisan basis. U.S. officials welcomed Poland's contributions to U.S.- and NATO-led military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Poland and the United States continue to work together closely on a range of foreign policy and international security issues, most notably in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. policymakers widely regard Poland as a strategic frontline partner on NATO's eastern flank, and Trump Administration officials have characterized Poland as a model U.S. ally. Poland has been a focus of U.S. and NATO efforts to deter Russian aggression against NATO members. The United States has approximately 10,000 military personnel deployed in Poland. Arms purchases from the United States play a central role in Poland's armed forces modernization. In 2023 and 2024, the United States provided Poland with approximately \$11 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) loans and loan guarantees to purchase U.S. defense articles and services.

### Response to Russia's War Against Ukraine

Poland has been a leader in Europe and NATO in supporting Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Poland is one of the leading providers of military assistance to Ukraine, and it has served as the main logistics and transit hub for international assistance to Ukraine. Poland also has taken in approximately 1 million refugees from Ukraine. Polish leaders have urged the EU adopt the strongest possible sanctions against Russia. Poland also has been a leading voice in calls for NATO members to increase their defense spending.

### Political Situation

Prime Minister Donald Tusk of the center-right Civic Platform (PO) party has led a coalition government in Poland since 2023. The conservative-nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, which led the government of Poland from 2015 to 2023, is the largest opposition party. Poland's next parliamentary election is due to occur in autumn 2027.

Running as the candidate backed by PiS, Karol Nawrocki won Poland's 2025 presidential election. Nawrocki is scheduled to be inaugurated on August 6, 2025, succeeding Andrzej Duda, who won the 2015 and 2020 elections as the candidate backed by PiS. President Duda has blocked efforts by the Tusk government to undo a number of controversial changes to Poland's judicial system that PiS made during its time in government. Some of the measures adopted under the PiS-led government caused tensions between Poland and the EU. Analysts expect that Nawrocki will continue to block the Tusk government's judicial reform agenda.

### Defense Spending and Security Concerns

As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), Poland (at 4.1%) had the highest defense spending of any NATO member in 2024. Poland plans to spend 4.7% of GDP on defense in 2025. Poland has undertaken an ambitious initiative to expand the size of its armed forces and acquire a range of new military equipment. In addition to conventional military threats, Poland faces hybrid threats from Russia and Belarus such as cyberattacks, sabotage, and weaponized migration. Poland has taken steps to enhance the security of its borders with Russia and Belarus.

### Energy Security

Over the past decade, and in particular since 2022, Poland has moved to end reliance on energy imports from Russia, including by constructing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal and a natural gas pipeline connecting Poland to Norway. The United States is Poland's largest supplier of LNG. A consortium of U.S. companies has signed an agreement with Polish authorities to build Poland's first nuclear power plant. Poland continues to rely heavily on coal for electricity generation.

### Outlook and Issues for Congress

Given its role as a close U.S. ally, Poland and its relations with the United States are of continuing congressional interest. The main areas of interest have included bilateral defense cooperation, the future of NATO, Polish armed forces modernization, efforts to deter further Russian aggression, support for Ukraine, energy security, and economic relations.

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## Introduction and Issues for Congress

For decades, U.S. policymakers have considered Poland to be a strong ally of the United States and one of the most pro-U.S. countries in Europe. With strong backing from the United States (including the U.S. Congress), Poland was among the first group of post-communist countries to join NATO in 1999 and the European Union (EU) in 2004. Of the Central European and Baltic states that have joined NATO and the EU since the end of the Cold War, Poland is the most populous, has the largest economy, and is the most significant actor in terms of security and defense issues.

**Figure 1. Poland: Map and Basic Facts**



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

**Population:** approximately 38.75 million

**Ethnicity:** 96.9% Polish

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

**Religion:** 84.6% Roman Catholic, 13.0% listed as unspecified

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 2024 (current prices):** approximately \$908.6 billion; per capita GDP approximately \$24,800

**Currency:** zloty (PLN), \$1=approx. PLN 3.75, €1=approx. PLN 4.25

**Sources:** Created by CRS using data from the U.S. Department of State and ESRI. Factual information from International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database* (April 2025) and *CIA World Factbook*.

Especially since 2014, following Russia's initial invasion of Ukraine, Poland has become an increasingly important strategic partner for the United States. The United States and NATO have enhanced their defense posture on NATO's eastern flank, with Poland as a focal point for the U.S. military presence in the region. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine starting in 2022 has put

security at the top of Poland's national agenda and further deepened U.S.-Poland security cooperation. Poland has been a leading provider of assistance to Ukraine and has played a central role in U.S. and international efforts to provide such assistance. As Poland prioritizes increasing its defense spending and expanding the size and capabilities of its armed forces, the United States provides significant security assistance to Poland, and the two countries maintain a multibillion-dollar arms sales relationship. Poland also has been a leading advocate for other NATO member countries to increase their defense spending.

