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What Kind of Poland? Some Remarks on the Efforts to Establish the Territory of Poland After World War I

Summary

The end of World War I brought the collapse of three multinational monarchies, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany, in Central and Eastern Europe, which offered the societies living in the region a chance to organize their own state structures.

In Poland, the political elites agreed that the western border would be demarcated at the Paris Peace Conference, while chances for a more independent resolution were seen in the east. There were two competing notions of the Polish presence in this area: the incorporationist view, promoted by nationalists and advocating the division of the so-called partitioned territories between Poland and Russia, and the federal view, under which socialists and Pilsudski supporters championed the establishment of independent Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus, which were bound to it by alliances, on the eastern fringes of the Republic. Although the final decisions at Riga were closer to the former, the territory of Poland that was outlined in both concepts raised objections from Ukrainians and Lithuanians. Germany reacted similarly to demands that Pomerania, Greater Poland and Upper Silesia be annexed to Poland, and Czechs

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opposed the annexation of Cieszyn to Silesia. These demands were only moderately strengthened by the ethnic predominance of Poles in these areas, but the final decisions were influenced by the pressure of uprisings and the goodwill of France.

The borders postulated by the nationalists and the Pilsudskiites corresponded with their vision of policy toward national minorities. The nationalists believed that Slavic minorities, who were denied the right to a separate state, should be assimilated. The Pilsudskiites, on the other hand, advocated state assimilation: they allowed religious, cultural and linguistic separateness of national minorities on condition of loyalty to the Polish state. Ultimately, however, the Second Republic failed to develop a long-term and consistent policy towards national minorities, as well as towards Poles living abroad.

Keywords

Second Polish Republic, struggle for borders, Jozef Pilsudski, Roman Dmowski, Treaty of Versailles, Treaty of Riga

Poland's regaining of independence in 1918, on the one hand, crowned the long struggle of Polish society to rebuild its state, and on the other hand, raised the pressing question of its territory. The Great War had ended, and Europe was entering the stage of defining its political identity. This problem was especially significant in Central and Eastern Europe, where the collapse of the three multinational empires, German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian, opened the way for the fulfilment of the national aspirations of the communities living in the region. The expectations of Polish elites had to align with these transformations as well. It is a complex issue: they viewed many of the problems differently, and the circumstances that need to be taken into account were just as different.

Given the structure of this volume, I felt that the best way to cover the subject matter would be to strictly adhere to the research questions posed by the editors. This will ensure the consistency of the different articles and make it possible to compare the different voices.

The literature on the subject is so abundant that simply citing it would exceed the limits of this article, so I will only refer to selected items. However, before we move on to answering the questions, we must draw attention to the circumstances that, in a fairly common perception, had to occur in order for the Polish cause to once again become the subject of discourse in international circles. We will also try to address the issue of Polish society's preparedness for independence.

The event that was necessary to raise the question of the political ambitions of Polish society was the conflict between the three partitioning powers. The Polish cause was absent from international discourse: it was commonly regarded as an internal problem of the partitioning states. Only the war lifted the Polish cause from non-existence, with the Polish elites making a decisive contribution by advocating for international recognition from the first weeks of the conflict (Wołos and Kloc, 2018).¹

At this point, it is worth noting that war is usually a catalyst for social processes. It was no different in this case: in 1914, the problem of Poland's independence mainly preoccupied the Polish elite, but by 1920, interest in this issue was much more widespread² (Mędrzecki, 2002).

It should be stressed, however, that Polish society was preparing for independence. In military terms, this meant organizing troops. They symbolized separateness and aspirations for some form of autonomy: not necessarily independence, as this was out of the question in 1914. Remarkably, they fought on both major sides in the conflict, although we should keep the proportions in mind. Tens of thousands of men passed through the Legions: the Blue Army had about 70,000 soldiers, and the Puławy Legion had about a thousand volunteers. All this was negligible compared to the millions of Poles loyally serving in the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian armies. We can see, however, what contributed to the ultimate

1 These authors also point to the participation or direct access of Polish elites to the leadership circles of the partitioning powers, and of other states.

