

Intermarium Strategic Survey I

June 2022

Now, with the war in Ukraine raging, and an open challenge to the international order being laid down by Russia in a way not witnessed in Europe since the end of the second world war we believe it is critically important to have the perspective of the Intermarium states heard louder than ever before. With that in mind we decided to launch the **Intermarium Strategic Survey** – a cyclical and in-depth review of key trends and developments affecting the structural balance of power in Central and Eastern Europe, from the Baltic to the Black sea. Intermarium Strategic Survey will take form of a bundle of texts published on Strategy&Future website, both most recent and archival, delivered on a monthly basis via email.



[Strategy&Future](#) is the premier European geopolitical center for understanding international competition and for exploring the strategies and military concepts pursued by international actors in the 21st century. Focused on the future, reporting daily on the present and drawing abundantly from the lessons of the past, we offer to dive into the very essence of knowledge on world affairs, as seen through the lenses of geopolitics and geostrategy. June 2022

Our core mission is to explain unfolding events and trends that impact the lives of people and shape the destinies of nations around the world. We also aim to help develop innovative, resource-informed concepts, galvanize public debate, and spur action – should such a need arise. We want to share with our subscribers the European and especially the Central & Eastern European perspective on world affairs, permanently influenced by the fluid balance of power in Eurasia – and elsewhere – in an increasingly volatile and fragile security environment that badly needs to be understood, not only by political and military leaders but also by individuals and business leaders.

For centuries, our part of Europe has been a playground for great power competition, witnessing devastating wars, excessive turmoil and revolutions. Just as importantly, in times of stability and power consolidation, it has also tended to foster its own strategic culture. Being traditionally squeezed between the sea and continental powers in a crush zone composed of a 1200 km long belt of multiple nations, it stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, right along the main geopolitical crossroads of strategic flows, between a vibrant European peninsula and the formidable militaries of the Eurasian landmass. At Strategy&Future, we seek to cultivate a lively tradition of strategic thought and mental mapping that is unique to the region and its inhabitants.

Paradoxically, it seemed after 1989 that Warsaw was located conveniently close to the Atlantic coast, making it easy to embrace a Transatlantic Western community then engulfed in the conviction that ‘History’ had ‘Ended’ with the remarkable victory over Soviet Union being its last chord. Instead, it turned out that history never ends, and in terms of distance, Warsaw is half-way between Beijing and Washington D.C. One may walk to Moscow or Beijing while they cannot do the same across the ocean to the United States – and more worryingly one may walk from Moscow to Warsaw just as easily. This matters very much in geopolitics. Traditionally close to this part of Europe are the powers of Germany, Russia and Turkey, who are reorienting or will soon be reorienting their policies and strategies in order to adjust to the ongoing structural shift. All that is framing the environment in which Poland and other nations of continental Europe are operating. Regardless of our best will and desires, the flux that ruthlessly follows any structural shift of power will certainly affect all of Eurasia.

These words are excerpted from the very first article published on our website back in August 2019, one meant to lay out our creed, and explain the idea behind Strategy&Future. Nearly three years onwards we believe we have delivered on our pledge, as attested by nearly 10000 paid subscribers, over 160000 subscribers to [our YouTube channel](#), 19000000 total views on YouTube, [countless interviews](#) with Polish and [international](#) guests, speaking on the matters of [grand strategy](#), [geopolitics](#), [economy](#), and [military affairs](#). Nothing has changed in so far as our financial model; we remain funded exclusively by our subscribers, free from any interference from governmental and private entities.

In August 2020, in the aftermath of the Belarus’ presidential election, and our dawning realization, that the entire Intermarium region will soon find itself in a state of flux, S&F had embarked on it’s most ambitious project so far – the New Model Army for Poland, a blueprint laying the foundation for modernizing and reconceptualizing the Polish Armed Forces. In keeping with our business model, the NMA project was financed solely by crowdfunding. In December 2021 the NMA project was unveiled, accompanied by a 400 page report, [and a 10 hour long live presentation](#), published on YouTube (which has since been viewed more than 600000 times), stirring public debate in Poland, and garnering a significant interest from the key stakeholders within the Polish Armed Forces.

Welcome to Strategy&Future

08 / 2019 – Jacek Bartosiak

”Our life is what our thoughts make it”.

— *Marcus Aurelius*

Strategy&Future aspires to be the premier European geopolitical centre for understanding international competition and for exploring the strategies and military concepts pursued by international actors in the 21st century.

Focused on the future, reporting daily on the present and drawing abundantly from the lessons of the past, we offer to dive into the very essence of knowledge on world affairs, as seen through the lenses of geopolitics and geostrategy.



Warsaw on the Vistula river (photo: Henryk Niestrój)

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We want to share with our subscribers the European and especially the Central & Eastern European perspective on world affairs, permanently influenced by the fluid balance of power in Eurasia and elsewhere in an increasingly volatile and fragile security environment that badly needs to be understood, not only by political and military leaders but also by individuals and business leaders.

This need for understanding will be ever intensified as the fragmentation of the current era of globalisation (triggered by the end of uncontested US supremacy) transforms the so far relatively benign web of international interactions into a maze of vulnerabilities and leverages. The first symptoms of this happening are already discernible.

For centuries, this part of Europe has been a playground for great power competition, witnessing devastating wars, excessive turmoil and revolutions. Just as importantly, in times of stability and power consolidation, it has also tended to foster its own strategic culture. Being traditionally squeezed between the sea and continental powers in a crush zone composed of a 1200 km long belt of multiple nations, it stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, right along the main geopolitical crossroads of , between a vibrant European peninsula and the formidable militaries of the Eurasian landmass. At Strategy&Future, we seek to cultivate a lively tradition of strategic thought and mental mapping that is unique to the region and its inhabitants.



Warsaw, Old Town (photo: Studioyayo)

Today, two concurrent developments are structurally altering the global order, undermining the last 30 years of US unipolar supremacy. The US has long relied on its power projection capability, radiated across the World Ocean from its continental land base in North America, to maintain status and influence in the Eurasian supercontinent either side of it. Recently however, this reach has been undermined and pushed back both by Chinese and Russian Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. This development is leading to an erosion of US security guarantees in the grey zones of the geopolitical crossroads where strategic flows traverse, notably in the East and South China Seas but also in the Indian Ocean. In Europe, the main corridor of strategic flows traverses the Northern European Plain, with its centre of gravity stretched across Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, with an additional Romanian contribution in the Danube river system estuary, effectively monopolising between the Black and Baltic Seas and suitably located between Russia and Western Europe on the projected path of the China's new Belt & Road Initiative.