Members of the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress may be interested in developments in Poland and NATO's eastern neighborhood related to security concerns about Russia, as well as the implications of these developments for U.S. policy and NATO. Poland is among the principal U.S. partners in assessing and responding to these challenges. Numerous congressional delegations have visited Poland since 2022 to confer with Polish officials and conduct oversight of U.S. defense commitments and military activities in Central and Eastern Europe. The Congressional Poland Caucus 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.<sup>1</sup>

## Political Situation

Prime Minister Donald Tusk of the center-right Civic Platform (PO) party leads the government of Poland. Tusk took office in December 2023 at the head of a coalition government consisting of the centrist Civic Coalition (KO, in which Civic Platform is the largest party), the conservative Polish People's Party (PSL), the centrist Poland 2050 party, and the left-wing *Lewica* (The Left) coalition.<sup>2</sup> In the October 2023 parliamentary election, KO, PSL, Poland 2050, and *Lewica* won a combined 53.7% of the vote and 248 of the 460 seats in the *Sejm* (the lower house of parliament).<sup>3</sup> The coalition government now holds 242 seats after one of the parties in *Lewica* switched to the opposition in October 2024. Tusk previously served as prime minister from 2007 to 2014 and as president of the European Council, the leading political institution of the EU, from 2014 to 2019.

Although the parties of the governing coalition have ideological differences, they united to deny a third consecutive term in government to the conservative-nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, which led the government of Poland from 2015 to 2023. In general, Polish politics are largely characterized by a divide between national-oriented social conservatives, represented by PiS, and Western-oriented liberals, represented by Civic Platform. PiS came in first place in the 2023 parliamentary election with 35.4% of the vote and 194 seats in the *Sejm*. However, it was unable to secure support from other parties to form a new government. The next parliamentary election is due to be held by October 2027.

In the 2023 election, the coalition parties won a combined 61 seats in the 100-seat Polish Senate (upper house of parliament), compared with 34 seats for PiS. The Senate may propose amendments to legislation passed by the *Sejm*, but the two houses do not have equal status; the Polish Constitution "provides the *Sejm* with a dominant role in the legislative process."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, the cochairs of the Congressional Poland Caucus are Rep. Marcy Kaptur, Rep. Bill Keating, Rep. Chris Smith, and Rep. Mike Turner.

<sup>2</sup> The Polish People's Party and Poland 2050 ran in the 2023 parliamentary election as an electoral alliance called Third Way.

<sup>3</sup> Election results from National Electoral Commission, *Polish Parliamentary Elections 2023*, October 15, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Sejm of the Republic of Poland, Sejm in the System of Power*, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/english/sejm/sejm.htm>. Also (continued...)

Karol Nawrocki, a historian backed by PiS, won Poland's 2025 presidential election. Nawrocki defeated Rafał Trzaskowski, the mayor of Warsaw and the candidate backed by Civic Coalition, by 50.9% to 49.1% in a second-round runoff vote held on June 1.<sup>5</sup> 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, representing the state in international affairs, and acting as commander in chief of the armed forces. The president also has the power to propose and veto legislation.<sup>6</sup> Nawrocki is scheduled to be inaugurated on August 6, 2025. He succeeds Andrzej Duda, who won the 2015 and 2020 presidential elections as the candidate backed by PiS.

Some analysts observe that Nawrocki's victory is likely to extend political and legislative deadlock between Poland's prime minister and its president.<sup>7</sup> During its eight years in government, PiS carried out numerous controversial reforms to the judiciary and public media that strained Poland's relations with the EU and raised strong objections from opposition parties.<sup>8</sup> Critics charged that some of the policies and reforms adopted by PiS undermined judicial independence and damaged democracy and rule of law in Poland. The Tusk government has sought to roll back many of these reforms, but President Duda vetoed some of the government's bills (requiring a 60% majority in the *Sejm* to override) and blocked others by referring them to the country's constitutional tribunal.<sup>9</sup> The Tusk government contends that the tribunal lacks independence and that PiS unlawfully appointed several of the tribunal's judges and many of the country's other judges during its time in government.<sup>10</sup> Some analysts assess that Nawrocki is likely to continue blocking the Tusk government's judicial reform agenda.<sup>11</sup> Nawrocki's veto power also is likely to prevent the Tusk government from pursuing social reforms such as loosening abortion restrictions or legalizing same-sex marriage.

Some observers have criticized the Tusk government over rule-of-law issues, pointing to legal controversies about how it has undertaken its own public media and judicial reform efforts.<sup>12</sup> The prosecution of some PiS officials over alleged offenses committed during their time in government also has generated controversy.<sup>13</sup>

The Tusk government's intentions to reform Poland's judicial system have improved relations between Poland and the EU. In February 2024, the EU released €137 billion (approximately \$160 billion) in funding for Poland through 2027 that had been frozen due to the EU's rule-of-law

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see Senate of the Republic of Poland, *How an Act Is Made?*, and *The Role of the Senate in the Constitutional Structure of the Polish State*, <https://www.senat.gov.pl/en/about-the-senate/senat-wspolczesny/>.

<sup>5</sup> National Electoral Commission, *Election of the President of the Republic of Poland 2025*, June 2, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> See Official Website of the President of Poland, <https://www.president.pl/en/president/competences/>.

