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# Poland-US Defense Relations: The Pursuit of Great Power Politics in Central Europe

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**Abstract:** Poland and the US share a rather complex relations throughout the international modern history; forasmuch as the end of the Great War, the Warsaw Pact, the Cold War to today's bilateral relations. Along with the democratic reforms that emerged in Poland in 1989, the relations between two states have gradually become more than just a close-packed ally in securing each other's geopolitical interests from external threats, specifically in Central Europe. This research is aimed to understand the rationale of the strategic alliance, the modern defense strategic relations between the two will be further examined in this article by employing the realism theory of International Relations; including the conceptual analysis within security dilemma and US-Poland defense collaboration in boosting their dominance, presence, and threats deterrence in the anarchic international system. The research indicates that geopolitical factors, namely the importance of the regional agenda of Central Europe plays a key-role in determining the defense relations among Poland and the US. The political silhouette of the "Iron Curtain" and US outlook on the region have helped the framework of the defense relations; mainly Poland's role in NATO, the enhancement of the joint-military deterrence, bilateral political ties as well as defense strategic adjustment between the two nations.

**Keywords:** Poland-US Defense Relations, Great Power Politics, Central Europe, Security Dilemma

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## 1. Introduction

The strong bilateral relations of Poland and the US that were built since their pursuit of independence continued to their security strategy and power politics today. The US was the first major power state to recognize the sovereignty and the statehood of Poland in 1919 and during the pursuit of Poland independence, thousands of Polish-American which involved the most known Haller's Blue Army soldiers were sent to Europe to fight for Poland's independence. In addition to that, the 28<sup>th</sup> US President, Woodrow Wilson had in fact explicitly supported Poland independence in his world-known Fourteen Points [1] Within US-Poland's today defense power per se, Poland has become an active member of NATO since 1999, conscientiously working together with the US in the sectors of counter-terrorism, missile strategy, regional strategic cooperation, energy and economy security. Polish military presence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo as well as its role in combating ISIS militants have highlighted

the strong military relations between Poland and the US.

Poland continued to host many more joint-military events for both countries, the last one was DEFENDER-Europe 20 Plus in 2020 [2]. The United States has confidently stated in their official released documents that their alliance with Poland is one of the most important key-players in securing its prosperity in Europe and the world.

*"Poland is a stalwart ally in Central Europe and one of the United States' strongest Continental partners in fostering security and prosperity regionally, throughout Europe, and the world."* [3]

The defense relations of Poland and the US have drawn a complexity beneath the military strategies; that it also relies on the historical establishment of both countries as well as the people, regional strategic environment, and global power politics in Central Europe. Both states' leaders have always been actively engaged in diplomatic relations. The most recent examples can be seen by the 2019 last two joint collaborations between Poland and the US to increase their

defence collaboration. Poland recently also purchased 32 pieces of F-35 fighter jets from the United States, which strengthen the military trade between the two states. Not to mention some Poland multilateral agreements such as the Three Seas Initiative have also boosted its bilateral relations with the United States.

We argue that the strategic relations between both states imply a rather complex strategic and regional defense interests. Poland-US strategic environment plays a colossal role in defining their defense policies in an international realm, and combining both as an ally, and we will examine the complex motives underneath the bilateral strategic relations by using the theories of realism in international relations. This includes how the security dilemma and the anarchy international system have nonetheless supported the great power politics pursuit in the region of Central Europe. This article is divided into three main parts; the first analysis part will analyze how the US portrayed the region as its important interests, continued on how Poland is placed in the midst of security dilemma in the region and the last part will elucidate how Poland and the US collaborate in achieving the main interest of the ally whilst protecting it from the external threats.

## 2. Analysis

Central Europe, as the pinpoint region between the West and the East, has manufactured a world-view shield that encompasses three distinctive ideas in protecting its region from the spectre of communism; where the economy is functioned by the fundamental forces' liberal interaction, neo-liberalism within its social existence, conservatism in its international balance of power concept. The dark history from the influence of the "Iron Curtain" has certainly caused confusion in the region's views ideologically and politically, since the functional transformation of the national, social as well as the civil ideas within its 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century political condition affected its geographical environment. The region of Central Europe has become one generative region for the idea of nationalism while struggling to its liberal conception. The geopolitical understanding of Central Europe is characterized more by the power characteristics and intellectual assessments in the region. The region of Central Europe consists of three parts; the Northern zone that includes Poland - Germany lowland to the North Sea and Baltic, the Inner zone that includes Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria and Hungary, and the Southern zone that includes the Balkan region starting from the Sava rivers and Aegean Seas [4].