2 Although by 1917, the legionaries were already treated as a national army.

triumph, or the regaining of independence, i.e. playing on different pianos, and not pinning hopes on only one side.

Civilian actions were, however, more important as it seems from the point of view of the events of 1918 and 1919. What I mean is the awareness of the need to prepare structures, people, and legal proposals wherever possible. Naturally, it is worth looking at this problem through the lens of the capabilities of each partition. In principle, the lands within the borders of the German state did not have such, although the Supreme People's Council and district councils, based on the local elites, tried to make preparations for the seizure of power. The situation was different in the Austrian partition: the autonomous system functioning there since the 1860s provided the grounds for an administration with a Polish clerical apparatus, Polonized public schools and universities, and extensive local self-government (see Witkowski, 2007; Grzybowski, 1959, for more details). However, despite the overproduction of intelligentsia in Galicia, so that after 1918 it could "share its human resources" with the other two former partitions, the Kingdom of Poland was key due to its location, importance and demographic potential. This is where new opportunities opened up with the issuance of the Act of November 5 by Wilhelm II and Franz Joseph I. Marek Kornat emphasizes the fundamental importance of this declaration as the beginning of a geopolitical revolution in Central and Eastern Europe through the initiation of an unsuccessful attempt to create Mitteleuropa, which also moved other nations in the region, not just the Poles (Kornat, 2016). It was considered a breakthrough for the Polish cause in the international arena not only by activists, but by people closer to Dmowski. Although they basically held off with the transfer of powers to Polish actors until the last moment, the Central States were contemplating some form of autonomy for Congress Poland in the near future. The Act of the two emperors, in fact, created a new dynamic for the Polish cause in the international arena. Domestically, it provided an opportunity to train future state and local government officials, to make lists of those who were prepared to take up employment in the state apparatus when the time came, or to draft legislation that formed the basis of the decrees issued by the Chief of State after the restoration of

independence (for more on the subject, see Mierzwa, 2016). Finally, the basic echelon of central administration was being formed from late 1917 and early 1918: the clerical apparatus of the Polish Council of Ministers was still functioning under the Regency Council and was inherited by Jędrzej Moraczewski's cabinet.

1. Turning to the fundamental issue of the territorial proposals and their sources, in Poland they were largely the result of the political elite's own reflection. Foreign proposals for the area of future Poland were always several steps back from what the Poles demanded. Even in 1918, Wilson proposed a territory similar to the Kingdom of Poland, with the Vistula River neutralized and Gdansk internationalized. Such a functioning state would, of course, be dependent on the superpowers (Pajewski, 1985). Western ideas for Polish borders were a corollary of the interests of the countries that submitted them and did not take into account the basic premise of the Polish elite: that Poland must be a country large enough to play a subjective, independent role in this part of the continent, and that its fate would not be dependent on its formidable neighbours, Germany and Russia (it did not matter here whether it would be white or red) (Kucharczyk, 2019).

In the period of the struggle for independence, there were two territorial programs: incorporative and federal. The first, promoted by national-democratic circles, had an anti-German tone, while the competing one, endorsed by Jozef Pilsudski and the pro-independence left, saw the main threat in Russia (Faryś, 2019). With regard to the western and southern borders, demands were made for the annexation to Poland of Greater Poland, Gdansk Pomerania with Danzig, part of East Prussia, Upper Silesia and Cieszyn Silesia. But in fact, both the National Democrats and the Pilsudski supporters realized that it was not Poland that would decide on the contours of the border, and that this would depend entirely on the decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference.