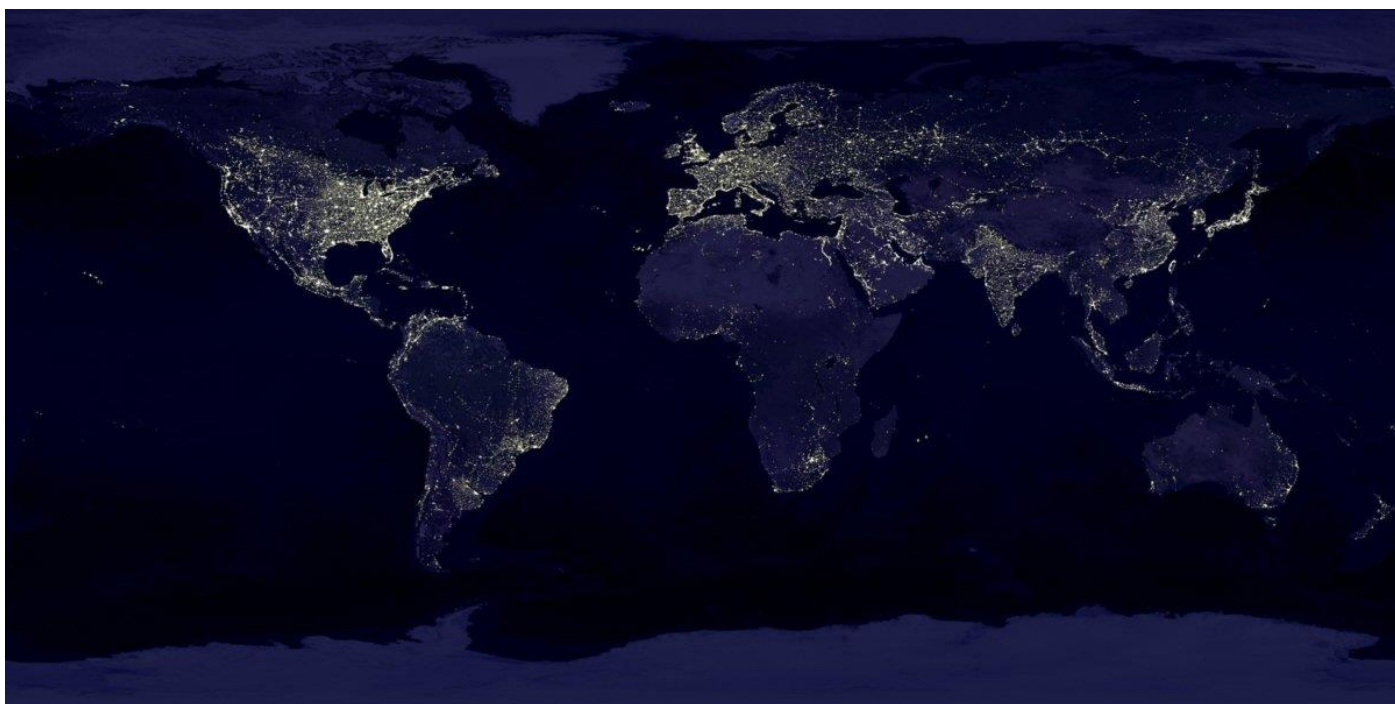
A second equally consequential development is the looming spectre of economic competition over questions around who controls the global supply chain, where the most important parts of supply chains (particularly frontier technologies enhancing connectivity and new divisions of labor) are

located, and who ultimately controls the key mechanisms of the global economy. A rapidly rising China is now effectively attempting to break the Western-oriented global economic model which has rested for roughly the last 500 years on the supremacy of the World Ocean as the main thoroughfare of the world's strategic flows, thus enabling the entrenched political and economic dominance of the coastal and sea powers of the Atlantic world.

As of writing these words, the world has already entered into a transition period, manifested by the great power competition between the US and China, with Russia playing its role in spanning the Eurasian landmass in an eternal balancing game of geopolitics. All the major powers are attempting to project political power into key geostrategic locations in Eurasia and in its littorals, trying to seize the upper hand in the power game of perceptions and capabilities. They also compete over who has effective leverage in shaping regional decisions on directions and volumes of strategic flows that are the testbed of a rivalry, resembling the ever fluid correlation of power. This contest will define the world order of this new century.

Paradoxically, it seemed after 1989 that Warsaw was located conveniently close to the Atlantic coast, making it easy to embrace a Transatlantic Western community then engulfed in the conviction that 'History' had 'Ended' with the remarkable victory over Soviet Union being its last chord. Instead, it turned out that history never ends, and in terms of distance, Warsaw is half-way between Beijing and Washington D.C. One may walk to Moscow or Beijing while they cannot do the same across the ocean to the United States. This matters very much in geopolitics. Traditionally close to this part of Europe are the powers of Germany, Russia and Turkey, who are reorienting or will soon be reorienting their policies and strategies in order to adjust to the ongoing structural shift. All that is framing the environment in which Poland and other nations of continental Europe are operating. Regardless of our best will and desires, the flux that ruthlessly follows any structural shift of power will certainly affect all of Eurasia. Depending on our informed decisions, the shift may affect us in various ways. We are inviting you to Strategy&Future to be informed observers of that unfolding.

Our principle vision is to set the terms of debate on geopolitics, geostrategy, security, defence, nations' grand strategies and to drive change in strategy, strategic culture, operational and military concept development, as well as to guide our subscribers through the uncharted waters of the current era, characterised by great power competition in Eurasia.



The World (photo: Pixabay)

We wish to offer varying and modern forms of strategic thought, geopolitics and geostrategy, encouraging further self-education and further broad reading in the hope that all of you will find something of interest at Strategy&Future. We intend to boldly provide our assessments of threats as well as remedies to the coming challenges. We have been informed that some of you prefer longer assessments and dense reports, others – just short briefs. Some like to listen to long lectures and heated debates, others just love short podcasts and watching films or animations. We will do our best to provide the proper mix. Last but not least, we are not afraid to also compete on the global intellectual market. We know this market very well.