The region of Central Europe with the subordinated level of prosperity, has gone through its own narrative whilst the Western democracy was convulsed. Together with the complexity of its history; from the short-lived democratic institutions, the ramification of communism history, the area has become a vital linchpin for the US' foreign policies and international political interests. Poland is certainly aware; the dynamics of the unpredictability of the European Union's

southern neighbourhood and the expansion of the security threats related to that. Thus, securing the accession of US lead international institutions such as NATO, as well as regional unification as the EU is vitally important for Poland's security and interests. Historically, Central Europe's ruination of totalitarian regimes have taken a part in the disruption of Europe's postwar order which fostered socio-economy development within the Central European states including Poland.

The biggest historical lesson that can be taken during the political development in the region is that the security of Central Europe relies on the well-maintained relations with both the East and the West as the creation of a military-political small bloc in the region would not guarantee long-term regional stability. It emphasized that Central Europe's defense and security does not need any form of separate structure than what has been adopted by European standards and norms, but rather to foster the role within the available structures that includes the accession to NATO [5].

To further examine the strategic environment and Poland-US military strategy in Central Europe, it is important to canvas the inherent character of the politics of the international system which is close to violence called wars. This includes how the distribution of power affects how both the United States and Poland examine their strategic environment in the region. This emphasizes that the strategic environment in fostering political power relies on the distribution of power in the international system.

Nonetheless, as policy is the fundamental instrument in states' politics struggle, it is also predominantly important to consider that war can often become the only means available in achieving political dominance in international realms. The most important thing that states and policy makers have to underline is that within the complexity of the international system, uncertainty and dynamics should be expected in advance. The three elements in a strategic environment that have to be carefully taken into account are; the identification of the strategic problem, anticipation to prevent future's strategic issues, and a set of strategies that will help in fostering the political objectives of the state [6]. Central Europe had lived through multiple changes along with the democracy dynamics in Western Europe and the US. From its tradition and democratic institutions, the jeopardized memories from the communism era, Central Europe has been through an intense history until today's ongoing evolution.

Contrasting what happened in Western European countries after the end of the Second World War, where they worked on the issues of extreme nationalism and national behavior's complex realities, what happened in the Central was the fact that they were lying under another major power's control, videlicet, the communists. Along with the 40 living under the communists, the shock due to its adaptation to democracy was massive; from the disproportion of the economic distribution, to the inequality development of the cities and the provinces when the reformists dismantled all the leftover communist structures and regulation to entirely adapt to European Union's standards. In the geopolitical context, the

region of Central Europe has officially mitigated its diffident geopolitics from the geopolitical threats of Russia since they became the NATO members.

Nonetheless, for the US to consider that the Central European countries' accession to NATO as sufficient in maintaining the security in the region, is often considered untimely. The challenges underneath the geopolitical security are rather complex; from national identity concerns, economic affairs, to the democratic principle crisis within the states. The interests of Central Europe in the past to where it was separated from other foreign policy interests have once ended up with inadequate results for the US. This includes the story of US withdrawal on the occurrence of the Treaty of Versailles when the region was still holding on to a strong democracy, when communism and fascism were not a vigorous entrants. This occurrence has put another surface of coercion for the US to push forward its interests in Central Europe within its global strategy and policies [7].

Poland's Manifold Gradation of Security Dilemma within the Anarchic International System.

Poland politics today is a manifestation of how the history of the country itself sculptured from the year 996. Since the beginning of the Polish State in the Baptism era, the golden age of Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedish deluge in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the second partition to 123 years of not existing in the map, regaining its independence 1918, confronted by both fascists and communists during the Second World War, to live behind the Iron Curtain until it collapsed, to the establishment of the Third Polish Republic that holds strong until today. After the Soviet Union collapsed, along with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Poland experienced its rapid transformation and development in the economic, social, political, and defense sector.

