

# Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy

Piotr Graczyk

*Poland has noticeably increased its activity in Arctic affairs in recent years. Although the first Polish research facilities on Svalbard were established back in the 1950s (by virtue of being a party to the Treaty concerning Spitsbergen) and the country has been involved in the Arctic environmental cooperation since its inception in the early 1990s, it was not until 2006/2007 when a policy shift towards assumption of a more ambitious role could be observed. The current Polish activity in the Arctic is motivated primarily by scientific interests, but nonetheless the region has been given a renewed attention in the Poland's foreign policy. Taking advantage of its status as a "permanent" observer to the Arctic Council (AC), Poland has keenly engaged in advancements at different international levels by introducing and supporting various initiatives within the AC and bilateral relations with Arctic and non-Arctic states as well as the European Union. This article attempts to explain the shift in Polish foreign policy towards the Arctic and how Poland, as a country without significant economic and/or strategic interests in the Arctic, has become one of the most active outside actors discussing their role in the region with the Arctic states. Furthermore, it assesses prospects for a coherent Polish polar policy.*

## Introduction

The dynamics of Arctic international relations, driven by a combination of climatic and geopolitical forces, have had a substantial impact on policy objectives of both Arctic and outside entities, in many cases leading to their (re)definition (Heininen, 2011: 5). The process of formulating new strategies has become an additional and distinct factor in shaping Arctic international environment and governance, thereby affecting the existing forms of non-Arctic engagement. Under the circumstances, various external actors, both newcomers and those who have been engaged in the Arctic for decades, have intensified their efforts to respond to these developments. A shift in foreign policies of these entities is induced primarily by economic and (geo)political interests (Major and

Steinicke, 2011). Poland's approach to the region is quite an exceptional case as it has neither of these features. Polish presence in the Arctic is based on long-standing scientific research, conducted primarily on Svalbard. The state's main interest in the region is, therefore, to secure adequate operation conditions for its scientists. Since the European Union (EU) has decided to step up its involvement in Arctic affairs, Poland has gained an additional channel to rally support for its scientific interests in the region through shaping the prospective EU Arctic policy.

This article argues that the current Polish political activity in the Arctic stems from both promotion of its scientific interests and an attempt to play the role of an intermediary state (Schroeder, 2004: 78-79) in relations between Arctic and other non-Arctic actors. Although Polish activity in Arctic affairs has been boosted in recent years, Poland does not have any officially stated Arctic (or polar) policy. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the Polish government has started to work on a more comprehensive and coherent approach to the polar regions.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the article is to summarize actions taken in this regard and to assess prospects for a future Polish polar policy. Following a brief background discussion focusing on Polish exploration and science in the Arctic involving a low political interest, attention is given to the shift in Polish foreign policy concerning the Arctic. Then, the main drivers behind an increased activity are identified and accompanied by several examples of Poland's initiatives. The article concludes with an assessment of prospects for a possible Polish polar policy. Sections pertaining to the most recent developments (since 2008) are based largely on author's personal observations as a participant of most of the events.

### **Among Pioneers – Origins of Polish Political Presence in the Arctic**

Poland has a well-established presence in the Arctic in both scientific<sup>2</sup> and political terms. The focus of this article is on Polish political involvement in the region, which, however, stems directly from the scientific one. Poland established its formal connection to the Arctic on 2 September 1931 by ratification of the Svalbard Treaty.<sup>3</sup> Besides equal rights to “the exercise and practice of all maritime, industrial, mining or commercial enterprises” (Svalbard Treaty, Art. 3), it also provides a foundation, although not explicitly stated, for scientific activities in the archipelago for its parties (Machowski, 1995: 18-19). Although there is no international convention regulating scientific activities on Svalbard,<sup>4</sup> they are well carried out based on practices and procedures elaborated throughout the years (Machowski, 1995: 20). Today, all research activities on the archipelago are coordinated by the Svalbard Science Forum, a platform created by the Norwegian government, and chaired by the Research Council of Norway.<sup>5</sup>

It is fair to say that becoming a party of the Svalbard Treaty stimulated further development of Polish polar research, what led to consolidation of the country's scientific interests in the Arctic. Consequently, a need arose to promote freedom of scientific research in the region and to improve political conditions for the integration of non-Arctic scientists in international research programs, most often sponsored by Arctic governments. In this context, Polish interest in concepts of regional cooperative structures that were proposed by Finland, Norway, and Canada (Young, 1998) came as no surprise. Involvement in international institutions, especially driven by Western states, became even more important given the dissolution of the socialist system in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the associated political situation (Graczyk, 2011: 581). Reformulated objectives of Polish foreign policy, introduced by the newly appointed non-communist minister of foreign affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski, included closer links, and eventual integration, with "the network of west European interdependencies" (Skubiszewski, 1992: 56).