All in all, Strategy&Future aims to provide timely, impartial and insightful analyses, focusing on key questions related to existing and emerging threats to European and world security. Meeting these challenges might require transforming conventional perceptions and we are devoted to helping achieve this end.

Money always comes in one way or another with strings attached, unless provided from the theoretically unlimited or at least large pool of those who are willing to pay for a product that is worth its price. Creating a community financially committed to supporting our efforts and in exchange offering the informed knowledge that helps evade bias and permits to strive for truth rooted in independence of thinking, we look to pursue an approach whereby, after an initial period of free access to Strategy&Future, you are able to make your own decision based on an informed product evaluation.

Welcome to Strategy&Future.

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Smolensk Gate and the Golan Heights

10 / 2019 – Jacek Bartosiak

The Polish theatre of war can be broken down into separate operational areas.



Dniepr river in Smolensk, Russia (photo: Wikipedia)

Their common feature is the vastness and spatiality, which - due to the relative weakness of the forces earmarked to defend and secure all the areas - it will never be possible to control evenly.

The Baltic direction behind the Suwałki Gap has recently been discussed in Strategy&Future (in three parts). The most dangerous, the north direction (also known as the Belarusian), stretching from Polesie to the Daugava, and bounded by the Niemen in the west), is located in the Belarusian highland. It is an open, a bit rolling terrain that gives relatively good observation conditions. Apart from the upper Niemen and the Szczara and the swampy valleys of these rivers - it does not contain any major terrain obstacles. Herein lies the shortest and the most convenient routes of the Russian invasion of Poland, originating in Smolensk, Orsha and Vitebsk, i.e. the central base of the Russian empire.

The Russian offensive movement on relatively numerous and good roads here separates Poland from the Baltic states and ports and restores Russia's land connection with Kaliningrad, facilitating the supply of the Russian army in this region.

By projecting power across the Belarusian front from the Smolensk Gate, the Russians can force the entire Polish front into retreat and move the war - as has happened many times in history - to the central Vistula valley, and therefore to the heart of the Poland, thus paralysing the main centres of its political will and compromising Poland's defensive posture.

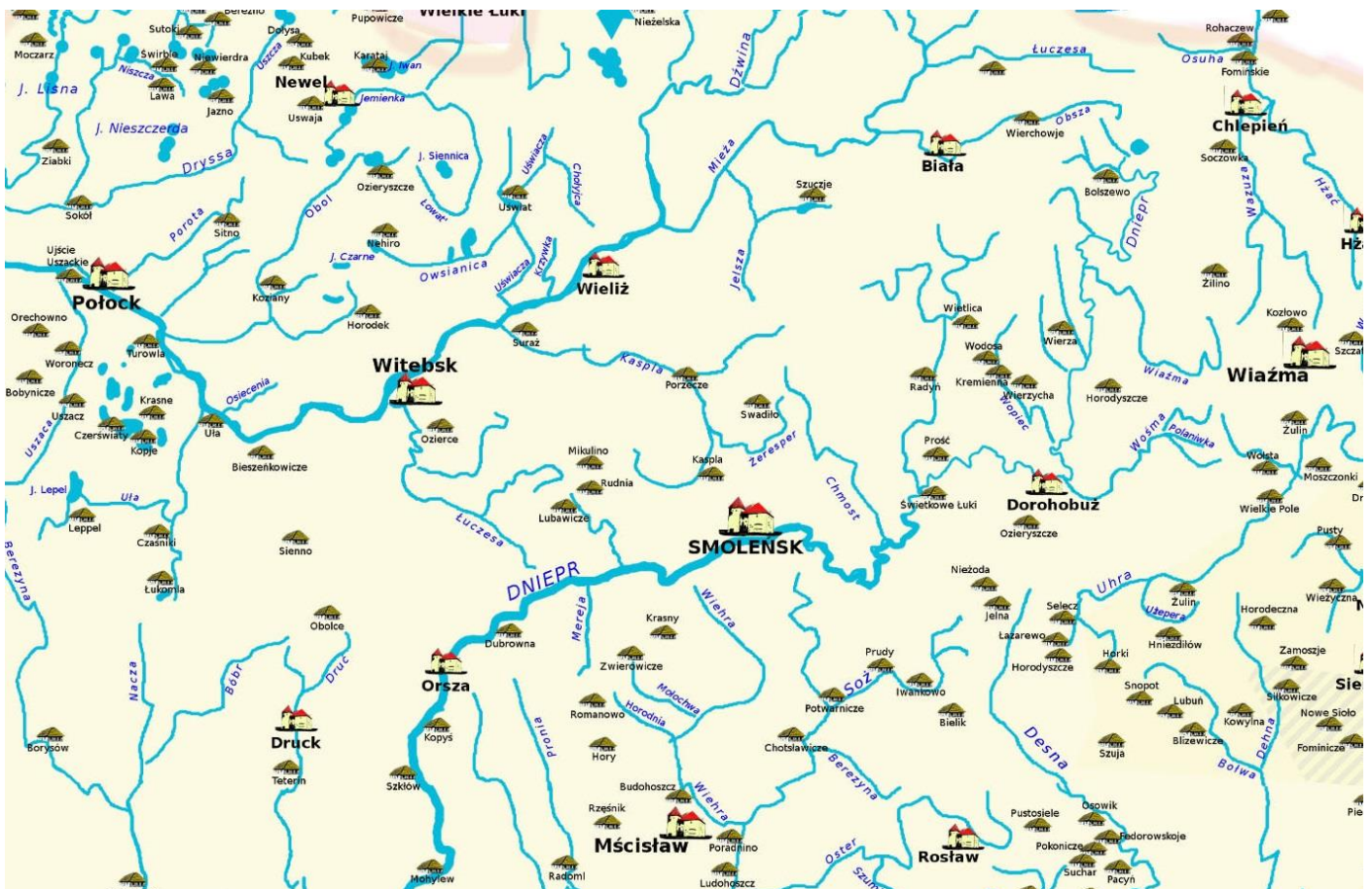
The entrance gate from the Polish core area towards the Smolensk Gate stems from the arrangement of lakes, rivers, forests and lowland areas of north-eastern Poland. The Suwałki Gap is the area between the Niemen river and the Kaliningrad Oblast, formerly the Prussian border, with numerous lakes stretching from the north to the south, the largest of which are around Augustów and near the Augustów Canal system. From Suwałki, along the border to the south, there is a muddy stretch - the great Augustów Primeval Forest (Puszcza Białowieska). Further towards Lithuania, the Suwałki Gap transforms into a series of smaller, but frequently located hills, stretching beyond the current Lithuanian border to Marijampole, creating an ideal place for a tank battle in an area convenient for tanks. There, this area joins the forests descending into Kaunas.