<sup>7</sup> Maciej Bukowski, *Gridlock Wins: What Next for Poland?*, Center for European Policy Analysis, June 4, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Dariusz Kalan, "Poland's State of the Media," *Foreign Policy*, November 25, 2019; Alistair Walsh, "What Are Poland's Controversial Judicial Reforms?," *Deutsche Welle*, November 5, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Jakub Jaraczewski, "Poland's Ongoing Rule-of-Law Crisis Explained," *Notes From Poland*, March 17, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Justice of Poland, *A Package of Healing Solutions for the Constitutional Tribunal*, March 4, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Aleks Szczerbiak, "What Is at Stake in Poland's Presidential Election?," *Notes from Poland*, May 28, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Tilles, "More Poles Believe Rule of Law Has worsened Under Tusk Government Than Improved," *Notes From Poland*, January 5, 2025; Raphael Minder, "Inside Donald Tusk's Divisive Campaign to Restore Polish Democracy," *Financial Times*, February 18, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Katarzyna-Maria Skiba and Dominika Cosic, "Former Polish PM Morawiecki Faces Prison over Alleged Abuse of Power," *Euronews*, February 28, 2025; "Polish Central Bank Chief's State Tribunal Case: What You Need to Know," *TVP World*, May 24, 2024.



concerns during the PiS-led government.<sup>14</sup> In May 2024, the EU closed a procedure it had launched in 2017 to determine whether Poland was in breach of EU values relating to the rule of law.<sup>15</sup>

## Economy

Poland's economy is one of the most successful in Central and Eastern Europe. Starting with post-communist reform programs in the 1990s and continuing beyond Poland's 2004 EU accession, pro-market policies and stable institutions have underpinned strong economic growth and a steady increase in per capita gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>16</sup>

Poland's economic growth is among the strongest in the EU. The Polish economy grew by 2.9% in 2024 and is forecast to grow by 3.2% in 2025 and 3.1% in 2026.<sup>17</sup> Unemployment is low, at 2.8% in 2024. Poland's economy continues to face challenges from relatively high inflation and weak demand from its main trading partners. In May 2025, year-on-year inflation in Poland was 3.5%, compared with the EU average of 2.2%.<sup>18</sup> Germany is Poland's largest trading partner; in the first quarter of 2025, Germany was the destination for 27% of Poland's exports and the source of approximately 19% of Poland's imports.<sup>19</sup>

Although Poland joined the EU in 2004, it is not a member of the Eurozone, the group of 20 EU member states that use the euro as their common currency. Poland continues to use the zloty (PLN) as its national currency. 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.

## Response to Russia's War Against Ukraine

Poland resolutely supports Ukraine and is one of the international community's strongest critics of Russia. Prime Minister Tusk has stated that "Poland's national interest requires unequivocal, lasting support for Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression. This is non-negotiable."<sup>20</sup> Historically, Poland has had a difficult relationship with Russia. Polish views of Russia remain affected by the experience of invasion by the Soviet Union during World War II and Soviet domination during the communist era. Over the past two decades, Polish leaders have warned about the nature of Russian President Vladimir Putin's government and tended to view Russia as a threat to Poland and its neighbors. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its initial invasion of Ukraine in 2014 sharpened such concerns. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has put security at the top of Poland's national agenda. In a 2023 speech, President Duda asserted, "Russia sees Poland as a country that will either [be] subordinate to it and be dependent on it, or

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<sup>14</sup> Jorge Liboreiro, "Breaking Down the €137 Billion in EU Funds That Brussels Has Unfrozen For Poland," *Euronews*, February 29, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *Commission Intends to Close Article 7(1) TEU Procedure for Poland*, May 5, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Dominik Kopiński et al., *The Big Bang Enlargement: 20 Years of Central Europe's Membership in the EU*, Polish Economic Institute, April 2024.

<sup>17</sup> International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2025. Figures rounded to the nearest tenth of a percentage.

<sup>18</sup> Eurostat, "Annual Inflation Down to 1.9% in the Euro Area," June 18, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Poland, "Foreign Trade Turnover of Goods in Total and by Countries in January–April 2025," June 13, 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Historic Summit in London – Western Leaders Stand Together for Security and Ukraine," March 2, 2025.

will be its enemy.”<sup>21</sup> Poland shares a 130-mile border with Russia’s Kaliningrad exclave and a 260-mile border with Russia’s ally Belarus; Poland also shares a 330-mile border with Ukraine.

According to the Kiel Institute, a nongovernmental organization that tracks aid to Ukraine, Poland committed approximately \$4 billion in bilateral military assistance and \$1.5 billion in financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine between January 2022 and April 2025.<sup>22</sup> Military assistance has included hundreds of main battle tanks, as well as infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled howitzers, multiple rocket launchers, air defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, mortars, small arms, and ammunition. Poland also functions as the main logistics center and transit hub for delivering international military assistance to Ukraine. The city of Rzeszów, in southeastern Poland, has been a particularly important focus of such activity.

In addition to providing material assistance, Poland has hosted and conducted training for Ukrainian armed forces personnel.<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister Tusk has stated that Poland does not plan to send armed forces personnel to Ukraine as part of a prospective future security guarantee but that Poland would provide logistical and political support should other countries decide to send their personnel to Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

As of May 2025, approximately 1 million refugees from Ukraine were in Poland, making it the second-largest destination for Ukrainian refugees (behind Germany).<sup>25</sup> The Kiel Institute estimates that the cost to Poland of hosting and supporting Ukrainian refugees from January 2022 through April 2025 was €29.3 billion (about \$34.3 billion).<sup>26</sup>

In May 2025, Prime Minister Tusk joined other European leaders in calling on Russia to agree to an unconditional ceasefire and enter into peace negotiations.<sup>27</sup> He subsequently stated, “The Russian side once again set conditions that were absolutely unacceptable, not only to Ukraine but to all of us.”<sup>28</sup> Polish leaders have supported strong EU sanctions against Russia and repeatedly argued for expanding the EU’s sanctions further to increase pressure on Russia. Poland also has advocated for EU membership for Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> The EU named Ukraine as an official candidate country in 2022 and opened accession negotiations with Ukraine in 2024.