Poland started to integrate with European countries to have better cooperation in economy and political structure, and joined NATO in 1999 as well as the European Union in 2004 [9]. Poland's geopolitical situation prior to the dismissal of the Warsaw Pact did not warrant its national security, neither after the pact was dismissed. Poland had to reform radically from a central planning and state ownership economic structure into private ownership, restructuring the institutional system, and dismantling all non-democratic institutions. The ideological battle, however, did not stop there. In 1993 to 1997 Poland was once ruled by a qualification of a post-communist Democratic Left Alliance and the agrarian Polish People's Party, that is due to the situation where Poland had to face a huge rate of unemployment and the fall of numerous enterprises and it recalled the people's support to the previous system.

Then in 1997-1998 Poland elected a coalition between Solidarity Electoral Action and Freedom Union that led to the bill passing on collapsing the communism influence [10]. Since its independence, Poland security policy is formed based on three interconnected agendas that will be nurtured to the next decade; trans-atlanticism that is manifested by its accession in NATO and strengthening its relations with the

US, strengthening its position in the EU including its influence in the EU security policies and its focus on the East (Ukraine and Russia). Since the aftermath of the Cold War until today, the most vital aspect of Poland's security policy is to ensure that the relations between Poland-US and the security EU are well-nurtured.

The most recognized geopolitical threat for Poland is Russia, aside from the historical terrors that are still haunting, the circumstances that Russia had to invade Georgia in 2008 had prompted Poland to effectively, without hesitation, deduce the establishment of the US anti-ballistic missile in Poland's territory. The prominent consensus amongst Polish people also showed that the people of Poland preferred to connect to the West and leave all the Russian domination legacy behind. While the European Union's CSDP is the most predominant collective security policy in the region that is taken account of, the shift of focus in securing Poland within the anarchic international system is also assigned to the bilateral relations to the US and NATO [11].

The security threats that are coming from Russia have been persistently mentioned in Poland's National Security Strategy. Supported by the fact that Central European states have become a predominant quarry for Russian political, military and economic interests. From the annexation of Crimea, military ventures in the area of Eastern Ukraine, to Russian's military modernization that included the Anti-Access systems inter alia in the region of Baltic Sea, and the massive military activities conducted and exercised in the area. Poland claimed in its National Security Strategy that Russia has been carrying military activities below the threshold of war as in the hybrid nature that has the possibility to cause a conflict in the international system; including the cyber attacks, and military escalation that could harm the Western states societies.

To precisely look upon the beginning of the 2000s as Russia is shifting its scant attention to states in the region, Poland's foreign policy 2017-2021 has emphasized that the two major rationales upon the crisis in the Western world are caused by the negligence on addressing Russian policy and the economic crisis. Poland believes that since the end of the Second World War, European political landscape did not encounter any form of open aggression, omitting the moment when Russia annexed Ukraine which is considered as a violation of territorial integrity [12]. On the other hand, Russian President Vladimir Putin, has written a nine-thousand-word essay for the National Interest Magazine addressing several historical issues during the Second World War as well as pointing out how today's Poland wishes to sweep Germany's betrayal in the Second World War under the carpet.

This is due to the European Parliament's approval upon the Importance of European Remembrance for the Future of Europe in 2019 which claims that the Second World War was unleashed by USSR and Nazi Germany that he claimed as provoking and dangerous threats. The essay was emphasizing on how such paperwork would be unnecessary as Russia is focusing on the enhancement of security, stability and the

well-being of all states. Russian President Vladimir Putin, regardless how the Western world considers its strategy as a threat, ensured how Russia is solely focusing on strengthening global and regional security, strategic arms controls and deterring other major threats in the region [13].

It is also important to consider that today Poland's political strategy relies on the role of Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS) along with the common rhetoric of Anti-EU and Anti-Germany while the opposition chose to avoid any form of issues that related to Russia. After the fall of the USSR, many changes occurred within Poland's political focus; which includes the focus on the elimination of the Kremlin's influence and shifting the international political linchpin to the West. At the same time, the current government of Poland ought to believe that Poland does not have the necessity to lean to the Western values within the community that is shown by the current policies that are being implemented.