It is difficult to concentrate troops in the Suwałki Gap. Augustów occupies the most important location, closely barring free communication in this area, and the city cannot be simply bypassed in the event of hostilities. In addition, its location and topography are great for turning it into a fortress barring in the process all the opponent's movement.

In its military history, Poland entered the main entrance between Białystok and Wołkowysk to the Belarusian theatre of war operations and then to the Smolensk Gate and crossed the Daugava river

along the old Polish warfare trail, in the narrowest passage between the muds of the Biebrza and the Narew and the Białowieża Forest. Then the trail continued from Baranowicze) to Mińsk, and the northern passage from Lida) through Wilejka to Połock or straight from Vilnius to Połock - on the upper hinge of the Smoleńsk Gate.

The gap between the upper Dnieper and the Daugava, forming the Smolensk Gate, is about 80 kilometers wide and it is a lowland plain covered with only scarce forests and cut through by minor two rivers, and in one third of the width partitioned with an area of mudflats - known in Polish as *Błota Weretejskie* - 25 km long and 15 km wide.



Smolensk Gate (photo: Wikipedia)



Smolensk Gate (photo: Wikipedia)

The areas next to the Daugava and the Dnieper rivers are convenient for large force maneuvering. Of the rivers crossing the Gate, the only significant ones (each of them is about 20 m wide) are the Łuczosa and the Kaspla. The Łuczosa, also known in its upper reaches as the Werchita), originates northeast of Orsha near the Dnieper and crosses the Smolensk Gate flowing almost along the entire width of the banks of mostly rugged terrain. The Kaspla, in turn, flows in a general direction to the north-west, into the Daugava River near Suraż. Both rivers can become only a tactical obstacle, at most, and only during heavy floods. In front of the Smoleńsk Gate from the west direction at a distance of 90-120 kilometers - there is a group of *Lepelskie* Lakes, channeling traffic towards the Berezyna fords near Borisov. The muddy Berezyna valley "closes" access to the Gate. The area around Lepiel is a great crossroads from which natural routes lead to Moscow - one south passing the Dnieper on the right - to Wiaźma through the Smolensk Gate and the other north through Vitebsk and along the banks of the Daugava to Rżew).

The military significance of this great road leading to Moscow is magnified by the fact that there are three major cities along the route: Mińsk, Vitebsk and Smoleńsk. Only Gomel lies slightly off the beaten path of this route. The Smoleńsk Gate traditionally shielded the heartland of Russia from the Polish Empire in the past and protected the capital of the tsars, only 480 kilometers away - Moscow.

One can compare the significance of the Smolensk Gate for Poland and Russia to the importance of the Golan Heights for both Israel and Syria.

If Golan is characteristically raised above the neighboring areas of Israel, then the core areas of Israel in Galilee, including Lake Galilee, Tiberias and the Jordan Valley, and even the Valley of Gilboa, are relatively safe from threats emanating from Syria or from any powers using the Syrian territory to initiate attacks against Israel. On the other hand - if the Golan Heights are in the hands of the Israeli army, then the Syrian capital, located less than 50 kilometers from the eastern edge of the Golan-Damascus - is within the direct Israeli military reach from the commanding Golan Heights, from a convenient operational base, including a potentially rapid land offensive going down through Quneitra to Damascus. This would be a strategic nightmare for Damascus.

If Syria, in turn, had Golan Heights in its possession - as it was before the 1967 war - then the Israeli core area could not develop properly (settlements and kibbutzim in Galilee located near the Golan Heights were before 1967 constantly disturbed by Syrian military activities), and in the event of a symmetrical war and a land invasion, the immediate danger of seizure threatened the entire Israeli area from the border with Lebanon, through Galilee, to the border with Jordan and the Gilboa valley, from where it is not so far to Tel Aviv or the Mediterranean coast.



Golan Heights, Israel (Photo: Yuri Loginov, Pexels)

This was clearly seen during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, which the Arabs called the Ramadan War. The Israeli army was surprised at the same time on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts and did not have sufficient forces to prevent the Syrian armored forces from overflowing through southern Golan, which threatened the Syrians to quickly seize Degania and Tiberias on the shores of Lake Galilee.

In fact, it also resulted in the evacuation of people deeper into Israel. Literally at the last minute, the offensive (aimed at breaking the defense of the southern Golan Heights and then rolling down the slopes of the western plateau straight into the heart of Israel through the efforts of Israeli reservists entering the war) was halted by brave Israeli reservists.

It is also enough to imagine what the situation would be from the point of view of Israel's interest if the Golan Heights returned to Syria as a result of peace talks several years ago. Today, as in all of Syria, there would be a civil war there, which would mean automatic destabilization spreading out of the Golan into Israel's core region. In particular, if - as Israeli representatives often say - Iran, hostile to Israel, became the dominant power in war-torn Syria.

The above example clearly shows the importance of strategic buffer zones and that this is not a theoretical issue or known only from the annals of history. The prosperity and security of other areas depends on the safety cushion offered by such buffer zones.

To the east behind the Smolensk Gate, the country becomes hillier and drier up to the central part of the Russian Upland. In front of the Gate from the west, the area around Lepiel abounds in lakes, which creates an obstacle to driving deep into the Smolensk Gate from the Polish side. A larger lake group is also located on the left bank of the Daugava River between Połock and Bieszenkowicze). This is a convenient point to defend the wing of this Gate among the few hills loosely scattered, with gentle slopes and a wavy horizon, in an area ideal for tank war.

The Dnieper from Orsza flows through a wide valley with abundant spring floods, numerous oxbow lakes, lakes and the roads through them traditionally led to dikes. In contrast to the Vistula, which is not always suitable for fording, it was possible to ford the Dnieper during the dry run up to the mouth of Berezyna. The Berezyna to the mouth of Hajna flows within the muddy banks overgrown with bushes, with a small number of places to descend and ford, making it is difficult to cross, with a convenient crossing point at Borysów - known thanks to the legend of the retreat of the *Grand Armée* in the autumn and winter of 1812.