Although Poland has been one of Ukraine’s biggest supporters, there have been trade-related tensions between the two countries concerning imports of Ukrainian grain.<sup>30</sup> Groups of Polish farmers periodically have blockaded crossing points at the Polish-Ukrainian border in protest over competing with cheaper imports from Ukraine. During the presidential election campaign,

<sup>21</sup> President of the Republic of Poland, “Poland’s Foreign Policy Seeks Russia’s Strategic Defeat Andrzej Duda Says,” June 19, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Kiel Institute for the World Economy, *Ukraine Support Tracker*, June 16, 2025.

<sup>23</sup> NATO, “Ukrainian Troops Train in Poland to Master Allied Leopard 2 Tanks,” December 10, 2024; NATO, “Ukrainian Soldiers Train in Combined Arms Warfare in Poland,” December 18, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “Prime Minister After Informal Paris Summit: Europe Must Strengthen Its Defense,” February 17, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation*.

<sup>26</sup> Kiel Institute for the World Economy, *Ukraine Support Tracker*, June 16, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “Prime Minister Tusk in Kyiv: We Call on Russia to Accept Unconditional Ceasefire,” May 10, 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “United for Peace: Europe Rallies to Increase Pressure on Russia,” May 16, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “Joint Statement by Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy,” January 15, 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Emma Dodd and Caitlin Welsh, *Fracturing Solidarity: The Grain Trade Dispute Between Ukraine and the European Union*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, February 20, 2024.



President-elect Nawrocki also adopted a critical tone toward Ukrainian refugees in Poland and other aspects of relations with Ukraine; in contrast to both Prime Minister Tusk and President Duda, Nawrocki has advocated against the idea of Ukraine joining NATO. Nevertheless, both the Tusk government and the opposition PiS back continued support for Ukraine and share the view that Russia is by far Poland's primary security threat.

## 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, and Poland has become a significant U.S. ally over the past 2½ decades. Poland contributed armed forces personnel to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. The two countries have considerable cultural ties, including more than 8 million Americans of Polish heritage.<sup>31</sup> The United States granted Poland membership in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program in 2019, resolving a long-standing irritant in bilateral relations.<sup>32</sup>

Following Poland's 2025 presidential election, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a statement congratulating President-elect Nawrocki and asserting that

The United States and Poland share a strong and enduring partnership rooted in mutual commitment to security, prosperity, and the rule of law. The Polish people have spoken and support a stronger military and securing their borders. Poland is a model Ally and a key contributor to strengthening the NATO Alliance and its sovereign integrity against today's challenges and those ahead. Our cooperation in the energy sector—including nuclear energy—supports our expanding commercial ties and advances Poland's energy security.<sup>33</sup>

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 Russian aggression in Europe and has played a central role in U.S. and NATO activities to aid Ukraine. In a February 2025 visit to Poland, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth described Poland as a "strategic frontline partner on NATO's eastern flank" and stated that "we see Poland as the model ally on the continent, willing to invest not just in their defense, but in our shared defense and defense of the continent."<sup>34</sup> The United States and Poland maintain a robust arms sales relationship (for more, see "Defense Spending and Modernization"). In 2023 and 2024, the United States provided Poland with more than \$11 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) loans and loan guarantees to purchase U.S. defense articles and services.<sup>35</sup>

Poland also is among the strongest European voices in favor of retaining a leading U.S. role in European security affairs. In a 2023 speech, President Duda stated that "the United States is the guarantee of security" in Europe.<sup>36</sup> Although they are political rivals who disagree on many domestic issues, both Civic Platform and PiS support a strong partnership with the United States. In 2024, Prime Minister Tusk and President Duda conducted a joint visit to the White House to

<sup>31</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Polish-American Heritage Month: October 2023," October 2023.

<sup>32</sup> See CRS Report RL32221, *Visa Waiver Program*, by Abigail F. Kolker.

<sup>33</sup> Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, "On Poland's Presidential Election," U.S. Department of State, June 2, 2025. See also Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, "Poland's National Day," U.S. Department of State, May 3, 2025.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, "Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Polish Deputy Prime Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz Hold Joint Media Availability," February 14, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Bolsters Poland with \$4 Billion FMF Loan Guarantee, Totaling Over \$11 Billion in Loan Support," December 5, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Poland, "Message by the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda," February 24, 2023.

mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Prime Minister Tusk has advocated for Europe to build up its own defense capacity, arguing that Europe must simultaneously maintain close relations with the United States and become a stronger, more independent actor when it comes to defense. In March 2025, the prime minister stated, "The paradox is that 500 million Europeans are asking 300 million Americans to defend them against 140 million Russians. We must rely on ourselves, fully aware of our potential and with confidence that we are a global power."<sup>38</sup>

Although relations between Poland and the United States remain mostly positive, there have been some tensions between Tusk and the Trump Administration. During his time as president of the European Council, Tusk criticized President Trump on several occasions. In a February 2025 media interview, Prime Minister Tusk characterized President Trump as a "difficult partner" whose approach to the war in Ukraine and relations with Russia creates challenges for Poland and Europe, adding "but we must engage with him effectively, without illusions and without panic."<sup>39</sup> At the February 2025 Munich Security Conference, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski described President Trump's direct outreach to Russian President Putin as a "mistake" and asserted, "the credibility of the United States depends on how this war ends."<sup>40</sup>

