



Polish Foreign and Security Interests in Western Balkans – an overview

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Introductory remarks - place of Western Balkans in Polish foreign and security policy

- Western Balkans – **not a priority** in Polish foreign and security policy
 - no vital interests at stake
 - limited political, social and economic ties with the region
- Involvement/interest – mainly a consequence of membership in EU and subregional structures (V4)

Place of Western Balkans in Polish foreign and security policy II

- **"Region of bargain"** – engagement as "an investment" in partners' loyalty, solidarity and support in other endeavours (part. in Eastern Europe)
- Lack of vital interests in the region → more "conciliatory" attitude (opportunity for partners from the region)
- Involvement rather through multilateral institutions and instruments (particularly EU and NATO, but also OSCE, UN, V4, CEI, RCC etc.); secondary role of bilateral initiatives

Security issues – main principles

- Fundamental interest – **stability** of the region
- The ultimate solution and guaranty of this – integration with European structures (primarily with European Union, but NATO as well)
 - Sound Polish support of EU/NATO membership of Western Balkan states
 - result of pragmatic analysis of Polish interest
 - ‘moral obligation’
 - Necessity of fulfilling membership’s criteria (**NO to “lowering the crossbar”**), particularly political – HR and minorities rights, rule of law, etc.)
 - *Sine qua non* condition of integration progress – permanent solutions of regional disputes (or at least substantial progress in it)

Regional issues and disputes I

- Permanent and acceptable for all parties solutions of regional disputes/tensions (currently "unfinished businesses"):
 - Direct impact on stability of the region and Europe as a whole
 - Strengthening of EU CFSP (including ESDP)
 - Freedom of action for NATO ("finishing of unfinished businesses")
 - Occasion to withdrawal of Polish units (and of substitution of primarily military engagement by civilian/commercial presence)
- Polish position on key regional problems – similar or identical with common EU position (or at least position of majority of its members)

Regional issues and disputes II

■ Kosovo:

- The most important regional issue from Polish perspective
- Ultimate goal (but not in foreseeable future)– independent Kosovo and Serbia in the EU; EU/UN/NATO efforts crucial; support for EULEX mission and all principles of Ahtisaari plan)

■ Bosnia & Herzegovina:

- Strengthening state structures (dissuading both secessionist/autonomous tendencies in RS and too-strong centralisation/unifications trends in Federation)
- Stressing complex approach (gradual, even if prolonged swift from international primarily military presence to influencing by other means)
- Cooperation particularly through EU and NATO framework (Intensified Dialogue, prospects of membership)

Regional issues and disputes III

■ Macedonia:

- Lack of agreement on official name of the country:
 - negative impact on NATO enlargement mechanisms
 - Polish support for Macedonian position (but not for the price of EU unity)
 - Limited capability to influence Greece
- Issue of Albanian minority and democratic standards (some concerns caused by the declaration of Kosovo independence and last parliamentary elections)

■ International justice (question of ICTY):

- Unconditional and full cooperation with ICTY of all respective countries absolutely crucial
- Regional perspective - enhancing stability and “healing the wounds from the past”
- Positive impact on international justice mechanisms in European/global scale

Other security issues

■ Energy security

- One of Polish priorities: diversification of sources and transit routes
 - Nabucco vs. South Stream projects
 - Concerns over Russian economic expansion in the region
 - Do not overestimate the importance!

■ Other issues of concern (transnational challenges):

- Terrorism (concerns over possibility of development of Islamic groups in Bosnia & Herzegovina)
- Transnational Organised Crime (TOC): drug issue (context of so called "Balkan route" and activities of local and Turkish OCG), trafficking of human beings (THB), infiltration by Balkan OCG and their cooperation with Polish OCG (indigenous or operating in Poland);
- Problem of corruption
- Immigration (legal and illegal) – possible problems in future
- Transnational challenges - currently (and in near future) generally low risk issues from Polish perspective

Polish presence in the region

- Primary instrument – participation in international stabilisation/peacekeeping missions:
- **B&H – since 1992 (UNPROFOR)**
 - Current involvement: 170 soldiers (Althea)
 - Participation in EUPM (police officers, civilian experts)
- **Kosovo – since 1999 (KFOR)**
 - Current involvement – 285 soldiers (KFOR), 143 policemen (UNMIK), some civilian experts, one military observer
 - Declared participation in EULEX (projected transfer of Polish police forces from UNMIK to EULEX)
- **Past engagements – Macedonia** (since 2001- NATO/EU operations)
- **For comparison: other Polish expeditionary engagements:**
 - Afghanistan** (ISAF) – 1200 (1600) soldiers; **Lebanon** (UNIFIL II) – 496 soldiers; **EUFOR CHAD** – c/a 400 soldiers (deployment finished in September); **Iraq** – 900 soldiers (last rotation, until the end of Oct.)

Polish economic interests in Western Balkans

- Overshadowed by security concerns
- Extremely low current scale of trade contacts and investments
 - Western Balkans (7 countries, population - c/a. 25,6 millions) – 0,7% of Polish export; 0,2% of Polish import (2007)
 - Visegrad countries (3 countries, population – c/a 25,6 millions) – 10,6% of Polish export, 7,4% (2007)
 - Surpluses in trade exchange with all countries from the region
- Significant possibility of future development of trade and other economic relations
 - Continuous growth of GDP in the region, increase in volume and value of trade exchange with Poland (albeit not exceptional), new institutional framework (SAAs and other agreements)
- Particular interest in cooperation of small and medium businesses (but more declared than implemented – lack of significant programs of promotion or support)