Forests stretched along the river, difficult to pass, becoming wider to the south, increasing the importance of this river as a defensive line. The Lower Pripyat has no fords at all. By contrast, the Daugava River has quite a lot of them for a change.

It is interesting - as described by Władysław Sikorski in his memories of the 1920 war - that as a result of the success in the war of 1919–1921, some Poles 'dreamed' of the same eastern borders as before the Andruszów truce of the 17th century. Going in this way even further beyond the strategic defensive line of the Daugava and Dnieper rivers and reaching as far as Wielki Łuki, Wiaźma, Bryansk or Poltava deeper into Russia proper thus consolidating forward defensive areas additionally screening the great rivers' line that were a traditional boundary between the Polish and Russian worlds and former empires. Others, however, considered the minimum plan to be at least the old borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before the First Partition.

As part of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), the center of gravity in this region is becoming the growing competition for situational awareness advantage in the modern scouting battle to be waged throughout the Baltic-Black Sea bridge.

**Poland connects the Atlantic oriented Europe with the entire eastern front facing Russia and stretching from the Black Sea to the Baltic Seas. Therefore, it has the main communicating role.
In geopolitical terms – Poland is a key pivot.**



Dnieper river in Kyiv (photo: Pxhere)

Poland is coming to understand continuity of importance of the former strategic borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that is stemming from the ruthless logic of the Smoleńsk Gate, from which the rapid maneuver of the enemy towards the Vistula valley threatens Poland's existence.

At Strategy&Future we promise to continue to reflect on the considerations of the previous centuries and of the great leaders of the Intermarium from the past as these are growingly valid today in the new strategic landscape.

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Date

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Loose Thoughts, Poland&Europe, World
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“The Anxious Dream”- *à rebours?*

A political plan for Poland’s victory and peace in the East

Part 1

5/2022 Jacek Bartosiak

This time we’ll start with poetry.

My attention was drawn towards the following poem during Easter whilst reading Professor Andrzej Nowak’s latest book, the chapter describing Poland’s dependence on the Soviet empire after World War II. Czesław Miłosz described the centuries-old Russian imperial pressure on our part of Europe from the east, very depressingly, as follows:

*Orsha is a bad station. In Orsha, the train can stay for a day.
So maybe it was in Orsha that I got lost, six years old,
and the repatriation train started, leaving me behind*

*Forever. As if I understood that I would be someone else
The poet of another language, with a different fate.
As if I'm guessing my end at the shores of Kolyma,
Where the bottom of the sea is white with human skulls.
And then a great terror came to me,
That, which was to be the mother of all my fears.*

The little child trembles before the pain. Before the Empire.
Which moves and moves west, armed with bows, ropes, Papasha submachine guns,
Riding a carriage, hitting the rider on the back,
Or in a jeep, in tarps, with a file of conquered lands,*

*And I have been running away for a hundred or three hundred years
Over ice and swimming, by day, by night, any further,
Leaving over the home river with hole-pocked armour and a chest of the king's
gifts,
Across the Dnieper, then across the Niemen, across the Bug, and across the Vistula.*

*But I come to a city of tall houses and long streets
And fear torments me, for what am I here to them but a peasant?
Because I just pretend to understand what they are so smart about
And I try to hide my shame, my failure from them.*

*Who will feed me here when I walk at cloudy dawn
With a tiny coin in your pocket for one coffee and no more?
A refugee from imaginary countries, who will I be here?*

*Stone walls, indifferent walls, dreadful walls.
An order not of mine, but of their minds.
Now just say yes, don't kick. You won't run any further.*

*"The Anxious Dream" A translation of the Polish-language poem Trwoga – Sen
(1918) by Czesław Miłosz*

**This sentence is written in (transliterated) Russian in the original.*

Since the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, this peculiarly Russian combination of primitivism and civilisational backwardness with simultaneous military power, growing demography and islands of high civilisation: Russian literature, ballet, space travel or atomistics, pushing towards the setting sun, destroyed and trampled the development of nations between the two interior seas of Europe - the Baltic and the Black. Miłosz's poem is a good illustration of this sense of a reversal of civilization, escape, eternal retreat, misfortune at the breakdown of the civilised order.

In 2022, in connection with the war between Russia and Ukraine and the course of hostilities unfavourable for Russia, we have the best chance in 100 years, and maybe even in 300 years, to reverse the whole situation. The Anxious Dream *à rebours!* It's time to think about the Polish victory plan. Yes - Polish, Ukrainians certainly have theirs and let's not do it for them. Because we should consider what the war and the new geopolitical situation should bring for Poland so that our interests are best served.

Our rivalry with Russia in the areas between Poland and Russia has always been aimed at establishing an advantage, not good neighbourly relations. Mieroszewski wrote in the twentieth century: "It seems that while the Russians never appreciated

the Ukrainians and still do not appreciate them...” (as can be seen from the course of the war in 2022), “they have always overestimated and still overestimate the Poles. They always see us as rivals - either active or only potential, but always as rivals.”

Litvinov spoke about the rebuilding of the Polish empire from the 16th and 17th centuries, which seems comical to us, but for Litvinov, unlike us, the 20th century was a continuation of the 16th and 17th centuries, with the same traditional problems, including Polish problems. Like the Tsars, Stalin, Litvinov, Brezhnev and the like believed and believe that either the Poles or the Russians would rule in the ULB areas (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus).

Mieroszewski wrote further, that: “The advantage of the Russians was confirmed by HISTORY, which turned our fights and uprisings to ruin. But most Poles do not believe that we can ever gain an advantage over Russia, and the child of this unbelief is the servile satellite mentality. One can add, unfortunately, that this is strongly embedded in the Poles.” Mieroszewski's statement that it was possible to push Russia away from the gates of Przemyśl to Smolensk was even more fanciful. And yet, this is what actually happened after 1991.

The war in Ukraine, successive victories of the Ukrainian army, also supported by military and material aid from Poland, gives a chance to push Russia even further to the east and push it out of the European system for good. It may even lead to a political and social crisis, *Smuta* and disintegration of the state. The recovery of Crimea and Donbas and the destruction of the cherished land forces of the Russian Federation could lead to this.