The reorientation of Poland's defense policies that is focusing on the maintenance and development upon the bilateral relations with the US as the highest defense priority. Within the context of Poland's foreign policy, PiS' policy is rather emphasizing on the historical conflicts with Ukraine than Russia that it became the central pinpoint on the issues of Volhynia massacre and the loss of Poland eastern territory. As the consequences occurred widely, Poland has lost its political identity upon the bilateral relations with Russia; that it objected to the West values whilst neglecting the border dispute of the West, while at the same time avoiding the political influence of Russia. As the cooperation with the US is getting tightened, along with Russian's threat perception upon US military presence by its border, as well as US threat perception on the Russian aggression to the region of Central Europe that included Poland, Poland international political stance is fairly balance between avoiding the risk of provoking Russia and the consideration upon the advantages of constructing a deterrence against it [14].

To comprehend the concept of an anarchic international system and security dilemma, as well as how it affects the international cooperation between states, it is important to look upon Robert Jervis's ideas with regards to that matter. Jervis argued that the security dilemma among states are detachable from the fact that there is an absence of international sovereignty i.e. the lack of international law enforcement as well as the authorities to enforce it, the circumstances where states may cooperate and may not to which it often leads to unpleasant output when they do not cooperate. In a situation where solution has always been every state's collective interests, the international system is mainly characterized by the "Stag Hunt" three difficulties. The first one is the dynamics of the status quo that states expect from the other states might discontented later that states' decision makers cannot guarantee to cohere the same pattern of their successors while the dynamics of the states' leadership always lead to the contemporary challenges and opportunities for international politics [15].

The challenges do not only come within the alliance but from the outside decision makers as well, and Russia as

Poland's biggest geopolitical threat in the region especially with the fact that Russia has objected to numerous Western policies that included the expansion of NATO. When Russian President Vladimir Putin came into power, his interests rely on restoring Russian power and influence; that's not merely focusing on the development of its political economy after the fall of the USSR that his predecessor could not achieve but also to reinstate the post-Cold War security order in Europe. As the 2008 Georgia invasion is one of its most important milestones for Russia, it emphasized that Russia is still on its mission of portraying its "privileged interests" in certain regions [16].

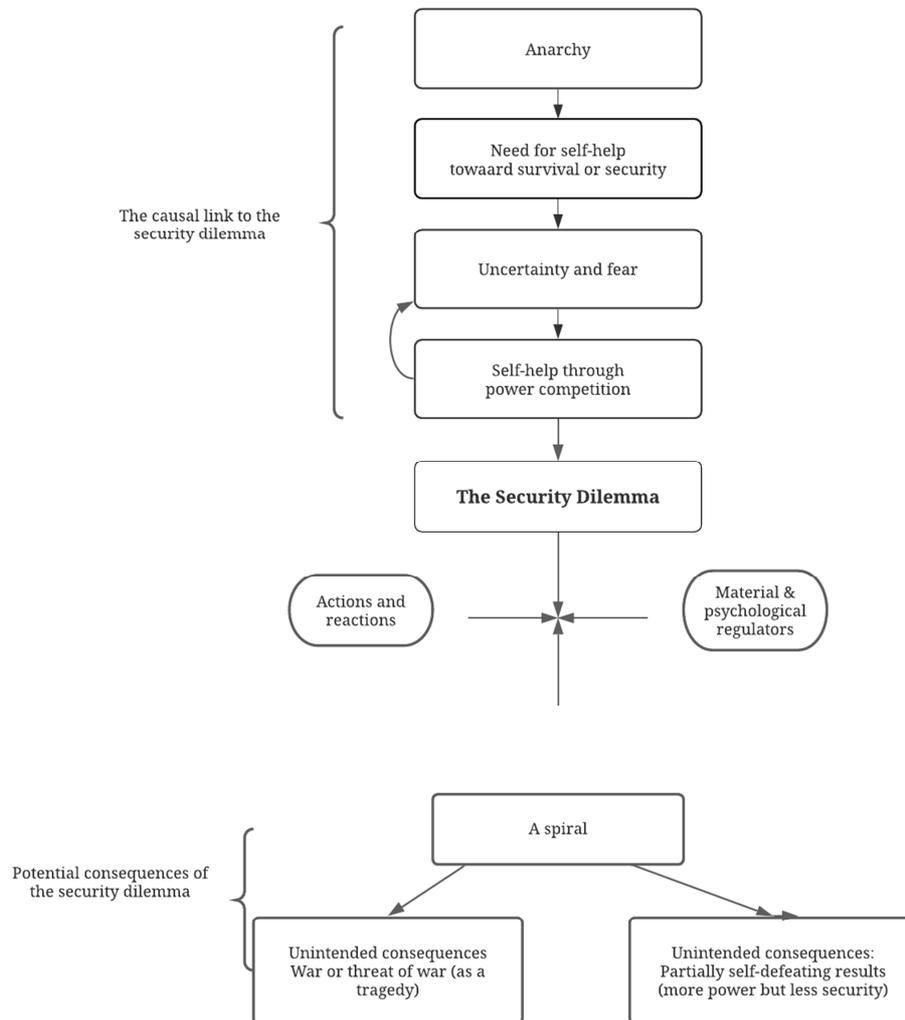
The second concern is the fact that in order to protect the state's interests and resources, states are likely to find resource control outside their own land, to secure the necessary supplies in a time of scarcity, for instance during the war time. States, as argued by Jervis, tend to establish the ideological buffer zone by tightening the domestic and foreign politics amongst two states in advance, in order to protect their interests and subsequent security. As both the US and Poland has reaffirmed both states' adherence to NATO, the alliance of US-Poland will strengthen its military cooperation including; the enhancement of the US military presence in Poland as well as providing additional defense capabilities in Poland, in return Poland has supported; the additional US force, the establishment of US Division Headquarters, the establishment of the US armed forces CTC, the establishment of the US Air Force MQ-9, the establishment of the debarkation aerial port, and the establishment of the support group and military combat infrastructure in Poland [17].

