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THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AND POLAND'S EASTERN POLICY: HISTORICAL ECHOES IN TODAY'S APPROACH

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the extent to which the Jagiellonian idea still has a discernible influence over contemporary Polish foreign policy. More particularly, it addresses the question whether this tradition in some way still informs Poland's approach towards its eastern neighbours that possess territories that once belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The paper argues that it is possible to discern the legacy (or afterlife) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth when it comes to the way in which Poland manages its relations with its eastern neighbours. The civilizing mission that was once associated with the Jagiellonian idea can still be seen in Poland's efforts to promote democracy and liberal values in the East; this is most evident in the contribution that Poland has made to the European Union's Eastern Partnership. Nevertheless, differing collective memories among these states also continue to cause tensions between them.

Key words: Jagiellonian idea, Polish foreign policy, Eastern Partnership, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine

INTRODUCTION

This article will assess the degree to which the Jagiellonian idea has a discernible influence on Poland's relations with those states that possess territories which once belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The first section of the article discusses the extent to which historical legacies (or afterlives) can still be imprinted upon contemporary political processes. More specifically, it will focus upon the way that collective memory can shape national identity, which informs the foreign policy choices

that decision-makers make. It then discusses the extent to which the Jagiellonian idea of a multi-ethnic Polish federation clashed with more modern forms of ethnonationalism that came to the fore in the late nineteenth century. The second section of the article discusses the degree to which the Jagiellonian idea informed Polish foreign policy after 1989, arguing that two broad schools of thought can be perceived in relation to Poland's relations with its eastern neighbours: the first was a minimalist school, which advocated that Poland should concentrate its efforts on integrating itself into western institutions and that there should only be a limited amount of engagement with its eastern neighbours; the second was the Romantic School, which suggested that Poland had a duty to promote democracy and liberal values in the East – a version of the old civilizing mission associated with the Jagiellonian idea. The third section assesses the degree to which the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth continues to influence Poland's relations with Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine.

THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AND POLAND'S EASTERN POLICY

An in-depth discussion of the history of the Jagiellonian Dynasty and its relations with other empires, kingdoms, principalities and duchies within its neighbourhood falls well beyond the confines of this article. For now it is enough to note that the Jagiellonian Dynasty ruled Poland from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, a period when Polish power and influence reached its apogee. The union of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was converted into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569, resulted in a polity that stretched from those territories located in today's Poland and Lithuania into the depths of modern-day Belarus and Ukraine. As a consequence, Poland became a multiethnic and multilingual empire which sprawled over a large portion of Central and Eastern Europe. Over the course of the next two centuries, as a consequence of internal political weaknesses and the depredations of rival powers (the Russian, Prussian and Hapsburg Empires), Polish territory progressively shrank, a process that culminated in the three partitions at the end of the eighteenth century. It has been argued that the *collapse of the early modern political order of the Commonwealth* was a particularly important moment in the history of Central and Eastern Europe because, from this period, one can trace *the origins of modern Poland, Ukraine, and indeed Russia*.¹

Many analysts of Polish foreign policy have emphasised the importance of the experiences of the Second World War and the Cold War in relation to the foreign policy choices that Poland has made since 1989. It is undoubtedly true that these experiences have indeed impinged strongly on Poland's foreign and security policies; it will be argued, however, that one should not dismiss some of the longer lasting legacies of Poland's history. Some writers, for example, have borrowed the concept of the *longue du-*

¹ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nation. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, New Haven 2003, p. 117.

rée from the French Annales school of historians in order to explain some of the more deep-seated processes that can be observed in Central and Eastern European societies. Ekiert and Ziblatt, for instance, have suggested that the different patterns of democratization in the region have, to a significant degree, reflected the extent to which these different societies have embraced liberal values over the course of the last two centuries. They argue *that post-communist political transformations (outside of the former Soviet Union but including the Baltic states) should be conceptualized as a part of an on-going and long-term historical democratization process across the gradient of Europe's continent, from which the communist rule was but almost a temporary diversion.*² Simply put, those nations which in the nineteenth century began embarking upon a path that was leading to a liberalisation of their political institutions were rather more successful than other states within the region when it came to producing reasonably strong democratic systems after 1989. They argue that *patterns of politics, competing political discourses, policy choices, regime stability, levels of the economic development, and the nature of institutional choices found in Central and Eastern Europe today tend to correlate with patterns of politics, levels of development, regime stability, and institutional choices in the region in the pre-communist period in the first half of the twentieth century. Also, even more fundamentally, the old nineteenth-century territorial divisions seem to persist in their impact, despite decades of changes that should have made them obsolete.*³

It has also been argued that one can today observe the *peripheries and easternness* which *make for particularly visible kinds of borders*. These borders, which are essentially the result of decades or even centuries of particular historical processes, can be viewed as *tidemarks, analogous to those reminders of historic high waters that remain marked out on shorefront bulkheads and pilings.*⁴ Ballinger also employs the notion of what he terms as an afterlife: *Technically referring to life after death, an era following a particular event, or an unexpected persistence beyond an original context, afterlives [...] [capture] the sense of traces, resonances, survivals, and pathways.*⁵ If it is true that early-modern political processes still have a discernible impact upon the political makeup of the region today, then there is every reason to suppose that the legacies (or afterlives) of foreign policy traditions can still have a visible effect upon contemporary foreign policy formulation. From this perspective, the Jagiellonian idea could be viewed as some kind of afterlife which continues to influence foreign policy decision-making to this day.

This article is less concerned about the historical reality of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and is rather more interested in how the Jagiellonian idea might influence Poland's relations with its Eastern European neighbours to this day. Indeed,

² G. Ekiert, D. Ziblatt, "Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe One Hundred Years On", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2013), pp. 91-92, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325412465310>>.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴ P. Ballinger, "Whatever Happened to Eastern Europe? Revisiting Europe's Eastern Peripheries", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2017), p. 50, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416675020>>.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

any discussion on the extent to which one can discern a Jagiellonian idea in contemporary Polish foreign policy must begin with the major caveat that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which was constructed in the sixteenth century bore little resemblance to the modern nation-states with which we are familiar today. As Snyder has observed: *The early modern Polish nation which the Lithuanian gentry jointly created was far from the modern concept of the nation with which we are familiar. It was based on citizenship in a great republic where the gentry enjoyed extensive and codified rights.*⁶ Hence to talk about the Jagiellonian idea in contemporary Polish politics or foreign policy is largely a synthetic construct. Yet, however artificial this construct may be, in a nation so steeped in its history, it seems highly likely that successive generations of politicians would have drawn inspiration from this period, and that this construct (however mythical) has had a major influence in shaping their particular worldviews. Prizel, for instance, has argued that national identity plays a particularly significant role in relation to the formulation of a state's foreign policies. Identity, moreover, is to a large degree also moulded by a nation's sense of collective memory. He has observed: *A polity's national identity is very much the result of how it interprets its history – beliefs and perceptions that accumulate over time and constitute a society's 'collective memory'. Since the memories of societies, much like those of individuals, are inconsistent and selective, the national identity is subject to what layer of a polity has after the custodianship of the collective memory [...] [A] transfer of custodianship of a polity's collective memory will often lead to a fundamental redefinition of the 'national idea' and, with it, the parameters of a polity's national interest.*⁷