The differences between the two options concerned mainly the eastern question. The Socialists were in favour of creating a state composed of lands inhabited by an indisputably Polish population. In the areas east of the Congress Kingdom, they postulated the establishment of a "Union of Free Nations," a formula for Poland's alliance

with Lithuania and Belarus. Simultaneously, they firmly insisted that the Vilnius land belongs to Poland. As for the Polish-Ukrainian border, they demanded a plebiscite, which corresponded to the fundamentalist socialist concept of self-determination of peoples. In this spirit, they supported the alliance between Pilsudski and Petlura, although in principle, from the second half of 1919, voices in favour of entering into truce as soon as possible intensified in this milieu (Michalowski, 2001). The ideas of the Pilsudskiites, who had their own Chief of State and Commander-in-Chief, but lacked more elaborate political structures and had vestigial representation in the Sejm, were not far removed from Socialist ideas. For Pilsudski, territorial demands were part of the new order in Central and Eastern Europe (Zimmerman, 2022). As he wanted to stamp out Russian and German influence from the area, he stipulated the necessity of establishing a multinational, federalized structure in the region. Only it could be an entity strong enough to resist Russian imperialism (Paruch, 2001; Kornat, 2020). Pilsudski, who had an army in his command and headed foreign policy in the eastern section, attempted to implement the federalization program. One of the tools to achieve this was the Civil Administration of the Eastern Territories, established in February 1919. It would administer the successive areas occupied by the Polish Army and lay the groundwork for later federal solutions (for more on this subject, see Gierowska-Kałuża, 2003). If these were developed, detailed territorial settlements were less important, although Pilsudski could not imagine a Poland without Lviv or Vilnius. However, the entire plan collapsed under the influence of war events, and Pilsudski had little say in the final arrangements made in Riga in 1921 although he accepted the policy strategies of the Polish delegation (Faryś, 2019).

Things were viewed differently by the National Democrats. They called for the annexation to Poland of “the former governorates of Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno, part of Minsk and part of Volhynia” (Maj, 2001, p. 167). With regard to the Ukrainian, or “Ruthenian,” question, as the National Democrats called it, it was proposed that the issue be settled as soon as possible before Russia was in a position to compete with Poland; Poland would include not only the entire former Austrian partition, but also Kamianets-Podilskyi and

Proskuriv. Interestingly, as there were strong pro-Russian sentiments in this milieu, the National Democrats assumed that a peaceful settlement was possible, and that Russia, with other problems on its mind, would be willing to reach a compromise with Poland. In the end, they were the ones who had the key influence on the contours of the Polish-Soviet border, and the decisions made at the time can be considered the realization of the concepts of the National Democrats expressed by Stanisław Grabski with the words “we will take as many Byelorussians, as many Ukrainians as we can handle” (Michałowski, 2001, p. 277).

Of course, these concepts could not have been abstracted from historical contexts. Dmowski referred to them, for example, on January 29, 1919, during his speech at the Paris Peace Conference. To show that his territorial program was moderate, he juxtaposed it with the pre-partition borders. He stated “we renounce 311,007 square kilometres of the 1772 Polish territories, which we could claim back, and 16.5 million inhabitants. Instead, we demand 34,386 square kilometres with 3.3 million inhabitants outside the 1772 borders” (Wapinski, 1989). Piłsudski also drew on historical analogies, for how else to describe the proclamation he issued after the Easter expedition: “To the Inhabitants of the Former Grand Duchy of Lithuania”. Without going into the motives that guided the Commander-in-Chief, we can just say it was a proposal for a political agreement between the nations living in the North-eastern Borderlands, based on the historical experience of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Mędrzecki, 2018).