The third problem, as well as the biggest challenge in the international system is the security dilemma. The security dilemma occurs when one state tries to increase its own security while indirectly causing the decrease of another state's security. The "security dilemma" term was originated by John Herz which scientifically referred to the situations where there are multiple groups and individuals that are living alongside each other with the absence of higher authority will be prone to concern upon their chance of being attacked or dominated by any other groups. Thus, in the international system where there is no absolute authority that has higher sovereignty than states, states' security is often projected in a very complex analysis within the concept of security dilemma. According to Shiping Tang, the causal link from anarchy concept of security dilemma can be illustrated within the conceptual analysis as follows;

Within the theory of neo-realism, it is fairly intelligible that the international system is the major role in determining international politics. The international system only recognizes states as the highest authority in the system, and the communal higher governance is nonexistent. This situation leads to the situation where international rules are hardly being imposed whereas the international institutions are weak. The politics among nations are complex; cooperation does not merely lead to harmony, and does not automatically do good in the designation of moral. The

anarchy concept ought not to be separated with the interests through a discrete scheme such as the prisoner dilemma. In this term, Poland has to deal with its dilemma against Russian defense strategy in the region as well as the

maintenance of its alliance. Jervis's Stag Hunt is also essential to be put into account as there is a need for self-help in acquiring survival or security, that also foster the recognition that to fight together is temporary [18].



**Figure 1.** The causal link from Anarchy to the Security Dilemma and War, according to Shing Tang.

This condition also motivates states to entirely ensure that the self-help order is obtainable through power competition. The notion of self-fulfilling prophecy of state in securing its national interests is often considered as rather imprecise in determining one state's security situation within the system. The anarchy international system has stimulated states behaviors to suspend the status quo even in the case of extremes. How one state can interpret what has happened in the past to influence the future probability of strategy, to which in this context, Poland might have correlated the dilemma towards the policy and strategy of the external threats as what has happened during the development of Poland's history. The credibility of the increase of the security level along with the military development often leads to the fact that the security level is often decreased. The evil spiral emerges within the security dilemma when the only path to security is viewed as narrow as it is merely about expansion where most major power states need to act as an

aggressor. This is what has been viewed by Poland, to which geographically-wise located in the area where international politics are very dominated by major power countries, Central Europe [19].