Prizel further argues that the birth of the modern form of Polish nationalism – as with all varieties of nationalism – rested on the construction of national myths. One myth that was of particular importance was *the desire to reconstitute an independent Polish state within the boundaries of the old Commonwealth.*⁸

This vision of a multiethnic Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita*) exerted a strong hold on a number of Polish Romantic thinkers and activists. Foremost among them was Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), who in time would become Poland's national poet. Born in Wilno (today's Vilnius) his writings would reflect the Jagiellonian vision of an extended Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth. Indeed, one of the biggest ironies is that Poland's national poet never actually set foot in either Poland's modern capital, Warsaw, or its historic capital, Cracow.⁹ Another towering figure in the history of modern Poland was Józef Piłsudski whose origins and vision bore more than a passing resemblance to those of Mickiewicz. He, too, was a native of Wilno and, like Mickiewicz, envisioned a multiethnic Polish state. *His patriotism was founded not upon a modern ethnic or linguistic definition of Poland, but upon nostalgic republican ideas of*

⁶ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, p. 20.

⁷ I. Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge 1998, p. 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, pp. 29-30.

the Grand Duchy of Lithuania [...] Piłsudski, who called himself a Lithuanian, spoke the literary Polish of his home, the folk Belarusian of the countryside, and the rough Russian of his Siberian exile.¹⁰ Yet this Romantic vision, which drew upon the traditions of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, found itself increasingly challenged in the late nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century by a more modern version of Polish nationalism. The leading figure within this movement was Roman Dmowski who envisioned – unlike Mickiewicz and Piłsudski – a rather more homogeneous, ethnically Polish nation state. Dmowski and his followers had little patience for the notion that the old Commonwealth should be restored; indeed, their preference was to limit the extent of Poland's frontiers in order to ensure that the number of minorities included within the frontiers of the new Polish state should be kept to a minimum. To this end, during the new Polish Republic's negotiations with Bolshevik Russia, which resulted in the Treaty of Riga that brought the Polish-Soviet war to an end in 1921, the chief Polish negotiator, Stanisław Grabski (a Dmowski acolyte) rejected the Russian offer of Mińsk and other territories in today's Belarus because he *wished to create a Poland in which the Poles could predominate*.¹¹

Many historians have emphasized the clash between Piłsudski and Dmowski's imagined Polish state. Snyder, for instance, argues that *Dmowski openly sought to destroy the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and replace it with a modern Polish identity*.¹² Prizel, on the other hand, has argued that, *as far as attitudes toward the eastern territories were concerned, the differences between the Piłsudski and Dmowski camps were more apparent than real [...]* It is noteworthy that although Piłsudski and Dmowski might have disagreed about the configuration that a reborn Poland should take, both men envisioned the *kresy* [the borderlands] under Polish domination.¹³ The modern Polish Republic, which reappeared on the European map at the end of the First World War, in fact bore little resemblance to the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The new state *would be based on the Poles as an ethnic group rather than a common ruling class and shared institutions. Instead of seeing Poland as a multinational entity based on the notion of one people, one faith* (jeden naród, jedna wiara), *the newly emerging Polish national identity reflected the belief of many post-positivists that only a clear, ethnonational self-definition would give the Poles sufficient cohesion to face the pressures of the partitioning empires*.¹⁴

In the same period as a new Polish state was being reconstructed, a similar process was underway in Lithuania. *Polish and Lithuanian nationalists were in accord on the main issue: that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was dead, that no multinational federation could arise*.¹⁵ The single biggest issue of contention between the two new

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹² Ibid., p. 59.

¹³ I. Prizel, *National Identity...*, p. 61.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁵ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, p. 62.

states was the status of Wilno/Vilnius. The city's population was predominantly Polish, but the Lithuanian government laid claim to it. The issue was effectively resolved when Polish forces occupied the city in 1920; but it resulted in a diplomatic standoff between the two countries throughout the interwar period.¹⁶

THE JAGIELLONIAN IDEA AFTER 1945

It was, however, the Second World War which had the most profound influence in shaping modern Poland. As a consequence of Hitler and Stalin's barbarities, the Poland which emerged from the wreckage of 1945 was very different from the state that had existed in the 1920s and 1930s. Snyder has noted some of the most important consequences of the war when he asserts: *In eight years, between September 1939 and September 1947, German power advanced and withdrew, Soviet power was installed twice, East European Jewish civilization was destroyed, Poles and Ukrainians ethnically cleansed each other, and a new and durable frontier separated Poles from Ukrainians. Operation Vistula ended the history of Galicia and Volhynia, and began the history of Western Ukraine and south-eastern Poland.*¹⁷ From the list that Snyder enumerates, the most obvious post-war change was Poland's new frontiers, with the state bodily shifted further to the West. Poland had 'reclaimed' the lost western territories (which in reality had not been in Polish hands for several hundred years, and whose population before the closing stages of the Second World War had been predominantly German). In contrast, the new state in the east lost significant tracts of territory. Notably both Wilno and Lwów – two cities which had largely ethnic Polish populations before the war – were now lost to Lithuania and Ukraine respectively (which were both now parts of the Soviet Union). Like their unfortunate German counterparts in the West, a large majority of the Polish populations in these cities were expelled from their homes and had to make new lives in the reconstituted post-war communist Polish state, often in those territories that had formerly belonged to Germany. A large proportion of Lwów's Polish citizens, for instance, were relocated to Wrocław (formerly Breslau).¹⁸ Aside from the post-war state's new frontiers, the other important difference was the relative homogeneity of its population. Most of the minority groups that had resided within the frontiers of the Second Republic had vanished, including Poland's three million Jews, most of whom had perished in the Holocaust. In many ways, as Davies has noted, the Poland that emerged from the war was one that largely conformed to Dmowski's vision of a homogenous Polish state.¹⁹

¹⁶ N. Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 2: *1795 to the Present*, revised ed., Oxford 2005, p. 292.