2. The role of international arbitration has already been mentioned. In the general view, this was how the Polish western borders were to be drawn up. Although Germany lost World War I, it was still a force that the Polish military could not match. While he was still imprisoned, Piłsudski declared that there was no possibility of fighting for Pomerania or the Poznań region, although he also made a caveat that if the Entente states decided to hand over something to Poland, then of course such a gift would be accepted (Gaul, 2006³). I would

3 There is a more extensive bibliography here.

therefore consider the Treaty of Versailles in terms of international arbitration. Was it received with gratitude or rather with resentment? The reception of the Paris Conference resolutions in Poland was far from enthusiastic. Criticism, however, focused on the provisions related to the minority treaty, the fact that it did not include Germany or was a form of restriction of sovereignty, and less on the territorial provisions themselves (Faryś, 2019). Rather, a measure of optimism and confidence in the successful outcome of the plebiscites tended to dominate in the case of the latter.

Two caveats must be made in assessing the arbitration. First, surrender to the decisions of the superpowers did not preclude exerting some kind of pressure on the Entente states, even though they perceived it very unfavourably, as an attempt to conduct a policy of *faits accomplis*. The Greater Poland Uprising and the Silesian Uprisings can generally be considered in these terms. Perhaps this can be seen most vividly with regard to the Third Silesian Uprising, whose goal was to induce a decision on delimitation in the plebiscite area that was favourable from the Polish point of view (Kaczmarek, 2019). This action was possible especially in the face – and this is the second caveat – of the inconsistent position of the Entente state. England and the United States defined their interests differently than did France. The Polish authorities could exploit France's favour, which, although not disinterested, is often underestimated today (Kornat, 2020).

Besides arbitration, in the sense of the Treaty of Versailles as a system, after 1919 there were also individual delimitation decisions, some of which were arbitrary and abstracted from the demands of the population, which could be expressed in a plebiscite vote. This mechanism was embedded in the decisions reached at the Spa Conference (July 1920). In exchange for a promise of mediation in talks with the Bolsheviks and possible assistance, Prime Minister Władysław Grabski agreed to submit to arbitration by Western countries in resolving the Polish–Czech, Polish–Lithuanian territorial dispute, as well as the situation of Eastern Galicia and of Gdansk. The first decision was made at the end of July 1920 in relation to Cieszyn Silesia. It was judged by the Polish side as eminently unfair and was a bad omen for the future (Kaminski, 2001; Skrzypek, 2017). This is

one reason to explain the later decision on the Żeligowski Mutiny: the conviction that arbitration would not bring anything positive to Poland was quite strong and was reinforced by the speeches of representatives of Western countries (Łossowski, 1985).

It should be noted, however, that even these grievances over arbitration settlements that were unfavourable to Poland did not change the overall assessment of the Versailles order, which they were a part of. The Treaty placed reborn Poland on the international stage and guaranteed its borders. Poland therefore had a vested interest in its continuance, and its diplomacy was rather on the defensive. Even with its tacit acceptance of disadvantageous solutions – as was the case with the Polish–Czechoslovak border – this stance would only change in the 1930s, when Polish foreign policy under Jozef Beck would become more active (for more on this, see Kornat and Wołos, 2020).

3. The clash between Poland's territorial aspirations and the expectations of its neighbours in this part of Europe was particularly obvious. On the one hand, this was a consequence of the existence of huge swaths of land, inhabited by a population of mixed nationalities or with no formed national consciousness (Chojnowski, 1979; Mędrzecki, 2018). This is not a problem pertaining only to Poles but rather a common affliction of the region. Things were not made easier by the absence of clearly defined borders or traditions. The collapse of the three monarchies meant that political boundaries had to be redefined. The public regarded the area of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as the reference point for the borders of the reborn Poland. Bearing in mind that the partitions themselves were treated as an injustice, this should be considered a fairly natural impulse. Whether it took into account the actual capabilities of the young state is another matter (Wołos, 2022).

With regard to Polish territorial claims, rather than answering the question of where Poles' ambitions clashed with those of their neighbour, it is simpler to say with whom Poland had no such disputes. The territorial agendas described above were of lesser importance. From the perspective of November 1918, Germany contested the allocation to Poland of any territories that were part of the Hohenzollern

monarchy, and in later months struggled to accept the loss of part of Greater Poland, not to mention Pomerania or Silesia. Neither did the Bolsheviks come to terms with Polish eastern border, and they treated the Riga settlement as temporary, and subject, under favourable circumstances, to revision (Wolos, 2022).

