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*Janusz Onyszkiewicz*

Joining NATO in 1999 was a huge success of Poland, which put a definite end to the post-Yalta division of Europe. However, the road to accession was by no means an easy one. It entailed convincing not only countries in the West to agree on NATO enlargement, but also winning support for the project on part of the Polish politicians. One should also bear in mind that in the early 1990s there was a serious debate going on in the West about the legitimacy of existence and shape of the Alliance in the post-Cold War World. Still, at the end of the day, Poland managed to live up to the piling up challenges and on 12th March 1999 it joined NATO, together with the Czech Republic and Hungary.

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*Robert Kupiecki*

Efforts aimed at ensuring Poland's membership of NATO in 1999 proved successful thanks to democratic reforms, consent of the political forces legitimized by popular support, as well as an evolution in the position of the West. The accession process took place amidst post-Cold War transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. The article discusses the course of the process in the political and social context of Poland as well as the external developments. In both cases, choosing the Atlantic option and NATO's decision to open up membership for the democratic states of Central Europe might seem obvious and lacking any alternatives from today's perspective. However, Poland's road to the West and the road of the West (NATO) to the East was complex. The result achieved in 1999 strengthens Poland's security and provides it with a tool to shape the international environment.

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*Bogusław Winid*

NATO has turned out to be one of the most effective Alliances in the long history of Europe and the World. Built to defend common values it has proved capable of ensuring security to all its members. It has been able to maintain one of the longest periods of peace in the history of the European continent. For 15 years, Poland has been an active and significant member of this elite club. Despite winning the peace, NATO has not ceased to develop. It is constantly working to improve its structures, taking its defence capabilities to a higher level. In the discussed period, Poland has significantly contributed, both politically and militarily, to NATO's development, and at the same time managed to successfully promote its vision of collective defence as one of the main tasks of the Alliance.

## Fifteen years in NATO 99

*Mieczysław Cieniuch*

A 15-year-long presence in NATO has confirmed Poland's credibility as a member of the Organization. Poland's membership is mature, creative and sensible, whereas accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has had its impact on the structure of the personnel, command and control system, education and training as well as modernization of the Polish Army. The current shape of the Polish Armed Forces has come into being largely thanks to our presence in NATO, making them an integral and significant part of the Organization's combat potential. A broad perspective and care for coherence of the Alliance become Poland's differentiating features among other members.

## NATO post 2014 – which priorities? 117

*Andrew Michta*

NATO's strength has been tested by a decade of military operations in Afghanistan – the most immediate defining experience for NATO since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The much anticipated shutdown of NATO's ISAF in 2014 is not just symbolic, but marks a change in how NATO is going to see itself going forward. As power shifts to Asia and the crisis in MENA deepens, while Russia reasserts its influence in the “near abroad,” NATO continues to grapple with declining defense budgets amidst the Great Recession. In 2014 the Allies need to revisit the basics of what makes the transatlantic relationship the core of their mutual security; they need to affirm that NATO's traditional defence functions and global missions are not an “either/or” proposition. The transatlantic community of democratic states will need NATO even more in the coming years to serve as the linchpin of their security and defense, the preferred framework for collective action, and the foundation of our open international order.

## NATO of the next decade 131

*Andrzej Juszcak*

Over the last 65 years NATO has brought a significant contribution to building international security. On several occasions it was faced with the need to redefine its priorities. The way in which the international security environment is evolving as well as completing the ISAF operation in Afghanistan are new demands to which the Alliance needs to adapt. A need arises to redefine priorities and to build new capabilities, both at the level of the Alliance as well as national states. Such approach to transformation of the Alliance should ensure its continued commitment to carrying out tasks in a smooth and effective way in three key areas: collective defence and deterrence, crisis management and cooperative security.

## Parliamentary dimension of NATO membership 151

*Jadwiga Zakrzewska*

The North-Atlantic Assembly, established in 1995, which is currently referred to as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, is an important forum of activity for Polish MPs. Despite its independent nature, the Assembly maintains regular and close contacts with the Alliance. It provides a forum dedicated to, inter alia, strengthening ties among NATO member states, promoting parliamentary democracy as well as parliamentary oversight over the Armed Forces and security policy. The delegation consisting of Polish deputies and senators has been a permanent member of the Assembly since Poland's accession to NATO in 1999. The Polish Parliament has already hosted two plenary sessions of the Assembly which constitute a vital element of the debate about NATO and international security.

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