¹⁷ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, p. 200.

¹⁸ N. Davies, *God's Playground...*, pp. 382-383.

¹⁹ Idem, *Heart of Europe. The Past in Poland's Present*, 2nd ed., Oxford 2001, pp. 128-129.

During the Cold War, Poland was reduced to being a semi-acquiescent Soviet satellite. One of the instruments that the Soviets used to ensure their newly subservient satellite was kept in check was to remind periodically their fraternal Polish comrades that the Soviet Union was the best guarantor of ensuring that the Germans would not one forcefully reclaim their lost territories. Indeed, this latent fear was to influence Polish-Soviet relations to the very end of the Cold War. In 1990 Poland's newly-minted non-communist government did not press for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces from their territory until they had negotiated a treaty with the government of the recently unified Germany that acknowledged both states' common frontier.²⁰ Indeed, Central Europe's security system in the 1990s – which was characterised by a high level of economic interdependence between the various states within the region, and a patchwork of inter-governmental organizations – was rather different from that with which the likes of Piłsudski and Dmowski were having to contend during the interwar period. One of the key differences, of course, was that the frontiers between Europe's states had been radically redrawn at the end of the Second World War. For Polish policy-makers acceptance of what Timothy Garton Ash has labelled 'Yalta Europe' was the foundation upon which their post-Cold War foreign policy was built. Like Willy Brandt – the West German chancellor who began to implement his ambitious and controversial *Ostpolitik* (Eastern Policy) roughly twenty years earlier – Polish policy-makers were obliged to *accept the results of history*.²¹ This essentially meant accepting the permanence of Poland's post-1945 frontiers and abandoning any notion of reclaiming the lost *Kresy* (the borderlands between Poland and its eastern neighbours, Belarus and Ukraine). Sanford makes this point when he asserts: *The price to be paid for Western-guaranteed security was the final burial of Poland's Jagiellonian [sic] legacy through the wholehearted acceptance of the national independence of the states on Poland's eastern borderlines*.²² Similarly, Prizel has also argued that the conditions in the Europe of the 1990s ensured that Polish policy-makers had little option other than to jettison previously ingrained foreign policy traditions. He argues that Poland was no longer *isolated from the rest of the Catholic world by Lutheran Germany and bogged down in a bitter and draining 'civilizing mission' to its east*. Moreover, owing to the homogeneity of its post-war population, Poland was for the first time *free of its enervating struggle to subdue the peoples east of the Bug River*. The collapse of the Soviet empire also meant that Poland found itself bordered by new states in the east, and it therefore had the *opportunity to establish 'normal' relations within its traditional sphere of political and cultural influence for the first time in 600 years*.²³ Hence in this narrow sense, one could argue that the Jagiellonian idea dissipated in the early 1990s. Notions of reconstituting a multiethnic

²⁰ A. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War. Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in Search of Security*, Basingstoke 1995, pp. 39-40.

²¹ T. Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name. Germany and the Divided Continent*, London 1993, pp. 5-6, 73.

²² G. Sanford, "Overcoming the Burden of History in Polish Foreign Policy", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2002), p. 184, at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270300660023>>.

²³ I. Prizel, *National Identity...*, p. 9.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were scarcely credible when set against the realities of late twentieth-century Europe. Polish foreign policy in this period largely concentrated on establishing the conditions which would facilitate Poland's integration into the plethora of western institutions, particularly NATO and the European Union.²⁴

It could, however, be argued that both Sanford and Prizel were a little premature in their eagerness to assert that Polish foreign policy had wholly abandoned its civilizing mission or even visions of extending its influence when it came to managing Poland's relations with Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. While notions of reclaiming or Polonising Poland's lost eastern territories were clearly antithetical to the values that membership of the European Union required, and the chief concern of Polish policy-makers was to integrate Poland fully into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions (which arose from both material and ideational motivations), 'the East' continued to exercise a grip on the minds of at least some Polish decision-makers. It has long been noted that there has been a division in Polish politics between political realists and idealists;²⁵ and this division has been at its most acute in the area of Poland's external relations. In the nineteenth century, the debate revolved around the positivist/realist school, who believed that Poland's best interests would be served by working with the various empires in an effort to achieve some degree of national autonomy, and the idealist/revolutionary school who were anxious to break the chains of their oppressors.²⁶ This dichotomy can still be observed today, particularly in the debate over how Poland should manage its relations with its eastern neighbours. Szczepanik, for example, has noted a division within Poland's policy-making community between the so-called 'minimalists' and the 'romantics' when it comes to how Poland should formulate its eastern policy. The romantics *preached an active support for democracy in the newly independent former Soviet republics in the name of a solidarity stemming from the countries' common history and the strategic necessity to create a barrier against Russia's tendency to re-establish its domination over the territories of the former Soviet Union*. In contrast, the minimalists *argued that a swift democratic transition and a creation of a Western-style civil society in countries such as Belarus and Ukraine were highly unlikely. Thus the tendency to challenge the influence of Russia in these territories in the name of the Polish historical mission in the East would be counterproductive*.²⁷ Klatt has also noted this dichotomy in relation to Poland's Eastern policy, arguing that: *Political realists have adopted a pragmatic approach to Poland's politics, focusing on increasing its internal strength and advocating a modus vivendi with their more powerful neighbours. On the other hand, the idealists acted on the basis of the moralistic view that Poland has its rightful place in Europe and its existence is indispensable for upholding a moral order in international politics, including bringing freedom to its*

²⁴ A. Cortey, *East Central Europe...*, pp. 39-40.

²⁵ A. Bromke, *Poland's Politics. Idealism vs. Realism*, Cambridge, Mass. 1967.

²⁶ N. Davies, *Heart of Europe...*, pp. 175-176.

²⁷ M. Szczepanik, "Between a Romantic 'Mission in the East' and Minimalism: Polish Policy towards the Eastern Neighbourhood", *Perspectives*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2011), p. 46.