The situation was somewhat different with the aspirations of smaller neighbours that did not pose a threat to the existence of the state. The subject of dispute with Czechoslovakia was mainly the areas of Cieszyn Silesia and Spiš and Orava. Attempts at an amicable settlement, worked out in November 1918 by local actors and based on ethnic considerations, were not accepted owing to Prague's negative stance. The offensive launched by the Czechs in January 1919, in the midst of the ongoing Polish-Ukrainian war, brought them territorial gains, and was stopped due to pressure from Western countries. It was this factor that determined the subsequent settlement: originally, a plebiscite was to be held, but ultimately the arbitrary decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, which left more than 100,000 Poles on the Czech side of the border, decided (Kaminski and Zacharias, 1987).

A clash over territorial claims also ensued in Polish-Ukrainian relations. As mentioned, from the Polish perspective, Poland's future border depended on whether the Pilsudskiites or the National Democrats had the vote. But things were no different in Ukraine. Although it relinquished the disputed areas as the critical military situation deepened, this decision came far more easily to Ataman Petlura and the Transnistrian Ukrainians than to the leaders of the West Ukrainian People's Republic. For the latter, the acceptance of Pilsudski's demands in mid-1919, more modest than Dmowski's, meant giving up the Ukrainian Piedmont that East Galicia wanted to be. In the end, first the Polish-Ukrainian alliance was concluded (more on this below), and then the border in this part of the country was derived from the findings of the Treaty of Riga.

In the interwar period, Poland's relations with Lithuania were unarguably the worst. This was, of course, influenced by the territorial dispute between the two countries, which seems to have been impossible to resolve in a manner acceptable to either side. Dmowski advocated the incorporation of all of Lithuania into the Polish state.

Pilsudski allowed for the alternative of an independent Lithuania, but within purely ethnographic boundaries. The Lithuanian side made any talks conditional on Warsaw's recognition of an independent Lithuania with a capital in Vilnius. As a counter to the incorporation concept, they demanded the granting of territory with Suwałki and Białystok (Łossowski, 1985). As was the case with the Polish-Ukrainian dispute, the scales began to tilt in favour of a settlement benefiting Poland (as of April 1919). The deciding factor was mainly Pilsudski's policy of *faits accomplis*, based on military superiority, and the turn of the Polish-Bolshevik war did not ultimately change this (for more on this conflict, see Galuba, 2004). The border was decided by the so-called Żeligowski Mutiny that brought the disputed Vilnius region with the city of Vilnius under control.

The course of the Polish-Romanian border was determined without major problems. Relations between the two countries tightened under pressure from Paris, but also as a result of the weakening of "white" Russia. The cooperation led to Romanian interference in the Polish-Ukrainian war, the seizure of Pokuttia and its handover to Poland. Both sides, mainly when faced with the threat from the east, needed each other, thus the delimitation settlement became the foundation of their later alliance (Bułhak, 1973).

There was also no major trouble in establishing the border with Latvia. The disputed area (a part of the Ilūkste district with an area of about 1,500 square kilometres) following the retreat of the Polish army after Tukhachevsky's offensive in July 1920 was occupied by the Latvians, and Żeligowski's troops operating in the area in autumn 1920 stopped on the line manned by the Latvian army, thus *de facto* accepting what had happened a few months earlier (Łossowski, 1990).

It is worth adding that territorial demands that were motivated by demographic considerations coincided with other demands. When discussing Eastern Galicia or areas east of the Kingdom of Poland, the National Democrats invoked the argument of the Ukrainians' lack of state traditions, which as we know, the supporters of the federalist option questioned (Faryś, 2019). With regard to the western border, the economic rationale was also invoked. The demographic argument was moot in the case of Gdansk as the number of Poles in the city oscillated (according to optimistic estimates) around 10%. Therefore,

the economic factor was cited when making claims to Gdansk, along with the fact that the port was indispensable to Poland because of foreign trade. The economic factor also surfaced as a supporting argument for claims to Upper Silesia and Cieszyn Silesia.