Going further, the plan for Poland's victory in the war between Russia and Ukraine is the reverse of the quoted poem, that is, when instead of pushing for 300 years with its influence to the west, Russia will now withdraw, shrink, give way under force across the Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga, even beyond the Urals. Under the influence of sanctions and a losing war, it escapes, collapses and ceases to count. In other words, when Russia has no basis whatsoever to influence the political situation in Europe.

The time has come for Polish politicians to take a piece of paper, a pen and write down the plan of Poland's political victory as sheet music. So what should have happened or has to happen consecutively for Poland to benefit from this war as much as possible?

It's not just enough to win a kinetic war. This, of course, means repelling the invasion, regaining Kherson, Mariupol, the whole of Crimea with Sevastopol, and Donbas with its mines and iron. This means the destruction of Russia's land forces so that it can no longer be treated as a superpower influencing the security architecture of Europe.

It is often much more difficult to win a peace that will bring stability, development and future. It is necessary to win peace for Ukraine in order for it to develop, to obtain investments from the world, to have full access to the sea, world markets and raw materials. That Kyiv would be able to control the movement of strategic flows on

its territory and shape them in accordance with its needs, and not with the artificial dictates of its dominant neighbour, so that it could freely decide with whom it has trade relations. That it would not be dependent only on the aid funds coming latitudinally from Western Europe, but that it would have development abilities itself.

It is also important for Poland to change the balance of power in Europe as a result of this war, which will also be beneficial for all the nations of the Baltic-Black Sea Bridge. Ukraine should become a Western state, but for our part of Europe to become an independent economic system, although anchored in the EU, but capable of creating its own value chains and a system of economic circulation, breaking the dualism on the Elbe, using the huge potential of Ukraine and Belarus and opening to the Black Sea and trade to the south.

It is equally important that the United States remain in this part of the continent both militarily and in terms of investment, and that Sweden and Finland join NATO, strengthening the power and influence of the United States in the Old Continent at the expense of the unfavourable ideas of continental France and Germany in cooperation with Russia, whose emphatic military defeat would nullify such ideas.

Both Poland and Ukraine will benefit from arranging internal affairs in Ukraine and their economic system in such a way as to break the oligarchy and control the influence of German capital on the reconstruction of Ukraine, in particular Ukrainian agriculture, which Germany and its concerns have a taste for.

The optimal plan is to dilute German strength in NATO and the EU after winning the war and breaking the raw material policy, and thus the high margin of the German economy. Especially since the upcoming energy and food crisis will redefine the EU in favour of the countries of our region, with the breaking of continental consolidation in the face of the greater presence of the British and Americans on the Baltic-Black Sea Bridge. This would be the end of the German Bismarck policy of "pretending to be stupid" and drawing raw materials from Russia (Russia as a source of Germany's political power in Europe), having the option to trade with China and the peaceful development of Eurasia at the expense of the Atlantic world), with simultaneous access to world markets thanks to the US and as a result of all of the above control of the continent by its economic power.

Therefore, we should not agree to any "crooked" truce proposed by France and Germany, because it will not win peace for Ukraine, which will become a hull state, without good access to the sea and Donbas resources and no chance for investments, while remaining in a frozen conflict.

Planning the parameters of peace already during the war is often more important than the war itself, although its course and result are the material from which the parameters of peace are ultimately created.

It is now 100 years since the signing of the peace treaty in Riga which ended our war in the East with Soviet Russia and established relations in our part of the world for the next 20 years, including the end of Ukrainian and Belarusian dreams of self-determination. Then, together with Tehran, Yalta and

Potsdam and the end of World War II, the chapter of the Jagiellonian policy of the Polish state was closed. Or so it would seem.

In 2022, we begin to dust off the old books and strategies of our former state.

In Riga in 1921, Poland won the war, but lost the peace. This is how the course of military operations and peace negotiations can be summed up. One more battle was missing somewhere near Orsha or Vitebsk in the Smolensk gate. Such a battle would have pushed Russia beyond the Dnieper and the Dvina and laid the foundations for a federation with Belarus and Ukraine. There were apparently not enough forces for this, both political and military. Although as to whether this was really the case, discussions are still ongoing, and the source materials do not give a clear answer what Józef Piłsudski (because he was the one who made the decision) "felt" in the autumn of 1920 and the spring of 1921, when it comes to the specific balance of power. It was Piłsudski who had to consider the arguments that were to decide about war, peace and the geopolitical system of Eastern Europe.

Ukraine's President Zelensky has to agree to his own version of the Treaty of Riga. Poland lost the peace then, and Piłsudski himself was disappointed with the Treaty of Riga. Giedroyc even claimed that after signing the treaty, Piłsudski became a different man, closed to others, not believing in the durability of the Polish state. He felt that the existence of Poland was temporary, that he had failed to build a new, favourable balance on the Baltic-Black Sea bridge that would permanently keep Russia outside the European system by building a federation of states separating it from Europe. Because the war in Ukraine is all about whether Russia is in the middle of the European system and plays within it or outside of it, thus giving a chance for the development of Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic state, etc., respecting the civilisation rights of those who are dear to them, about which Miłosz recalls so beautifully in the poem above.

Therefore, let us wish Zelensky that he will have enough strength and that he will not be forced to peace on German and French conditions, especially when autumn comes, there will be a social fear of the cold, the lack of raw materials and shortages and food for Europeans who will traditionally forget about values and what was going on with this war. They will want everything to be the old way.

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Background Check
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“The Anxious Dream”- *à rebours*?

A political plan for Poland’s victory and peace in the East

Part 2

5/2022 Jacek Bartosiak

Just as one hundred years ago, the war did not bring about the establishment of a federation, despite the Kyiv expedition, Ukrainian attempts supported by Poland, great victories of the Polish soldiers near Warsaw and on the Niemen River. So now, without a clear break-up of Russian troops and the taking of territories, the war will not eliminate Russia and will not give Ukraine proper breathing space to live. The same applies to us too, because a game for the continental consolidation of France and Germany will soon appear. It could also be different with the Americans if a war with China broke out.



(Source: flickr.com)

Without a full victory and the weakening of Russia or its collapse, the result of the truce will only be a *pieredyszka*, a temporary rest that imperial Russia, in this case in the Soviet edition, will use to prepare further movements, reforms or a rebuilding of its army. And this may only be the first campaign of the great war for Eurasia. The current war for Eurasia will have many scenes, so Russia cannot be given this chance. The Russians will do anything to kill the idea of cooperation between the nations of the Baltic-Black Sea Bridge: cooperation with Germany and France, an information policy, a heating up of sentimentality on the continent towards Russia, caviar, dumplings, poetry and ballet. At the same time, the mutilation of Ukraine, the extermination of a hostile people, deportations, and the destruction of culture and the material world.