*Eastern neighbours. They considered Poland's freedom the highest virtue; therefore, they were willing to sacrifice themselves to achieve this.*²⁸

Szczepanik argues that of these two schools of thought, the romantic tradition has had more influence over Poland's approach towards the east since 1989. Taras, in contrast, has argued that until 2004, which witnessed the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, *Poland's Russia policy was based primarily on power politics calculations which sometimes dictated cooperation with Russia, at other times non-cooperation.*²⁹

In many ways, the Romantic tradition draws upon the Jagiellonian idea as its inspiration, and hence it can be argued that it still has a discernible influence over Poland's approach towards the East today: *in the national identity of citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian state [i.e. the Commonwealth] and in the Polish mentality, the tradition of great power missionism – a particular civilising mission in Eastern Europe, not only in the strictly cultural dimension, but political as well – was deeply rooted [...] [I]t persists in a modified and modernised form, contributing to shaping our national identity and the group mentality of the Polish people.*³⁰

Klatt also argues that Idealism is still evident in the way that Poland manages its relations with other states: *Poland presents itself as a normative actor with a commitment to spreading European norms to the East [...].*³¹ A former Polish foreign minister, Adam Rotfeld, has made this point explicit, arguing that *the EU is not an economic union but first and foremost a union of norms, ideals and democratic values, which need to be 'explained' and 'exported' to the East by Poland.*³² Others, such as the former Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski, have cautioned that the Jagiellonian idea carries its own risks; indeed, he argues that *Poland's present growth potential does not depend on the status of 'Jagiellonian' regional power. He appeals to Poles to 'descend from a martyr pedestal and remove the crown of thorns'.*³³

It could be argued that – at least in the context of Poland's membership of the European Union – the Jagiellonian idea can be viewed as being most in evidence in relation to Poland's contribution to the European Union's Eastern Partnership. In many ways the Partnership built upon Poland's existing policy of engagement with the neighbouring states in Eastern Europe. From the vantage point of many European states, Poland is naturally equipped to play some of form of leadership role in Eastern Europe.³⁴ Yet at the time that Poland was on the cusp of joining the EU, there was little to indicate that

²⁸ M. Klatt, "Poland and its Eastern Neighbours: Foreign Policy Principles", *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2011), p. 2.

²⁹ R. Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy. Europe and Beyond*, Edinburgh 2015, p. 126.

³⁰ M. Mróz, "Historyczne uwarunkowania polityki wschodniej III RP", in A. Gil, T. Kapuśniak (eds.), *Polityka wschodnia Polski. Uwarunkowania, koncepcje, realizacja*, Lublin–Warszawa 2009, pp. 16–17.

³¹ M. Klatt, "Poland and its Eastern Neighbours...", p. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10; K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist. Poland's Foreign and Security Policy Priorities*, Oxford 2007, p. 58.

its existing members were considering seriously its further expansion eastwards. There was a European Neighbourhood Policy that encompassed the states in Eastern Europe. But the disparate composition of the states included within the ENP *certainly did little to make it look like a club for those next in line to join*. Those states included Russia – which was hardly viewed as a realistic candidate for membership in the near term – but also Morocco, *the only country ever to have been denied candidacy with the fundamental argument that it was not European*.³⁵

On becoming a member of the European Union in 2004, Poland's first efforts to persuade its European partners to embark upon a more ambitious strategy towards the East were relatively ineffective. The chief reason for the lack of success on this front was that among many Member States there was a deep-seated reluctance to embark upon any initiative that could be perceived as preparing the ground for the Union's eventual enlargement into the post-Soviet space in Eastern Europe.³⁶ After 2008 Poland was significantly more successful in persuading other member states of the desirability of a more coherent EU-policy towards the East. Poland (along with Sweden) played a leading role in formulating the Eastern Partnership. Poland's success can be attributed, *inter alia*, to a new government being formed in 2007, the main party being Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) which was instinctively more pro-European than its predecessor; the fact that Sweden – *a member state with the reputation of being a reliable, honest broker, a solid advocate of deeper integration with the European Union for the [Eastern Partnership] countries [...] as well as an altruist in foreign affairs*³⁷ – co-sponsored the Partnership was also an important factor in persuading other Member States to support the initiative. Furthermore, at a tactical level, Polish policy-makers downplayed the link between the Partnership and future membership of the European Union, which also made it more acceptable to other Member States. The Eastern Partnership eventually resulted in the six participating states³⁸ in Eastern Europe being offered the opportunity to sign free trade agreements with the European Union. In the case of Ukraine, this resulted in a political crisis which led to the collapse of its government, the Russian seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and an uprising in two of the country's eastern provinces.

It could be argued that Poland's capacity to fulfil the 'civilizing' aspect of its mission towards the East has recently weakened. This is mainly due to several actions that the current government, led by Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice), have taken regarding its reforms of the judiciary and a growing perception in Europe and beyond

³⁵ C. Kolvraa, "Limits of Attraction: The EU's Eastern Border and the European Neighbourhood Policy", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2017), p. 14, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416673141>>.

³⁶ N. Copsey, K. Pomorska, "Poland's Power and Influence in the European Union: The Case of its Eastern Policy", *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2010), at <<https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2009.3>>.

³⁷ Ibidem, "The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 66, no. 3 (2014), p. 433, at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2013.855391>>.

³⁸ The participating states are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova.

that the government is curtailing press freedom. This has resulted in Poland's reputation as being an upholder of democratic values and the rule of law being eroded in the eyes of many European states. One consequence of this is that the European Commission has threatened to activate Article 7 of the European Union Treaty, which could lead to drastic cuts in EU funding to Poland. Given that many outsiders believe that Poland's democratic institutions are in a somewhat fragile state, it seems likely that many outsiders will not view Poland as an entity which is endowed with the resources to effect democratic change in Eastern Europe. The current PiS government was at times critical of its predecessor for not doing more to support democratic elements in countries such as Belarus, although there has been relatively little recent evidence that the government is pursuing an overtly romantic policy towards its eastern neighbours. Certainly, under the current government, relations with Hungary – another country which has attracted a significant amount of criticism from governments in Western Europe regarding the state of its democratic institutions – are relatively warm.³⁹ In contrast, relations with both France and Germany – the two most influential Member States within the European Union – have been rather more strained. Indeed, several senior German politicians have publicly criticised the actions of the PiS government, which has resulted in some relatively testy exchanges between the two countries' respective diplomats and foreign ministers.⁴⁰ The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, herself commented publicly, saying that her government could not *hold [their] tongues for the sake of sacred peace. The principles of our cooperation in the EU are at stake.*⁴¹

Poland's leading role in the formulation of the Eastern Partnership was a clear indication that there was a perception that it could perform some form of leadership role vis-à-vis Eastern Europe. In this area at least, it is possible to see Poland continuing the civilizing mission that is most clearly associated with the Jagiellonian idea. The Partnership also resulted in major political consequences in the neighbouring states. The next part of the article will consider Poland's bilateral relations with Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus, all states which possess territories that once belonged to the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and for whom the Jagiellonian idea still has a marked impact upon their relations with Poland.