During Poland's 2025 presidential election campaign, the Trump Administration expressed support for Nawrocki (who ultimately won the election) over the candidate backed by Tusk. Prior to the election, Nawrocki visited with President Trump at the White House on May 1, 2025, and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem endorsed Nawrocki during a speech in Poland later in the month.<sup>41</sup> Some Members of Congress have expressed concerns about rule-of-law issues in Poland under the Tusk government.<sup>42</sup> Some U.S. officials during both the Biden Administration and the first Trump Administration, including some Members of Congress, previously expressed concerns about the rule of law in Poland during the PiS-led government.<sup>43</sup>

## U.S. Military Presence in Poland

Approximately 10,000 U.S. military personnel are deployed in Poland. Many of the U.S. personnel in Poland are deployed under Operation Atlantic Resolve, a contingency operation launched in 2014 to deter potential Russian aggression against NATO by rotating U.S.-based military personnel into the countries of NATO's eastern flank. The United States and Poland

<sup>37</sup> White House, "Remarks by President Biden, President Andrzej Duda, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland Before Bilateral Meeting," March 13, 2024.

<sup>38</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Historic Summit in London – Western Leaders Stand Together for Security and Ukraine," March 2, 2025.

<sup>39</sup> "Europe Must Adapt to Shifting U.S. Priorities: Polish PM," *PolskieRadio*, February 28, 2025.

<sup>40</sup> Munich Security Conference, *Europole? The Old Continent's New Geopolitical Role*, Panel Discussion, February 15, 2025, <https://securityconference.org/en/msc-2025/agenda/event/europole-the-old-continents-new-geopolitical-role/>.

<sup>41</sup> TVP World (@TVPWorld\_com), "The U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem Said That Karol Nawrocki Should Be the Next President of Poland," X post, May 28, 2025; White House (@WhiteHouse), "President Donald J. Trump Welcomes Polish Presidential Candidate Karol Nawrocki to the Oval Office," X post, May 1, 2025.

<sup>42</sup> House Committee on Foreign Affairs, "Chairman Mast, Republicans Blast EU Inaction as Polish Globalists Undermine Free Election," May 27, 2025; "Vance Letter to Blinken on Poland Media Freedom," posted on Scribd, January 11, 2024.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State, "Poland's Troubling Legislation," U.S. Department of State, August 11, 2021; Office of Representative Jamie Raskin, "House Democrats Urge Pence to Address Poland's Democratic Erosion," August 30, 2019, U.S. Department of State, "Poland: Independence of the Judiciary," July 21, 2017; and "U.S. Senators Urge Poland to Respect Democracy, Rule of Law," Reuters, February 14, 2016.

signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2020 that supplements the NATO Status of Forces Agreement and streamlines cooperation on infrastructure construction and logistics.<sup>44</sup>

The U.S. military presence in Poland includes the following:<sup>45</sup>

- the U.S. Army's V Corps forward headquarters at Camp Kosciuszko in Poznań, established as a permanent headquarters in 2022 to command U.S. rotational forces in Europe, support allies in the region, and improve allied interoperability;
- a permanent U.S. Army Garrison Poland, based at Camp Kosciuszko to provide infrastructure support for U.S. forces in Poland;
- the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division command, a staff battalion based at Bolesławiec;
- a rotational Armored Brigade Combat Team, deployed mainly in western Poland and conducting training and exercises throughout Poland and the region;
- a rotational Combat Aviation Brigade task force, based at Powidz;
- a rotational contingent of approximately 800 soldiers deployed near Orzysz in northeastern Poland as part of a NATO Enhanced Forward Presence multinational battlegroup;
- a U.S. Air Force recurrent Aviation Detachment Rotation at Łask Air Base;
- a Combat Sustainment Support Battalion based at Powidz to provide logistical support for *Operation Atlantic Resolve*;
- a Long-Term Equipment Storage and Maintenance Complex at Powidz that hosts thousands of pieces of military equipment and vehicles; and
- naval personnel assigned to an Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense base constructed by the United States in Redzikowo.

## Economic Relations

In 2024, U.S. exports of goods and services to Poland were valued at \$16.3 billion and U.S. imports of goods and services from Poland were valued at \$18.0 billion. In 2023, U.S. direct investment in Poland was \$15.8 billion and Poland's direct investment in the United States was \$498 million. In 2022 (most recent data available), majority U.S.-owned affiliates employed approximately 232,600 people in Poland.<sup>46</sup> U.S. companies with significant investment in Poland include Amazon, Citigroup, General Electric, IBM, Lear, Mars, Procter & Gamble, RTX, Whirlpool, and 3M.<sup>47</sup> As Poland is a member of the EU, U.S. tariffs on products from the EU apply to Poland.

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<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S.-Poland Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement*, August 15, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of National Defence, Republic of Poland, "Increasing the U.S. Military Presence in Poland," accessed April 2, 2025.

<sup>46</sup> Statistics from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Poland—International Trade and Investment Country Facts*.

<sup>47</sup> American Chamber of Commerce in Poland and SGH Warsaw School of Economics, *American Companies in Poland*, June 2023.

## Defense Spending and Modernization

Poland's national defense strategy has prioritized increasing defense spending, expanding the size of its armed forces, acquiring and developing new capabilities, and modernizing its military equipment.<sup>48</sup> As a percentage of GDP, Poland had the highest defense spending of any NATO member in 2024; Poland's defense expenditures were equivalent to an estimated 4.1% of GDP, or approximately \$35 billion.<sup>49</sup> Poland plans to spend 4.7% of GDP on defense in 2025, and Polish officials have expressed support for President Trump's call for NATO members to spend 5% of GDP on defense.<sup>50</sup> (In 2014, NATO member states agreed to a target of spending at least 2% of GDP on defense. At NATO's June 2025 summit, the allies committed to spending 5% of GDP on defense by 2035.)