It is worth emphasising that this war will decide the fate of Belarus, which will follow the path determined by the result of the war, and in this sense it is also a pivot state.

A Russian victory would cement the authorities in Minsk. A victory for Ukraine, supported by its allies, may turn Belarus around. Which would radically change the security situation of the Polish state, similarly to the accession of Sweden and Finland, will change the situation of the Baltic states and eliminate the problem of the Suwałki Gap. This means that the Polish elite should do whatever it takes to ensure that these two countries join NATO and tie themselves closely with US power.

The People's Republic of Poland - a vassal state vis-à-vis the Soviet Union - did not even dare to think about a Polish eastern policy. The borderlands itself (Polish, *Kresy*) appeared to the Polish independence intelligentsia in the People's Republic of Poland as a story from the old days, a bit romantic, a bit manor-like, and a bit incongruous with the realities of the 20th century. Certainly appeared to be the case of a closed past.

In the years 1989–1991, a miracle happened. The Empire in the East collapsed. Not as the result of a war with our participation, but as the result of the world war between the USSR and the USA - and more specifically, the course of the Cold War and the balance of power formed at its end between the superpowers, which broke the Soviet continental empire, freeing the peoples and nations trapped in it. Then almost all of them ran for freedom - and certainly all the nations of the Baltic-Black Sea Bridge.

Implementing the idea of Mieroszewski and Giedroyc, the new Poland recognised all the new and independent states in the East. Over the following years however, we believed that the power of the West, its institutions and lifestyle, as well as the values that were so different from those embodied by the Russian empire, would "do" for us as an eastern policy, which for several hundred years consisted of a very simple goal: to prevent the possibility of the Russians playing for balance in the European political system, which usually results in overwhelming the agency and developmental self-determination of Poland and other countries in the region.

Our strategic restraint as the Third Polish Republic resulted from a bad understanding of the tension between the Piast and Jagiellonian politics and a clear misunderstanding of contemporary influences and instruments of pressure on the policy of another state, so that these instruments serve their own interests.

The Jagiellonian policy complements the Piast policy, and does not constitute a disjointed alternative to it. There is no one without the other and vice versa. This conclusion contains the curse of the position of the Polish state, which has traditionally had too weak a population and economic potential to survive with its own “agency” against Russia and Germany, when both of these entities are powerful and well-governed. Economic consolidation, development, the construction of infrastructure and taking care of shaping the internal and external structure of strategic flows so that they serve Poland, through the “Piast” connection to the Atlantic-oriented economic zone, must be complemented by a Jagiellonian policy, consisting in shaping a Polish-friendly space in the East, from which there will be no threats to “Piast” consolidation. This space should be ideally shaped geopolitically, cooperating with us, for example, in shaping strategic flows. Then it will even add strength to Poland’s power.

The Jagiellonian policy appeared to be imperial because it referred, on a subconscious level, to land, territories formerly colonised by the Polish Crown, where Poles dominated in terms of property and wealth. That is why this policy was associated with imperial domination and, despite our sweet imaginations, with the often bad treatment of the Ukrainian or Belarusian population.

Such perception and design of this vision, for example by criticising the postulate of the Jagiellonian policy in the 21st century, results from a misunderstanding of the determinants of strategy in the 21st century. In the past, the main source of power, and therefore the influence and connections on which politics is based, was land and capital resulting from the labour of the land, from the ownership of the land. So from territories that yield taxes, produce, resources, capital and recruits. The more recruits the better, because this number also mattered. During this period, the mental maps of the former Polish Republic and its former Borderlands (*Kresy*) were formed, as well as the borderland culture, which we remember with sentiment while browsing through old albums. Of course, this understanding of the source of power resulted in ethnic conflicts, civil wars, including genocide. We also have a lot to accuse ourselves of, such as the political repressions against the Ukrainian minority in the eastern provinces or the inappropriate treatment of the Cossacks at one time.

In the meantime, the industrial revolution took place, which hardly ever came to the Polish Borderlands until the 20th century, and yet it significantly changed the sources of its power elsewhere. Strategic flows started to be of great importance. The movement and marches of the army were still of great importance, but it began to mean the movement of people by trains, cars, planes, the movement of goods, raw materials, energy, capital, technology, knowledge and data. A changeable and fluid system of forces began to be created, which, organised by the state, determined influence, instruments of pressure and shaping relations for the benefit of itself and its power. This was the expression of agency in a modern sense. It is the strategic flows that constitute the chessboard of the international game. Of course, there are still important places in the region, such as Małaszewicze, the Baranowicze communication junction or the port in Gdańsk, but they result from the strategic flow corridors that generate relative changes in power.

Shaping cooperation in the East to the benefit of the interests of the Polish state can be achieved through capital, regulatory and business issues that generate levers of political pressure, which must be reckoned with in everyday politics. But for this you have to be and act “in close quarters” in the East.

The ongoing information revolution also overlaps with this. Information processing and transmission have become both a commodity and a weapon in the fight for perception and for building the power of agency. This growing phenomenon distracts us even more from any territorial revisionism, while at the same time strengthening the essence of controlling the rules by which strategic flows take place.

Thus, a Jagiellonian policy in the East should shape the geopolitical environment of the Polish state, without which there is simply no Piast policy. This, however, is something completely different than territorial claims or sentimental chats about Wilno or Lwów, or Poles' self-exaltation towards other nations of the bridge.

The Jagiellonian policy of the 21st century is expressed in business, capital penetration, bank expansion, agency in the regulation of these flows, in linking the population from the East with the Polish economic area, in favourable cross-border traffic, in the import of labour supply from the East, pipeline reverse, energy transmission, using transport corridors, the lease of ports in Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Odessa. Finally - in military cooperation to blunt Russian "agency".