³⁹ G. Siwicki, "Visegrad Group Key Foreign Policy Focus for Polish Gov't", PAP English News Service, 15 November 2016, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1838940578?accountid=11664>>, 8 November 2017.

⁴⁰ "German Parliament Chief Slams Polish Cabinet over Constitutional Crisis", BBC Monitoring European, 2 November 2016, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1834869635?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁴¹ "Germany's Merkel Seen Losing Patience with Polish Government", BBC Monitoring European, 3 September 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1934688633?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

THE FORMER COMMONWEALTH TERRITORIES

History – or perhaps more accurately collective memory – still exerts a strong influence over Poland's relations with those neighbouring states which were once part, or currently possess territories which once belonged to, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The historical legacy – or afterlife, to borrow Ballinger's term – of Poland's role within the region still shapes its relations with neighbouring states to this day. Mayblin et al. emphasise the importance of this legacy when they remark that the *history of Poland is also cut through with 'colonialisms' – Poland experienced Soviet imperialism and was itself an imperial power in the Eastern European region.*⁴² Similarly, Burant has observed that, *In order to create an independent historical identity upon which to legitimise their claims to nationhood, Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians believed they had to distance themselves from the history of the Commonwealth, establish their separateness from the Poles, and eradicate all traces of Polish culture from their national cultures.*⁴³

The influence of history is perhaps most evident in the relationship between Poland and Lithuania, and particularly how the two countries think about the Commonwealth. For Poles, the Commonwealth is viewed with a sense of pride; this period, after all, was marked by Poland reaching its zenith as a European power. Lithuanian nationalists, on the other hand, tend to view this as a period of shame; in their eyes, Lithuania was reduced to little more than a Polish satellite. These sentiments have continued to persist even in the period after 1989. A few years ago, Lithuanian children were asked to choose the most shameful event in their country's history. More than any other, they chose the 1569 union with Poland.⁴⁴ Given that these two nations have very different interpretations of their heavily overlapping histories, it is scarcely surprising that relations between the two have, over the years, been relatively problematic.

One recent example of the way these different interpretations can still have a marked impact upon their current relations occurred when the Polish authorities announced that they would issue passports which contained images of various Polish landmarks which are considered to be of cultural or historic importance. Some of these sites are today located in Lithuania and Ukraine. One image, for example, depicted a Polish military cemetery in Lviv (formerly Lwów), Ukraine; another displayed the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius in Lithuania. Needless to say, the announcement resulted in some sharp protests from Poland's neighbours, with the Ukrainian government – in unusually forthright diplomatic language – labelling the passports as 'an unfriendly step'. In some quarters, the new passports were viewed as breaking *a longstanding practice of not making any claim, even symbolic, to territories Poland lost in the redrawing of borders during the 20th century.* In the face of these, protests, the Polish authorities agreed that

⁴² L. Mayblin, A. Piekut, G. Valentine, "'Other' Posts in 'Other' Places: Poland through a Postcolonial Lens?", *Sociology*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2016), p. 61, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514556796>>.

⁴³ S. Burant, "International Relations in a Regional Context: Poland and its Eastern Neighbours. Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (1993), p. 396, at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139308412098>>.

⁴⁴ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, p. 102.

the offending passports would not be issued.⁴⁵ While this incident can be viewed as being relatively trivial, it nonetheless underlines the way in which acts that hark back to the Commonwealth (however symbolic they may be) can stir strong emotions among those states that today possess territories which were once part of it.

One of the most tangible afterlives of the Commonwealth is the existence of Polish minorities in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. To be sure, in comparison to earlier periods of European history, their numbers are relatively small. Hitler and Stalin's genocidal policies and the forced population transfers at the end of the Second World War ensured that most of the remaining Poles found themselves living within the new Polish state. To this day, however, a few Polish communities can be found in the neighbouring states. It has also been argued that the way minority groups are treated in neighbouring territories tends to have a direct impact upon the bilateral relations between the interested states. As Burant has observed: *Where treatment of the national minority by each side in any of these three bilateral relationships is perceived by the other to be at least tolerable, the chances for satisfactory relations are good. Where treatment of a national minority is perceived to be poor, the issue can dominate the relationship and engender fear of Polish intentions.*⁴⁶

Again, Lithuania offers a good example of the way the minority issue impinges strongly upon its bilateral relations with Poland. Just over six per cent of Lithuania's three and a half-million population are considered to be Polish, and most of them reside in the county of Vilnius (whose population before the war was predominantly Polish).⁴⁷ Lithuania's treatment of its Polish minority has strained the bilateral relationship between the two countries from the beginning.⁴⁸ Since both countries extricated themselves from the Soviet empire in 1989, there have been periods where their relations have been marked by significant tensions. At one point, both states' foreign ministers had not had a direct face-to-face meeting for the best part of two years. One issue which created tensions between the two governments was the Lithuanian authorities' refusal to allow the use of Polish spellings on Lithuanian identity documents. The Polish government viewed this as an infringement on the rights of the Polish-speaking minority. The Lithuanian government, in contrast, viewed Poland's protests as representing the heavy-handed intervention of a former colonial power.⁴⁹ In fact, the Lithuanian alphabet and spellings have a significant symbolic significance as part of Lithuanian identity. In the nineteenth century, Lithuanian nationalists constructed their own

⁴⁵ "Poland/Ukraine/Lithuania", *Asia News Monitor*, 13 September 2017, at <proquest.com>, 8 November 2017.

⁴⁶ S. Burant, "International Relations...", p. 398.

⁴⁷ M. Barwiński, K. Leśniewska, "The Contemporary Situation of the Polish Minority in Lithuania and the Lithuanian Minority in Poland from the Institutional Perspective", *Geographia Polonica*, vol. 87, no. 1 (2014), pp. 28-29, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7163/GPol.2014.2>>.

⁴⁸ S. Burant, "International Relations...", pp. 399-405.

⁴⁹ "Poland, Lithuania, Spiralling Downwards: Polish-Lithuanian Theatre of the Absurd", *The Economist*, 30 October 2010, at <https://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/10/polish-lithuanian_theatre_absurd>, 18 December 2017.