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine prompted Poland to adopt a Homeland Defense Act calling for the Polish armed forces to double in size, from nearly 150,000 personnel at the time (111,500 active duty personnel and 32,000 territorial defense forces) to 300,000 personnel (250,000 active duty personnel and 50,000 territorial defense forces).<sup>51</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies' *Military Balance 2025* lists the size of Poland's armed forces as 201,600 (164,100 active duty personnel and 37,500 territorial defense forces) as of February 2025.<sup>52</sup> In a March 2025 speech to the *Sejm*, Prime Minister Tusk announced an initiative to provide military training to every adult male in Poland, with the goal of increasing the size of the Polish armed forces to 500,000 personnel, including reservists.<sup>53</sup>

Weapons and equipment purchases from the United States play a central role in Poland's military modernization program. According to the U.S. State Department, approximately \$20 billion in U.S. Foreign Military Sales cases to Poland were active as of early 2025.<sup>54</sup>

Sales since 2016 have included the following:<sup>55</sup>

- 32 F-35 aircraft;
- 96 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters;
- 250 M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks and 116 M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks;
- Patriot-3+ integrated air and missile defense systems;
- High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS);
- advanced air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles;

<sup>48</sup> Krystyna Marcinek and Scott Boston, *Polish Armed Forces Modernization: A New Cornerstone of European Security?*, RAND, May 29, 2025; Robert Czulda, "Poland's Future Armed Forces Take Shape," *European Security & Defence*, September 3, 2024.

<sup>49</sup> NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2024)*, June 17, 2024.

<sup>50</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Prime Minister After Informal Paris Summit: Europe Must Strengthen Its Defense," February 17, 2025; Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, "The Speech of Polish Prime Minister at the European Parliament: 'Europe Is Not Yet Lost as Long as We Are Alive,'" January 22, 2025.

<sup>51</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "More Troops and More Money for Defence—The Council of Ministers Adopted a Draft Homeland Defence Act," February 22, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2025*, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Prime Minister in Parliament: Hope Cannot Replace Strategy," March 7, 2025. Also see Katarzyna-Maria Skiba, "Poland Says It Plans to Give Every Adult Male Military Training," *Euronews*, March 8, 2025.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Security Cooperation with Poland*, January 20, 2025.

<sup>55</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Poland*, <https://www.dsca.mil/tags/poland>.

- Javelin anti-tank missiles; and
- F-16 aircraft upgrades and services.

Poland's equipment donations to Ukraine also have affected its own capabilities, adding urgency to the acquisition of replacement equipment to fill resulting gaps. In particular, since 2022, Poland has concluded deals for arms purchases from South Korea that reportedly are valued at more than \$16 billion.<sup>56</sup> Purchases from South Korea include 180 K2 main battle tanks (with a prospective deal for an additional 180), 212 K9 self-propelled howitzers, 48 FA-50 light combat aircraft, and 218 K239 multiple rocket launchers.<sup>57</sup> Under the agreements, Poland intends to produce K2s and K9s domestically and eventually to have 1,000 K2s and nearly 700 K9s.

In addition to purchases from foreign suppliers, Poland has emphasized the development of its domestic defense industry. Polish defense companies supply the country's armed forces with equipment including Krab self-propelled howitzers, Borsuk infantry fighting vehicles, Rak self-propelled mortars, Piorun anti-aircraft missile systems, and Grot assault rifles.<sup>58</sup>

Poland also has been seeking to strengthen its capabilities in areas such as unmanned vehicles, the cyber and space domains, artificial intelligence, communications, and electronic warfare.

Under an initiative launched in 2024 called Shield East, Poland is constructing a defensive line along its borders with Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. Shield East, which has a planned completion date of 2028, is expected to detect and impede hostile forces or other threats through an array of advanced surveillance systems, physical barriers, anti-tank fortifications, bunkers, and minefields.<sup>59</sup>

## Hybrid Threats

Analysts have observed that Russia frequently targets Poland and other NATO and EU member countries with a range of influence operations using hybrid warfare tactics such as cyberattacks, disinformation, espionage, and sabotage. The likely goals of such operations are to weaken, divide, or destabilize targeted societies without triggering direct military conflict.<sup>60</sup> Many of Russia's hybrid activities since 2022 additionally appear intended to undermine support for Ukraine by pressuring or intimidating countries that have provided such support.

The main categories of operations employed by Russia against Poland include the following:

- **Cyberattacks and Disinformation Campaigns.** Polish officials accused Russia of attempting to interfere in Poland's 2025 presidential election by spreading disinformation and conducting cyberattacks against critical infrastructure. In a May 2025 speech prior to the election, Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Digital Affairs Minister Krzysztof Gawkowski stated, "We are currently witnessing unprecedented Russian interference in the electoral process. Not on the side of a specific party or force, but generally on the Polish political scene. Russia sees us

<sup>56</sup> Bartosz Głowacki, "Will S. Korea's Drama Cause Problems, Or Savings, For Poland's Large Weapon Buys?," *Breaking Defense*, January 27, 2025.

<sup>57</sup> Dylan Malyasov, "Poland to Buy More K2 Tanks in \$6.2B Deal," *Defence Blog*, March 9, 2025.