Poland's security relies on the three harmonious measurements; first is to enhance the credibility of NATO and the EU while maintaining the bilateral relations with the US, regionally Poland has to simultaneously ensure the closer cooperation of countries in the region and domestically has to develop its own defense and military capabilities. That for Poland, NATO will continue to serve its security guarantee in the region of Central Europe. The Warsaw Summit has demonstrated that the term "NATO's Eastern Flank" refers specifically to Poland and some other states in the Baltic. The states in the region have their own national-based perception against Russia and the strategic threat possibilities.

Since NATO's focus is relying on the deterrence

perspective, together with Czech Republic and Slovakia's support and solidarity in the area mentioned, it is important to acknowledge that policies against Russia might have resulted in diverging voices in the ruling elites. Numerous distinctives responses in the region are also caused by the fact that there are factors of some aversions of militarization in the Black Sea region as well as the existence of strong economic relations with Russia. Following the agreement in the Warsaw Summit, Poland has agreed on maintaining the US military presence within its territory, as well as how the US would set up as the framework state for Poland's most homogenous battlegroup. Poland had to establish multinational division headquarters as well as the deployment of US heavy-armoured brigade will be allocated to Poland and some Seas States in 2017. The alliance between the US and Poland in 2016 has resulted in the formation of one of the main parts of the NATO defense system which is embodied in the establishment of the US SM-3 missile defense base in Poland [20].

According to NATO, both NATO and Russia have agreed upon the commitment on the highest political level to establish the eternal peace situation inclusively in the Euro-Atlantic that is according to the common democracy and security cooperation. NATO believes that Russia has decreased their conventional and nuclear forces in the consistency of the agreed security realities; this includes the withdrawal of Russian forces in Central Europe and taking all the necessary nuclear weapons to its national territory. To implement this agreement, NATO and Russia will be obliged to stick to the agreed international law and instruments; including the United Nations Charter, Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and the upcoming documents from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The future plan amongst the two are also involving the plan of the establishment of NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council. Poland recently spent 2,05% of its total GDP on the defense sector considering the fact that geopolitical and historical-wise, Poland is prone to conflict. Poland holds the ambition to spend 2.4% out of the GDP for defense spending in 2026 and project the increase to 2.5% in 2030 [21]. However, the factors of natural and psychological regulators will also affect the relations and alliance between Poland and the US in Central Europe, particularly the fact that political realms and elites in both countries consisted of contrasting ideas and interests.

As the US is just between the transition of the outcome of the election, there are numerous changes that are likely to happen in the defense sector if the power is shifted to the Democrats. The US Republicans hold the popularity for the great amount of military spending, whilst the Democrats are likely to shift the focus on healthcare, education and employment [22]. The defense budget under Donald Trump was increased by about 10 percent which included military development in terms of weapons technology initiatives and some hypersonic-weapons programs. Nonetheless, the continuation of the "fair share" amongst NATO members

might as well continue regardless which elites will be in charge.

On the other hand, Poland's President Andrzej Duda has officially manifested Poland's interests in NATO during the Warsaw Summit which includes how President Duda has emphasized on the reinforcement of both Eastern and Western flanks of NATO to defend the region and organization from the existence of the external threats. Andrzej Duda has also emphasized that any form of future decision made within NATO has to be focused on the future endeavors of the member states, to protect each member from any form of threat that might arise in the future. Last is that he emphasized that the alliance has to increase deterrence and defense potentials in the region so that non-member states would not render it to cause a potential threat.

In regards to Russia in the context of security, the leadership of Andrzej Duda is more emphasizing on the conduct of more dialogues to emphasize international law as the sole guarantee of peace in the region. NATO's military presence in Central Europe, according to him, should be permanent [23]. However, the actions that have been taken by Poland in regards to developing the military cooperation might have caused partially self-defeating consequences since there are numerous unfinished tasks of NATO that remained undone. As the member countries of NATO have split the focus on addressing the external threats from Russia, the alliance still has questionable deterrence values even in the case of the possibility of invasion in the Baltic states region as it is located in the front line of the Eastern flank.

Furthermore, the challenges that have been faced by NATO including the obstruction of rotating the troops, military equipment and vehicles to the Eastern Flank has also decelerated the deterrence plan of NATO itself. The relations between NATO and Russia are predominantly based on the NATO-Russia Founding Act that was initiated in 1997, while the geopolitical environment kept on changing based on the geopolitical dynamics. The Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) is arguably indisposed to deter the external threats coming from Russia as it is essentially designed to unnerve small-scale conflict potentials and rather manifest the military coalition as a rationale for Russia to stray further on conducting any form of military solutions in the region [24].