Lithuanian alphabet, borrowing several letters used in the Czech language, as a means of making Lithuanian spellings look decidedly less Polish.⁵⁰ Other issues which have created friction are the ban on bilingual street signs in predominantly Polish neighbourhoods, and the limited provision of Polish schools. From the Polish perspective, these policies are perceived as an effort on the part of the Lithuanian authorities to contain or marginalise manifestations of Polish culture in their country. These issues – which arguably could be relatively easily resolved with a little good will on both sides – continues to cloud relations between the two neighbouring states. In 2016, a senior Polish diplomat stated (ironically, at a conference which had been organised to celebrate 25 years of independence for the two states) that the Polish minority in Lithuania were in a worse situation than their counterparts in Belarus. This prompted a sharp response from his Lithuanian counterpart, who argued that the situation when it came to human rights of the Polish minority in ‘Europe’s last dictatorship’ could hardly be said to be better than that of their counterparts who lived in a ‘strong democracy’ like Lithuania.⁵¹

The minority issue has also at times impinged upon Poland’s relations with the government of Belarus. The Polish minority in Belarus accounts for roughly three per cent of Belarus’s ten million population, and they tend to be concentrated in the borderlands that straddle the Polish-Belarusian frontier. Unlike in the case of Lithuania, however, nationalists in Belarus do not tend to regard Poland as a historic enemy. Successive Polish governments have attempted to assume the role of an honest broker between Belarus and the European Union; and there has been a desire on the part of Warsaw to strengthen trading relations between the two states. A complicating factor in relations between the two countries is that Belarus is generally viewed as being Europe’s last dictatorship, under the leadership of Alexander Lukashenko. Moreover, the external policies of Belarus have tended to be oriented towards Russia, to the extent that it is widely regarded as being a Russian satellite. For these reasons, the Jagiellonian civilizing mission – which in contemporary terms means democracy promotion and economic liberalisation – has not been well received in Minsk. Indeed, in 2010 accusations were made that the Polish government was supporting the government’s opponents, and a Polish journalist was arrested and charged with producing anti-Lukashenko propaganda.⁵² More recently, however, relations between Poland and Belarus appear to have improved, and the issue of the Polish minority does not seem to have impacted particularly negatively on their bilateral relationship. There are also clearly limits with regard to the level of resources that Poland is currently willing to devote to cultural diplomacy. For example, the Polish government recently announced that it was cutting funding to Belsat – a satellite television company that serves the Polish community in Belarus

⁵⁰ T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations...*, pp. 36-37.

⁵¹ Quoted in “Lithuania ‘Outraged’ by Official’s Comment on Polish Minority”, BBC Monitoring, 21 September 2016, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1821797276?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁵² J. Dempsey, “Poles Nourish Ties to Belarusian Opposition”, *International Herald Tribune*, 7 January 2011.

and which the Polish government has partially subsidised. The current Polish foreign minister, Witold Waszczykowski, justified the cut by saying that the Polish government had to spend more money on consular services and on support for Syrian refugees.⁵³ It is unclear whether the decision to cut the channel's funding is in response to pressure from the Belarusian government, or whether it simply represents a cost-cutting exercise (or possibly a combination of both). Either way, it clearly reflects the limits of the current government's commitment to disseminating Polish culture to neighbouring states.

The presence of a Polish minority within Ukraine has not impinged significantly upon bilateral relations between the two countries. This is partly because the Polish presence is relatively small, and also because (unlike in the cases of Lithuania and Belarus) the population is relatively dispersed and not concentrated within the borderlands. This has meant that the minority's capacity for political activism has been rather limited.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, from the vantage point of Warsaw, relations with Kiev are considered to be of critical importance. Since the end of communist rule in 1989, successive Polish governments have gone to great efforts to construct a strategic partnership with Ukraine. Poland's interest in Ukraine is, of course, nothing new. The very fact that Ukraine – one of the largest states in Europe – is Poland's eastern neighbour ensures that any Polish government is bound to be concerned about this particular bilateral relationship. Indeed, this perception that the fates of Poland and Ukraine were inextricably intertwined was reflected in Marshall Piłsudski's remark that *[t]here can be no free Poland without a free Ukraine*.⁵⁵ This quotation speaks to an underlying motivation in Polish foreign policy to try and ensure that Ukraine is not absorbed into the Russian/Soviet empire/sphere of influence. Indeed, Aleksander Kwaśniewski – the second president of the Third Republic – seemingly provided a more contemporary version of Piłsudski's quotation when he opined, in the midst of Ukraine's 2004-05 Orange Revolution, that *any great power [implying the United States] would prefer a Russia without Ukraine than a Russia with Ukraine*.⁵⁶ Indeed, the desire to extricate Ukraine from Russia's sphere of influence has been an element in Poland's Eastern policy since 1989. This clearly clashes with Russia's goals within the region. As has been noted, *Moscow's apparent desire to maintain close ties with Ukraine and Belarus clashes with Poland's sustained goal of promoting independence and democracy in the region as well as closer ties with the*

⁵³ "Poland Confirms Reports of Funding Cuts for Belarusian TV", BBC Monitoring of Former Soviet Union, 29 December 2016, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1853763531?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁵⁴ "Europe Politics: Can Poland Strengthen its Ties with Ukraine and Belarus", EIU ViewsWire, 12 October 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1963060373?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁵⁵ Quoted in K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist...*, p. 64.

⁵⁶ K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, "Political Relations between Poland and Russia since 1990", in A.D. Rotfeld, A. Tokunov (eds.), *White Spots, Black Spots. Difficult Matters in Polish-Russian Relations, 1918-2008*, Pittsburgh 2015, p. 548.

West.⁵⁷ Historically, Eastern Europe has therefore has been an area of competition between Russia and Poland.