<sup>58</sup> Mariusz Błaszczak, "Breakthrough for the Polish Armed Forces," *Polska Zbrojna*, May 30, 2023.

<sup>59</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "'Shield East'—An Investment in Peace and Security," October 14, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> See CRS In Focus IF12865, *Russia's Foreign Intelligence Services*, by Andrew S. Bowen.



- as a target.”<sup>61</sup> Gawkowski asserted that Russia’s military intelligence agency had doubled information and cyber activities targeting Poland compared with the previous year.<sup>62</sup>
- **Espionage and Sabotage.** In April 2025, Poland’s Internal Security Agency reported that since Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the agency had detained 44 people in relation to spying or sabotage in Poland on behalf of Russia or Belarus.<sup>63</sup> Those apprehended have included Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Poles accused or convicted in connection with incidents including an arson attack against a Warsaw shopping center, surveillance of sensitive military locations, and plans to attack Polish railways carrying supplies for Ukraine.<sup>64</sup> Since 2023, there also have been several incidents of suspected sabotage in the Baltic Sea involving vessels damaging underwater infrastructure by dragging their anchors across the seabed.<sup>65</sup> In January 2025, NATO launched a new mission (Baltic Sentry) to increase its presence in the Baltic Sea and improve the allies’ ability to protect critical infrastructure.<sup>66</sup> In May 2025, Poland’s armed forces intervened to divert a Russian tanker vessel reported to have performed suspicious maneuvers in the Baltic Sea near an underwater power cable connecting Poland and Sweden.<sup>67</sup>
  - **Weaponized Migration.** Some analysts and European officials assert that Russia and its ally Belarus have sought to use migration to destabilize the EU. Since 2021, tens of thousands of migrants, primarily from countries in the Middle East and Africa, have traveled to Russia and Belarus and subsequently have attempted to enter the EU illegally through Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia.<sup>68</sup> Prime Minister Tusk has described these migration flows as “state-led operations involving the regimes in Minsk and Moscow.”<sup>69</sup> In response, Poland’s government has made the security of its eastern border one of its top priorities. Poland has deployed armed forces personnel to reinforce border guards, constructed a barrier fence along its border with Belarus, invested

<sup>61</sup> Mariusz Marszałkowski, “Defence24 Days 2025: The Largest Defence and Security Conference in CEE Has Started,” Defence24, May 6, 2025.

<sup>62</sup> *PolskieRadio*, “Poland Faces ‘Unprecedented’ Russian Election Interference: Deputy PM,” May 6, 2025.

<sup>63</sup> *Polska Agencja Prasowa*, “Poland Detains Ukrainian Suspected of Spying For Russia,” April 1, 2025.

<sup>64</sup> *TVP World*, “Poland to Close Russian Consulate After Evidence Kremlin Ordered 2024 Arson Attack,” May 12, 2025; Anjou Kang-Stryker and Janusz Bugajski, *Poland on the Frontlines Against Russia’s Shadow War*, Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 8, 2025.

<sup>65</sup> Juraj Majcin, *Battle of the Baltic: Safeguarding Critical Undersea Infrastructure*, European Policy Centre, April 22, 2025; Kinga Dudzińska, *Security of Critical Infrastructure in the Baltic Sea Region*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, January 16, 2025.

<sup>66</sup> NATO, “NATO Launches ‘Baltic Sentry’ to Increase Critical Infrastructure Security,” January 14, 2025; Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “‘Baltic Sentry—A New NATO Mission,” January 14, 2025.

<sup>67</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “The Baltic on High Alert: Poland Takes Action Against ‘Shadow Fleet,’” May 22, 2025.

<sup>68</sup> Stanisław Żaryn, Government Plenipotentiary for the Security of Information Space of the Republic of Poland, “The Kremlin’s Operation Against Poland,” April 28, 2023; Anna Maria Dyner, *The Border Crisis as an Example of Hybrid Warfare*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, February 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, “Poland Effectively Protects the EU Border,” March 22, 2025.



in cameras and sensors, and adopted a law allowing the government to temporarily suspend the right to seek asylum.<sup>70</sup>

## Energy Security

Since the 2000s, successive U.S. Administrations and some Members of Congress have encouraged EU member states to reduce energy dependence on Russia through diversification of supplies and supply routes.<sup>71</sup> Prior to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Poland had taken steps to diversify its energy supplies away from Russian oil and natural gas, including projects to expand pipeline connections with its European neighbors and the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal at Świnoujście. Poland also was a leading opponent of Russia's halted Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which would have increased direct Russian gas supplies to Germany via the Baltic Sea.

As of 2020, Poland received about half of its natural gas imports and two-thirds of its oil imports from Russia.<sup>72</sup> In April 2022, Russia halted supplies of natural gas to Poland, ostensibly because of Poland's refusal to comply with new Russian demands to pay for gas deliveries in rubles. Poland has been able to prevent shortages by importing gas from other suppliers.<sup>73</sup> The United States is Poland's main LNG supplier, followed by Qatar.<sup>74</sup> The Baltic Pipe, a new pipeline enabling import of Norwegian natural gas via Denmark, became fully operational in late 2022.