To comprehend the uncertainty that Poland is facing, it is essential to look through the recent National Security Strategy. In the introduction of Polish National Security Strategy in 2020, Polish government has emphasized that the security environment is dynamic and complex; that the increased economical and socio-political interactions on the global scale would take a powerful collision on the national strategy, the principal directions of the national security system's evolution. The security environment of Poland is focusing mainly on what they called the "neo-imperial" policy of Russia; that they believe has caused serious threat in the region by means of the military aggression against Georgia and the Crimea annexation.

Poland believes that the security threats that are coming from Russia do not cease there, they believe that Russia

continued to violate the basic international law principles and the European security system's pillars through the offensive military modernization in the area, activities in eastern Ukraine, the extension of Area Denial system, large-scale military exercises and the nuclear weapons utilization. As Poland has been trying to shape the national security by submerging the transatlantic and European structures as the regional and bilateral key partners, Poland is fully-aware that by joining NATO and the EU, the strategic interests might rely on the actions being taken by the fellow members-that oftentimes could increase internal tensions.

In the anarchic international system, where there is no higher authority than states, Poland is aware that there are numerous factors in the international system that could bring the security exposure of Poland to the higher level--namely the tensions of the major power countries such as People's Republic of China, Russia and the US. Poland believes that the armed conflicts and all the global insecurity condition is caused by the weakened disarmament treaties and agreements, mass production of destructive weapons and organized crime and global terrorism threats. The fear of technology development is also pertaken in Poland's security assessment; the development of unmanned systems, artificial intelligence used in the robotized weapons and numerous tactical nuclear weapons plausibility [25].

The war threat appeared when the illegal annexation of Russia against Ukraine happened in 2014 and along with the emergence of anti-EU political sentiment that have affected Central European's countries policy in governance, democratic standardization and has shifted the policy orientation. The weakened democracy in East Europe has made this neighborhood prone to possess authoritarian leadership despite the regional defense cooperation presence essentially NATO. Only 2 out of 10 countries in Central Europe, which is Latvia and Czech Republic have increased their democracy score after their accession into EU and NATO. Whilst the geopolitical situation of each country might vary and NATO's existence clearly plays an important role in securing the region, the understanding of transatlantic cooperation within the Central European region in particular is lacking, as well as the fact that there is still a Europe's biggest security threat within Europe's vulnerability in dealing with Russian's influence [26].

US-Poland Alliance and its Pursuit of Global Politics: Defense Policies, Defense Cooperation, and Leadership.

The defense cooperation between Poland and the United States has officially been written in United States' Treaties and International Acts series 15-715 which specifically addresses the agreement between Poland and the United States. This includes the construction of Lask Air Base, one of two air bases of Poland where their F-16 fighters are located. The second one is the agreed facilities and areas of Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area where Defender Europe 20 was held. This is also the place where Polish armed forces, along with the US army and NATO member forces conduct their military exercise. Next are the Skwierzyna, Ciechanów and Choszczno Military Complex K-2629, K-0166 and K-

1267 where the United States stores their military equipment. Within these five military bases, the United States and Poland have agreed on the elusive control that will be given to the United States for those equipment including the rights to remove them from Poland when it's needed [27].

Due to the fact that Poland's decided to obtain the military equipment from the US instead of using the old remnants from the Soviet Union since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, for the US, Poland is a principal actor for their military modernization and trade scheme. Poland has also signed a missile defense system and Patriot air contract with the US that is worth nearly \$5 billion in March 2018. This also continued with Poland's purchase of Foreign Military Sales System, F-35, AIM-120C-7 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, F-16 follow-on support, IAMD (Integrated Air and Missile Defense), IBCS (Integrated Command Battle System), aircraft DCS (Defense Communications System), and gas turbine gas engines to the US [28]. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has indirectly challenged the cohesion of Europe's territorial borders and security environment. European countries that share borders with Russia are prone to Russia's invasion threats in the future. Russia's predominant part in taking the partition of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century has emerged a huge forfeiture within Poland sovereignty for more than a century [29].