It is interdependence that builds the Jagiellonian policy. Observing it from a distance does not build it, but even undermines the possibilities of Piast consolidation. Especially when the security order in the East breaks with the end of the geopolitical pause, which is repeated cyclically. And this bodes badly for Poland, which has been trying to rebuild financially for 30 years. The reconstruction of Ukraine after the war should change socio-economic relations, liquidate the oligarchs, create a kind of Ukrainian enforcement movement that can build the foundations for a liberal society with a strong middle class, the rule of law and economic predictability, which will enable Polish private business to operate and invest in the east.

In the context of Germany's attitude towards the war in Ukraine (and this will continue to worsen the longer the war continues and winter approaches in Europe), it is worth recalling a fragment of my text from more than a year ago.

There are two methods of analysing international affairs. The wrong method is the one that tells you to listen only to what politicians are saying and to take into account the personal relationships between them. The user of this method relies on the intentions of the proceedings declared to all.

This method does not anticipate future events, it makes one afraid of synthesis and firm predictions. On the other hand, they know all the names, they are casuistic, they know who is from what party and which circles he represents. It is a factually flawed method, because people (and politicians in particular) lie, they are often wrong, and very often do not understand what is happening, they manipulate or want to please someone or just go with the flow. They have an agenda of their own and pursue their own interests, often hidden.

Such an analysis resembles a conversation at the mangle or chats with an uncle on name day, and has little to do with real politics. It is first of all "wobbly", if only because even the most sincere human intentions can be changed in one night. This is how the public debate in Germany should be assessed in the context of aid to Ukraine, the import of raw materials in Russia and Germany's attitude towards us and other countries in the eastern EU.

The second method, the effective one, is one that seeks to understand the structural forces, the real capabilities (not the intentions) that govern the economy and the state, and therefore its politics. Politicians are only obedient agents of these forces or, if you like, their executors, because they have to "slot into" them (in Polish, *zmieścić*). They often begin to understand the limits of their constraints the day after taking office. Then the question is how to explain this to people who've believed them all along. And this is especially true of the people's representatives, brought to power by the impulse of the street. This is the nature of politics and its ugly face.

Contrary to the ideas of the average voter, these forces are structural and exert such a powerful influence on decision-makers that they have very little discretion. Statesmen are recognised by the fact that, within a narrow field of manoeuvre, they are able to change the existing system of structural forces, transforming them in such a way as to be able to better serve the interests of the state for which they are obliged to care.

We wish this to Zelensky, because the overwhelming structural forces from Western Europe will try to take away his victory and peace, even if he defeats Russia militarily. Because the new geopolitical system in Central and Eastern Europe, after expelling Russia from the European system and effective sanctions on Russian resources, means a relative weakening of German agency and the strengthened military presence of the USA in Europe and a North-South alliance from Finland to Turkey and Romania, which will allow for a new cause for Europe. Thus, there will be enormous pressure on Zelensky when the Ukrainian army crosses the border of Crimea or pushes Russian troops out of the cities of Donbas.

That is why we so often get the impression that politicians are promising us pie in the sky (in Polish *gruszki na wierzbie*, "pears on a willow tree"). They are actually following the structural forces. Otherwise, they lose their agency, wasting their political careers. The end is bitter, if not brutal.

Each country has its own landscape of structural forces that govern it. Prime Minister or Chancellor, Tsar, King or Emperor. They only try to balance these forces effectively, thus preserving what is commonly called "power" and its credibility. The real "muscles and tendons" of the state function around structural forces, which translate into "levers" for daily agency in politics, otherwise known, especially in the East, as "assets".

Arguments "from values" in international politics, if they are effective, are only moderately effective. In the case of Ukraine, they work on the basis of an impulse, a way to stimulate people, since many there probably want to live better and in greater freedom, richer and without the "Russian knout". But

tendons and power muscles don't work that way. In particular, it is the structural forces of the state that determine its socio-economic model. Chancellor Scholz could have said to himself and had promised unheard-of things in the Bundestag, but now he is mitigating his assurances in real time. For this is being pressed by agents of the structural forces. They are made up of raw materials, financial flows, credits, exports, imports, communication with the world and its markets, internal and external supply chains, and division of tasks in industry and agriculture. And it is "served" by specific people who have income from it and their own fields of agency. Masses of people and the entire social contract is based on margins and an agreement between labour, capital and the political world.

Mackinder called this the "Going Concern." The point is that the model creating the "relational infrastructure" in our east, whether in Belarus or Ukraine, but also in Germany, should no longer be geostrategically oriented towards Russia. This has allowed Russia to enter the real assets of politics, the tendons and muscles of the state, the strategic flows generated by the established model, and therefore also the business and secret services which "stick" to the relational infrastructure, seeking income and influence, especially in the East. In a country such as Belarus they do it extremely tightly, in Germany politicians have to take into account public opinion, but not as much as we would like in Poland, which is clearly visible these days in our western neighbour.

"The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Unless the small (or medium) change their status ..., deploy efficient armed forces, win wars or have their own energy and innovations.

The countries of our region were too weak in the eyes of Western Europe, so they did not constitute the subject of international politics, because they were not exporters of security and could not influence the status of Belarus or Ukraine, if this status change was not desired by a power ready to go to war for this matter. Ukraine's great stance in the war, defeating the Russian army, Polish military aid for Ukraine changes this perception. We are dealing with the subjectivity of our entire region. The Americans and the British favour it, because it is in their interest, providing weapons for war like crazy. Their stance is a Mackinder-like classic of geopolitics and a nightmare for German advocates of continental consolidation. The merit belongs to the Ukrainians.

After regaining independence, Józef Piłsudski used to argue that there was room for manoeuvre for Polish politics in the East, in the implementation of the federal concept and in other activities aimed at building instruments of pressure and political influence. It does not have to be a federation concept this time, it does not have to be named in any way that would refer to a Polish advantage in the past. It may be something new, but something that will give a chance for life and development of our part of Europe without Russian domination and without peripheral dependence on Western Europe.

The instruments of Western policy do not reach east or are not that effective, and therefore Western countries must take Poland into account in this region. In characteristic and obscene words, Piłsudski assessed Polish policy towards the West, in which the above recommendations would not be implemented. Then such a policy would order us to be obedient in all directions and secondary to the will of the Western powers of the time. This would deprive us of subjectivity and force us to accept the will of powers outside our region, which limits our security field, but also weakens the development prospects of our business and the possibility of our market and capital penetration.

To summarise this recommendation succinctly: in the west of the continent we were nothing, while in the east we were someone, and this should be guarded in 2022 and in the future.

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