Poland has not imported oil directly from Russian companies since February 2023, when Russia halted delivery to Poland via the northern branch of Druzhba oil pipeline, which runs from Russia, through Belarus, to Poland and Germany. In June 2023, the EU subsequently banned the import of Russian oil through the northern branch of the Druzhba pipeline (as part of broader EU sanctions measures targeting Russian energy exports).<sup>75</sup> The main suppliers of oil to Poland include Saudi Arabia, Norway, the United States, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, and the United Kingdom.<sup>76</sup>

In April 2025, a consortium of U.S. companies Westinghouse and Bechtel signed an agreement with Polish authorities to proceed with the construction of Poland's first nuclear power plant.<sup>77</sup> The Polish government has allocated approximately \$15 billion for the project, covering about

<sup>70</sup> Adam Easton and Ian Aikman, "Poland Suspends Migrants' Right to Apply for Asylum," BBC News, March 27, 2025; Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Poland Effectively Protects the EU Border," March 22, 2025; Lorne Cook, "Poland Wants the EU Focused on Security. Its Border with Belarus Highlights the Challenges," Associated Press, January 20, 2025.

<sup>71</sup> The European Energy Security and Diversification Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-94, Title XX, Div. P), for example, directs relevant U.S. agencies' heads to prioritize energy infrastructure project support in Europe and Eurasia. Some Members of Congress also have expressed support for the Three Seas Initiative as a way to reduce European countries' dependence on Russian energy. See CRS In Focus IF11547, *The Three Seas Initiative*, by Sarah E. Garding and Derek E. Mix.

<sup>72</sup> Joanna Maćkowiak-Pandera and Aleksandra Gawlikowska-Fyk, *The End of Energy Resource Imports from Russia?*, Forum Energii, February 28, 2022.

<sup>73</sup> BBC News, "Ukraine War: Russia Halts Gas Exports to Poland and Bulgaria," April 27, 2022.

<sup>74</sup> *LNG Prime*, "Polish LNG terminal receives 300<sup>th</sup> cargo," July 23, 2024; *CEENERGYNEWS*, "Another 'Record Year' For Poland's LNG Imports," January 8, 2024.

<sup>75</sup> *Council Regulation (EU) 2023/1214 of 23 June 2023 Amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 Concerning Restrictive Measures in View Of Russia's Actions Destabilising the Situation in Ukraine*.

<sup>76</sup> Magdalena Maj, *Energy Without Russia: Country Report Poland*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, July 18, 2023.

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, "United States Signs Agreement to Advance American Civil Nuclear Deal in Poland," April 28, 2025; U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Poland, "FACT SHEET: United States and Poland Announce Deepening Collaboration on Energy Security and Nuclear Energy," November 2, 2022.

one-third of the total costs, and expects the plant to begin operations in 2036.<sup>78</sup> Poland reportedly plans to finance the remainder of the costs through borrowing from international financial institutions, potentially including the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the U.S. International Development Financing Corporation.<sup>79</sup>

Poland is a significant producer of coal and remains the most coal-dependent country in the EU, with coal accounting for approximately one-third of Poland's total energy supply and 60% of electricity generation in 2023.<sup>80</sup>

## Outlook

Russia's war against Ukraine has fundamentally altered the security outlook along NATO's eastern flank and elevated Poland's role in European security.<sup>81</sup> Poland is likely to continue acting as a leader in NATO and Europe in providing support to Ukraine and advocating for both a strong stance against Russia and increased defense spending among NATO members. Poland also is likely to remain a strong U.S. ally and an increasingly important U.S. partner in Europe, especially in terms of security and defense cooperation.

In the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, some Members of Congress may have an interest in

- assessing and monitoring the deployment of U.S. military personnel and equipment to Poland. Related congressional action may include continuing oversight of regional U.S. defense policy and commitments.
- assessing the development and capabilities of Poland's armed forces, including the role of U.S. Foreign Military Sales and the provision of U.S. security assistance. Congressional actions in these areas may include making decisions about security assistance appropriations and conducting oversight of related executive branch programs and activities.
- assessing security threats to Poland posed by Russia and Belarus, including conventional military threats and hybrid threats such as sabotage, cyberattacks, and weaponized migration. Related congressional action may include continuing oversight of regional U.S. defense policy and commitments and engaging in oversight of U.S. policies toward countering hybrid threats against NATO countries.
- conferring with their Polish counterparts and other Polish officials on wartime developments in Ukraine and Poland's role in efforts to support Ukraine. Related congressional action may include making decisions about potential security assistance to Ukraine, making decisions about potential additional sanctions against Russia and continued coordination with EU sanctions, and conducting oversight of U.S. policies toward Ukraine and Russia.

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<sup>78</sup> Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Republic of Poland, "Poland and U.S. Sign Bridge Agreement for First Nuclear Power Plant," April 28, 2025.

<sup>79</sup> David Dalton, "U.S. Development Finance Corporation Signs Letter of Intent for \$979 Million Nuclear Loan," *NucNet*, November 13, 2024; Alan Charlish, "Poland Says It Receives U.S. Interest in Financing First Nuclear Power Plant," Reuters, November 13, 2024.

<sup>80</sup> International Energy Agency, *Energy System of Poland*, accessed July 7, 2025.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Izabela Surwillo and Veronika Slakaityte, *Power Moves East: Poland's Rise as a Strategic European Player*, Danish Institute for International Studies, November 5, 2024.

- remaining informed about governance and rule of law issues in Poland. Members of Congress may have an interest in monitoring political developments in Poland in advance of the country's parliamentary election due to occur by autumn 2027.
- assessing Poland's transition away from Russian oil and natural gas supplies, including purchases of LNG from the United States and cooperation with the United States in the development of a nuclear power plant. Related congressional action may include legislation and continuing oversight relating to U.S. policies toward European energy security.

## **Author Information**

Derek E. Mix  
Specialist in European Affairs

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