Tensions between Poland and Russia over Ukraine have been particularly pronounced since the 2004 Orange Revolution. The Revolution was sparked by evidence of vote rigging in favour of the pro-Russian presidential candidate, Viktor Yanukovych. The Polish president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, played an important role in resolving the crisis. A second election was organised which led to the victory of Viktor Yushchenko, whose inclinations were rather more pro-Western. Poland's international stature was enhanced by President Kwaśniewski's successful intervention in Ukraine, and it was now *perceived as a state with a regional specialism and the ability to shape its immediate environment*.⁵⁸ It could be argued that Poland's intervention in 2004 in support of the pro-democracy forces in Ukrainian politics owed at least something to the old civilizing mission of the Jagiellonian idea. As Raymond Taras has noted: *A combination of realist, but also ideational, considerations explained Poland's vigorous support for the pro-Western leaders of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004*.⁵⁹ Poland's intervention in the Orange Revolution essentially foreshadowed the similar role that it would play during the Euromaidan revolution in 2014. The decision of Viktor Yanukovych – the Ukrainian president at that time – to reject the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union precipitated another political crisis in Ukrainian politics. It also led to the Russian seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and an uprising in two of Ukraine's eastern provinces Donetsk and Luhansk. As in 2004-05 the Polish government was again heavily engaged in Ukrainian affairs. On this occasion, it was Radosław Sikorski who played a prominent role, as he was a member of a triumvirate composed of the French, German and Polish foreign ministers. In their handling of the crisis in Ukraine, one can discern both the minimalist and romantic elements in Poland's approach to the East. On the one hand, the Polish government clearly came out in support of Ukraine's anti-government protesters; on the other, Sikorski cautioned opposition leaders not to overplay their hand, and urged them reach a compromise with President Yanukovych. He advised: *Repeat our scenario of 1989 when we made a deal, and not our scenario of 1981 when the opposition overestimated our strength and the government cracked down*.⁶⁰ In the event, the government was overthrown and since then Poland has overtly supported the government of the new Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko.

The history of Poland's role as a colonizing power still exerts a strong influence over its bilateral relationship with several neighbouring states. This is particularly apparent in the case of Ukraine because – despite the best efforts of both governments – historical grievances within both states have on occasions negatively impinged upon their bilateral relations. The tragedy of Volhynia, the ethnic cleansing of Poles in the

⁵⁷ K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist...*, p. 72.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁵⁹ R. Taras, *Fear...*, p. 126.

⁶⁰ Quoted in J. Cienski, "Poland Urges Ukraine Protesters to Work with Yanukovich", *Financial Times*, 12 February 2014.

Ukrainian-Polish borderlands in 1943-44, is an event which is still very much present in the minds of Poles today. Yet Poland and Ukraine have rather different perspectives on the tragedy. As Szeptycki notes, *For Poles, the Volhynia tragedy of 1943-1944 was an instance of genocide for which Ukraine should unconditionally apologize. But as our neighbors see it, Western Ukraine in the 1940s was the scene of a Polish-Ukrainian conflict which left victims on both sides.*⁶¹ Szeptycki also suggests that Poles tend to be more preoccupied with the past than their Ukrainian neighbours. In contrast, *Ukraine is more pragmatic, giving more weight to visa facilities or economic cooperation, which partly reflects the fact that for most of the country's political elites, often hailing from its eastern regions (Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk), the history of Ukraine's western reaches is a fairly remote subject.*⁶² An example of how collective memory can impinge negatively on the political relations between these two states occurred in 2003. Presidents Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Leonid Kuchma, in an effort to strengthen the Polish-Ukrainian partnership, participated in a joint ceremony, and the Ukrainian and Polish parliaments issued a joint declaration, to commemorate the Volhynia tragedy. Despite their good intentions, the whole process was almost derailed when parliamentarians in both Poland and Ukraine objected to the wording of the statement. A significant number of Polish deputies disliked the fact that the word 'genocide' did not appear in the text; in contrast, a large number of Ukrainian parliamentarians were unhappy that there was no mention of the persecution that Ukrainians had experienced at the hands of the Polish state between 1918-39, nor of the Ukrainians' expulsion from their ancestral lands in the Carpathians in 1947.⁶³

There have been other, more recent examples of the way in which history has had a deleterious impact upon the bilateral relations between both states. One controversy has been the Ukrainian government's decision to deny Poland the right to exhume and commemorate those Poles who were murdered in Ukraine during the Second World War. The decision to end co-operation on this matter was taken as a means of protesting against the Polish government's failure to protect several monuments that had been erected to commemorate the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in Poland. The Polish government has countered by stating that the monuments had been erected illegally and therefore they were not guaranteed any right to protection. The Deputy Director of the Institute of National Memory articulated the Polish position clearly when he stated: *Polish regulations clearly state that every person has the right to a grave, regardless of whether they were a German or Russian soldier, or a member of the UPA. Such places are protected in Poland. However, a situation in which someone tries to build triumphal*

⁶¹ A. Szeptycki, "Polish-Ukrainian Relations: From the Success of the 'Orange Revolution' to Russia-First Policy", *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 3 (2010), p. 5.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 7; N. Copsey, "Remembrance of Things Past: the Lingering Impact of History on Contemporary Polish-Ukrainian Relations", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 4 (2008), p. 551, at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130801999847>>.

*arches in honour of the UPA is a different matter. This will not be accepted.*⁶⁴ The bitterness of these exchanges between Polish and Ukrainian officials is all the more surprising when one considers the breadth of both countries' mutual interests. Poland has been a vigorous supporter of Ukraine's membership of the European Union; and has been at the forefront of the EU countries who has strongly advocated a tough approach towards Russia. The Polish foreign minister, Waszczykowski, acknowledged this point when he stated in a radio interview that Poland was in *no dispute with Ukraine, as little [had] changed at the political, diplomatic, military or economic levels*, before placing the responsibility for the current difficulties in the bilateral relationship firmly at the feet of the Ukrainian government. It was they, he argued, who were *departing from, and even backtracking on, certain arrangements, such as with respect to exhumation*.⁶⁵ Concerns have been expressed that both governments had allowed the bilateral relationship to deteriorate so markedly. Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz – a former Polish deputy foreign minister and ambassador to Moscow – has stated that while *Ukraine's policy towards history certainly has many flaws*, Poland's response had been *completely unproductive*. The end result was merely to generate an *increasingly deeper political conflict*. She added: *The conflict between Warsaw and [Kiev] definitely pleases the Kremlin because Russia is working to divide Europe and Ukraine is strongly oriented towards the West*.⁶⁶ The fact that the two countries' rather different views of history are overshadowing these wider interests attests to the powerful grip that history continues to exert over both nations. While successive Polish governments have publicly asserted that a free Ukraine is important in terms of Poland's security, recent events demonstrate that a free Ukraine may well challenge Poland's view of history. As one Polish commentators has stated: *Even though we have successes in the areas of economic or military cooperation, history continues to be a big problem for us. For the past year, this problem has had a very strong disorganizing effect on Polish-Ukrainian relations, and the lack of a solution is certainly not going to benefit our relations*.⁶⁷

Aside from the contested nature of the two nation's respective collective memories, there is an additional factor that could also become consequential in future years. Today, over one million Ukrainians live and work in Poland. Indeed, in a recent interview with an Italian newspaper, the Polish foreign minister, Waszczykowski, justified his government's decision not to participate in an EU-wide programme to manage the large numbers of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa on the grounds that Poland was itself a border state, and that it had issued over one million visas to Ukraini-