Thus, as can be seen from this brief outline, the solutions adopted by Poland followed a general pattern: in the west, we conform to the decisions of the Entente, with possible strategic pressure. With that said, actions geared towards the direct interest of Western countries in a given area belonging to Poland can also be considered a form of pressure. What I have in mind is mainly the presence of capital, which lobbied for such and not other territorial settlement, or the prospects of granting economic concessions (Wolwowicz, 1995; Szmídtke, 2005).

The situation was different in the east, where Poland pursued a policy of accomplished facts, using the instrument of the army. This was done in spite of the fact that the Entente states also laid claim to decision-making in this area. The Poles, by virtue of their military superiority, were able to impose their position on the Lithuanians and Ukrainians, and the actual decisions resulted from the outcome of the main clash in this theatre of operations, i.e. the Polish-Bolshevik war.

4. The aforementioned paths for the realization of Poland's territorial aspirations did not preclude attempts to build broader coalitions of interested states. Dmowski's proposals obviously made less allowance, in the spirit of national egoism, for the possible demands of neighbouring nations. From that point of view, only the Russians could be possible partners for discussion (Farys, 2019). Hence, the question of building broader alliances could mainly apply to the eastern area and was linked primarily to the federation program. The attempts made in the spring of 1920 to build a broader coalition were part of this. The idea was to align standpoints with Finland and Estonia. The formula for such cooperation was to be the Union of the Baltic States, which would become the region's voice against both Bolshevik Russia and Germany, and the project itself was presented at a conference in Helsinki in January 1920. At the time, however, it turned out that the discrepancies between the potential counterparts

were too large: Finland did not agree with the anti-German rhetoric, Estonia wanted peace with the Bolsheviks as soon as possible, but the relations between Poland and Lithuania were the worst, as the latter saw the main threat in Warsaw rather than Moscow (Łossowski, 1995).

In practice beyond diplomatic endeavours, we can speak of two undertakings carried out by Warsaw. The first was Polish-Latvian cooperation related to the offensive on Daugavpils in January 1920. As a consequence the Lithuanians were cut off from direct contact with the Bolsheviks and Latgale was occupied by the Latvians. This cooperation, however, did not develop in the following months for the Poles expected closer military cooperation, while the Latvians were rather content with the acquisitions they had gained and sought peace with the Bolsheviks (Łossowski, 1990).

The second agreement that functioned in practice (but which had the character of a formal alliance) was the treaty with the Ukrainian People's Republic (this issue already has a very abundant literature cf. Pisuliński, 2020). Talks on Polish-Ukrainian cooperation were still underway during World War I, but took on a more tangible form after the expulsion of the troops of the West Ukrainian People's Republic beyond the Zbruch River, i.e. in the second half of 1919. They did not proceed smoothly, mainly due to the reluctance of Ukrainians to give up Eastern Galicia, but their position softened along with the deteriorating situation of the UPR in the wake of Denikin's and the Bolsheviks' offensives. Finally, in April 1920, there was a military alliance and a joint Polish-Ukrainian offensive, which ended with the capture of Kiev on May 7, 1920. The future fate of the cooperation depended on the course of the Polish-Bolshevik war, and this turned out to be unfavourable for Pilsudski's federation plans and thus for the question of Ukrainian independence. Poland was able to defend its independence, but was too weak to win Ukrainian independence as well.

The presence of Russian and Byelorussian troops on the Polish side during the Polish-Bolshevik war was of a different nature (see, for example, Karpus, 1999). It is also worth noting here the support, mostly in war supplies, given to Poland by Western countries (Mazur, 2021).