Despite the reconciliation between Russia and Poland in 2011-2013, Russia today is still an identified strategic threat for the US in Europe due to its frequent hostile activities in the East region of Poland that includes active cyber security, prosaic tactics and hybrid threats to Poland-US imminent security. As the security of Poland as US' close ally is taken into account, the US has also intensified the personnel rotations as well as the US military presence in Poland. Russian's hybrid warfare scenario is still highlighted by the US in its security concerns, as there is no shared multilateral agreement in constituting hybrid threats; from conventional to psychological warfare. Together with Poland, the US believes in the alliance continuation to erode the rules-based international order. The US has also claimed Poland as its close friend and a regional "linchpin" of its regional security which includes; the strong NATO alliance since Poland's accession in 1999 and Polish troops' role in supporting the US in Afghanistan and the battles against ISIS. The US also provided EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement) that is initiated to share further logistics and infrastructure costs for US military presence in Poland in order to reinforce the Eastern Flank deterrence and security [30].

Polish President Andrzej Duda and President of the US Donald J. Trump have maintained strong bilateral and defense relations that are based on mutual respect and shared national values. As Poland-US have fought together around the world; including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, both states through the decision makers have come together to intensify their strategic and defense relations to foster the security of each country. In 2020, President Trump has emphasized that his administration has signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with Poland to build up the

negotiation that they agreed upon in 2019. This agreement consisted of the enhancement of the US military presence in Poland in order to reinforce NATO deterrence in the region, to support Europe's security whilst ensuring sovereignty, freedom and democracy [31].

Poland believes that the strategic cooperation with the US relies beyond the defense sector; that it furthermore supports Poland's security on energy, trade, investment, research and development. In Poland's National Security Strategy 2020, NATO and The EU have been mentioned in Pillar II (Poland in the International Security System) as the plan to strengthen the security capabilities in the Euro-Atlantic area. The highlight ensures the consolidation of Poland's position within the structure, to ensure that NATO's collective defense plan in preventing external threats, to assure NATO's fast actions in the decision-making processes including the boost of SACEUR's (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) level of enablement, supporting the consolidation in the Eastern Flank, and to assure that Poland is partaking in NATO's nuclear deterrence plan. Poland has also emphasized on the dual-track policy with regards to the external threat from Russia as Russia remains as the most important partner for Poland in its Energy security plan in Central Europe's gas supplies as it is also mentioned in the National Security Strategy [32].

### 3. Conclusion

Fundamentally, the geographical location of Poland has always been a very strategic linchpin of every major power in the international system. From the Great War, the Second World War, to the Iron Curtain domination, to the Cold War until today's Poland Politics. Being accountable upon the natural strategic point, right in the heart of Europe, has agglutinated Poland a series of security dilemmas; from the external threat consideration of Russia and how to utilize the alliance with the US in the Central European region. In the pursuit of strengthening Poland's external resource of control, Poland is taking its serious participation and membership of NATO, EU, as well as strengthening the strategic partnership with the US.

Poland believes that NATO's strategic adaptation is leaning to the build up of the ally's prevention policies and defense security which includes the presence of allied forces in Poland's territory. European security was convulsed when Russia started its annexation against Crimea and military operation in the Eastern Ukraine in 2014. As Europe has been identified as a key partner of the US, and Poland is considered as the linchpin of the strategic partner in Central Europe, the US presence in the region becomes vital. Some strategic tactics and doctrines included the enhancement of NATO's Eastern Flank, deployment of more US military presence in Poland, as well as numerous military deterrence programs initiated in the region.

The Baltic states are also taken as a consideration on Poland's security dilemma in terms of the Alliance's deterrence as they are continually expanding their forces.<sup>33</sup> However, the security dilemma that Poland is not merely relies

on NATO's presence in the region, but also the leadership of both countries' elites that could project Russian's aggression in the region differently. The possibilities of aggression by Russia that are visualized by the ally included the cyber domain, vessels or aircrafts and important railroads, regardless how the Russia-NATO relations in the foreseeable future are rather scarcely predicted.

### Ethical Approval

All the authors do not have any possible conflicts of interest.

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