⁶⁴ "Poland-Ukraine Relations Seen Souring over Monument Dispute", BBC Monitoring European, 30 October 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1957098207?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁶⁵ "Warsaw-Kiev Relations Experiencing Setback – Polish Foreign Minister", Sputnik, 22 November 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1966562827?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁶⁶ "Paper Views Ukraine-Poland History Row", BBC Monitoring, 22 November 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1966979048?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁶⁷ Łukasz Jasina from the PISM, Polish Institute of International Affairs, quoted in "Poland-Ukraine Relations Seen Souring..."

ans in 2017 alone.⁶⁸ If current trends were to continue, it is not inconceivable that one day Poland might look more like the multiethnic federation that Piłsudski originally envisaged, and rather less like the homogenous Polish nation that Dmowski and his supporters wanted (and largely achieved after 1945).

The fact that history so heavily overshadows relations between Poland on the one hand and Lithuania and Ukraine on the other is, in some ways, surprising, given that all three states have a common interest in containing Russian influence in the region. It is certainly true that Poland and the Baltic states (including Lithuania) are instinctively suspicious of Russian activities in their neighbourhood. In the case of Poland, the bulk of policy-makers tend to view Russia as having a relatively malign influence over regional affairs. *Over the centuries mutual vindications, irredentist claims, cultural chasms, incompatible value systems, religious and philosophic conflicts, and other historical grievances have created reciprocal suspicion, distrust, dislike, and, at times, hatred.*⁶⁹ Certainly, Polish and Lithuanian elites have a common perception of Russia as representing a regional security threat. One survey conducted among elites in Western and Eastern Europe in 2007 revealed that there was a marked difference in the way that they perceived Russian influence. German and Belgium elite decision-makers did not view potential Russian interference in European affairs as representing a significant threat to EU cohesion; in contrast, their Polish and Lithuanian counterparts believed this represented either a 'big' or a 'quite big' threat.⁷⁰ Lašas has also argued that the responses of the governments of Poland and the Baltic states to the outbreak of the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 were largely the result of *identity politics driven by historical-psychological legacies* that stemmed from these states' shared and traumatic experiences of the Second World War.⁷¹

Nonetheless, even if Russia's actions have not yet produced a united front among the various states which once belonged to the Commonwealth, they have at least forced the European Union and NATO to refocus their attention upon the security situation in the east. As Ballinger has noted, *the territorial ambitions of Putin's Russia and its dependencies (like Crimea) have infused the language of eastern and western alliances with renewed political and military salience.*⁷² One consequence of this has been the decision to strengthen NATO's military presence in Eastern Europe, much to the chagrin of the Russian government. Indeed, the Polish government has been quick to claim credit for NATO's renewed interest in the East. Recently, the Polish foreign minister, Waszczykowski, suggested that when the current government came into office in November

⁶⁸ "Polish Minister Accuses EU of Prejudice", BBC Monitoring Europe, 24 October 2017, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1954161904?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁶⁹ R. Taras, *Fear...*, p. 114.

⁷⁰ I. Matonyté, V. Morkevičius, "Threat Perception and European Identity Building: The Case of Elites in Belgium, Germany, Lithuania and Poland", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, no. 6 (2009), p. 974, at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130903063492>>.

⁷¹ A. Lašas, "When History Matters: Baltic and Polish Reactions to the Russo-Georgian War", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 64, no. 6 (2012), p. 1061.

⁷² P. Ballinger, "Whatever Happened...", p. 46.

2015, there existed, in his words, a 'two-level NATO'. On the top level was Western Europe, in which the terms of the Washington Treaty were followed and in which there were substantial military deployments undertaken by the western states (principally the US). On the second level was East Central Europe, where the allied military presence was largely symbolic. This situation, according to the foreign minister, had been to a significant degree remedied, with NATO significantly strengthening its presence within Poland and the Baltic states.⁷³ It is certainly true that NATO's forward presence within Eastern Europe and the Baltic has been significantly augmented. At the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw it was agreed that NATO's presence within the region would be significantly strengthened. Today NATO deploys *four rotational battalion-size battlegroups that operate in concert with national home defence forces and are present at all times in the host countries*.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

This article has offered a survey of the way in which the Jagiellonian idea still influences Poland's relations with its neighbours that possess territories that once belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It has been argued that the Jagiellonian idea of a multiethnic Polish federation found itself in competition with more modern forms of ethnonationalism; and certainly the state that emerged from the Second World War bore very little resemblance to the vision that had animated the likes of Mickiewicz and Piłsudski. It is also true that Polish policy-makers in the 1990s renounced the old Jagiellonian idea of reclaiming the lost eastern borderlands (*Kresy*). Notwithstanding these facts, it is argued that elements of the Jagiellonian idea can still be found in Poland's approach towards its eastern neighbours. One clear example was the important role that Poland played in the formulation of the European Union's Eastern Partnership. This, it could be argued, contained elements of the Jagiellonian idea that Poland should perform some form of civilizing mission in the east. In twenty-first century terms, this meant encouraging its eastern neighbours to embrace liberal values and democratic institutions. It is also argued that the Jagiellonian idea constitutes an afterlife which is still a significant factor in shaping relations among these states. Contrasting collective memories of the history of the Commonwealth continue to influence relations – this is particularly apparent in the case of bilateral Polish-Lithuanian relations. The more recent history of the experience of the Second World War also continues to impinge strongly on bilateral relations between Poland and Ukraine. Even though Poland makes no formal claim to the eastern borderlands that it lost at the end of the Second

⁷³ M. Bańkowski, "Our Efforts Have Led to NATO Presence – Foreign Minister", PAP English News Service, 15 November 2016, at <<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1839158331?accountid=11664>>, 18 December 2017.

⁷⁴ "Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast", NATO, 21 December 2007, at <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm?selectedLocale=en>, 29 December 2017.

World War, they do at times cast a baleful influence over the Polish government's relations with its eastern neighbours, particularly Ukraine. In the cases of Ukraine and Lithuania, we can observe that despite clear common interests – particularly the shared desire to limit Russian influence within the region – different interpretations of the past can limit these states' capacity for fruitful co-operation. If this situation is to be changed, it will require policy-makers in all the states which today possess territories that once belonged to the Commonwealth to be sensitive to these contrasting interpretations and make a concerted effort to transcend these particular barriers.

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