5. A separate issue is the consequences of the choices and opportunities that Poland used during the struggle for the borders. They affected how the role of national minorities was perceived in the country, and how the problem of Polish communities outside the borders of the Republic was viewed.

What policy to pursue with regard to national minorities living in Poland was influenced by the two main circles already mentioned. These ideas had to address what to do with these communities when they became citizens of the Polish state. The words of Grabski, mentioned above, illustrate the National Democratic Party's vision of nationality policy. In short, the Slavic, Belorussian and Ukrainian communities, which were denied the right to their own state, were to be assimilated, while with regard to Germans or Lithuanians, it was assumed that a policy of reciprocity would be pursued, which would take into account how the Polish population in those countries was treated. Concerning the Jews, it was envisaged that they would emigrate (for more on this, see Mich, 1994). The Pilsudskiites, on the other hand, stood for state consolidation, i.e., efforts to convince individual nationalities that the Republic is a superior value within which they would fit in while retaining the right to linguistic, cultural, religious etc. identity (Paruch, 2001). How these concepts were implemented is another matter. It is one thing that the Second Republic fell short of time, but it is another that neither concept was implemented consistently. Furthermore, they disregarded objective circumstances like the attractiveness of Poland or the aspirations of individual nationalities.

The view of Poles who resided outside Poland was even less orderly and consistent. The Poles living in the countries of the Americas or Western Europe were mainly considered in economic terms. With the huge population growth in the country, and the inability to provide work for the population, economic emigration was a natural way to relieve internal tensions (emigration projects related to the Jewish population were also part of this scheme). The Polish authorities strove to increase its scale, but the results were meagre.

As for the near abroad, the situation of Poles varied and was very complex depending on the country. In Germany, for example, the Little Treaty of Versailles was not in force, so Poles were

not subject to international protection, unlike Germans living in Poland. But Poles living in the plebiscite area of Upper Silesia, which remained part of Germany, were subject to such protection under the Upper Silesian Convention of 1922 (Polish-German Upper Silesian Convention signed in Geneva on May 15, 1922). The situation of the Polish population in Lithuania was mainly influenced by the quality of international relations between the two countries. The same was true for Czechoslovakia. In both countries the governments pursued a policy of denationalization and weakening of the Polish population. With regard to Soviet Russia (later the Soviet Union), Poland tried to take advantage of the opportunities created by the Treaty of Riga, but due to the nature of the communist system and limited tools, attempts to organize Polish education were abandoned and the country became effectively helpless in the face of the crimes committed against Poles (Iwanow, 2014).

Thus, summarizing this issue, it should be noted that the policy of the Second Polish Republic toward compatriots outside the country's borders varied greatly, whether due to the diverse reasons for which they found themselves outside the country, the political system of the country of residence or its policy toward other nationalities. As in the case of attitudes toward national minorities living in Poland, no consistent and comprehensive solutions were developed.

Both the concepts discussed and the border conflicts played different roles in later events. Embedded in the events of the Polish-Ukrainian war, the myth of the Lviv Eaglets and the Cemetery of Lviv Eaglets is still a flashpoint in mutual relations, even now in independent Polish and Ukrainian states. The struggle of Greater Poland and Silesia for becoming part of Poland is still an important element that constitutes identity mainly in the regional context. The Polish-Czech disputes of 1919-1920 became a rift in mutual relations and partly a justification for the revindication of 1938, which continued in 1945.

Concepts relating to territorial contours were, of course, revisited later. Awareness of the disintegrating importance of national minorities in the life of interwar Poland, as well as the disastrous location of the borders influenced the post-World War II decisions to some extent. The aforementioned territorial programs were also the

subject of reflection and evolution in the post-war period, as Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski referred to Pilsudski's concepts when discussing the Ukraine-Lithuania-Belarus area. In practice, a return to these experiences occurred in Polish politics after 1989.

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