However, the majority of Arctic states had also been interested in the inclusion of non-Arctic countries that significantly contributed to pollution in the region (Joenniemi, 1989: 119). Moreover, external actors conducting sound research in the Arctic could provide environmental cooperation institutions with valuable data (Nilson, 1997: 32). Therefore, Poland as the only "socialist" non-Arctic country along with the Federal Republic of Germany and Great Britain were invited as observers, when Finland initiated negotiations towards the establishment of Arctic environmental cooperation (Oude Elferink, 1992: 129; Graczyk, 2011: 579, 589; Young, 1998: 90). This bargaining process, also called the "Rovaniemi Process", led to the adoption of the Declaration on the Protection of the Arctic Environment and the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS) in June 1991 in Rovaniemi, Finland.

From the outset it was important to Poland to have links with the emerging structures that could affect science activities in the Arctic (Graczyk, 2011: 579). Despite limited capabilities to contribute financially to AEPS programs compared to Germany, Great Britain or the Netherlands (cf. Nilson, 1997: 32), Poland was an accredited AEPS observer state until the creation of the Arctic Council (AC) in 1996 and the absorption of the AEPS by the Council in 1997. The four non-Arctic states – Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Poland – which demonstrated their engagement and interest in the implementation of the AEPS, seamlessly became "permanent" observer states at the AC, however this status was officially confirmed in the declaration of the September 1998 first ministerial meeting in Iqaluit, Canada and reinforced in the Council's Rules of Procedure (Graczyk,

2011: 605). These countries were the first outside state actors to be accorded an observer status and they continue to hold it today.

Furthermore, Polish interest extended to the then emerging Barents Euro-Arctic Council/Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAC/BEAR) and Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which, along with the AC and the Nordic Council of Ministers are often referred to as the “four councils of the North”. Poland has been an observer at the BEAC since 1993, when the institution was established by the Kirkenes Declaration, again as the only non-Arctic representative of the Eastern bloc.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the CBSS is the only forum for co-operation where Poland is a full member state. This arrangement, although focused on the Baltic Sea region, involves also some Arctic states (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Russian Federation) and has clear links with the Arctic region as a neighboring and interconnected region. Involvement into these bodies should also be seen as stemming from the then-objectives of the then-foreign policy (Skubiszewski, 1991: 12).

No less important than the actual research activities in the Arctic was the Polish engagement in the formation of regional scientific co-operation structures. From the outset Poland was one of five non-Arctic states (Federal Republic of Germany, France, United Kingdom and Japan), which accompanied the Arctic countries in the process leading to the establishment of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) in 1990 (Machowski, 1993: 202). Besides IASC, the Committee on Polar Research is also a member of the European Polar Board – a part of the European Science Foundation.

To a certain extent, it may be said that the science-driven presence in Arctic cooperation structures has not been translated into greater political commitment to the regional affairs, even though the concept of including a “northern dimension” to Polish foreign policy was presented by foreign minister Stefan Meller in 2006 (Grzela, 2011: 193-94). In the age of a changing Arctic, however, the perennial regional presence, both within science and international institutions, appears to be Poland’s major asset, strengthening its position among other outside actors with an interest in the Arctic. This has opened a window of opportunity to promote Polish interests and use these diplomacy channels to develop bilateral relations with both Arctic and non-Arctic states (Graczyk, 2011: 581, 627).

### **Revitalized Interest in Arctic Affairs**

Since 2006, Polish engagement in the Arctic has gained an added impetus in the political realm. In the general view, the key reasons for this renewed interest may be derived from the attention drawn

by the publication of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) findings in 2004 and the dramatic message it conveyed to the rest of the world (Hoel, 2007: 126; Koivurova, 2009). From the Polish perspective this made the polar research even more relevant. An understanding of the changing climate in the Arctic gives a better insight into climatic processes in temperate latitudes, and thus has direct impact on responses at the national level. Having a research station in the Arctic – a barometer for global climate change – has become a useful asset and important laboratory for understanding climate processes in other regions (Jania, 2010).

Furthermore, a geopolitical debate concerning the Arctic has intensified after planting a Russian national flag on the sea bottom at the North Pole by the expedition *Arktika 2007*. Under the circumstances, many outside actors have expressed their interest in being involved in Arctic governance structures. Since the only formal mode of involvement in discussions concerning the region for external entities is to become an observer at the AC, the interest of players such as China, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and the European Union has centred on this forum (Graczyk, 2012: 278). However, after according the status to Spain in 2006, the process of admitting new observers has been brought to a halt due to the growing anxiety of the Arctic states and AC Permanent Participants (Graczyk, 2011: 606). Poland, as one of the current six state observers<sup>7</sup>, has found itself in a fairly exclusive group of countries within a hotly debated political situation in the Arctic. The reform of the Council being implemented by the Arctic states (Axworthy et al., 2012) created an opportunity for Polish diplomacy to engage in the process and advance Poland's scientific interests. To enhance a dialogue between Arctic and non-Arctic actors, the Polish foreign service undertook several initiatives, discussed below.

Since Poland has no direct economic or strategic interests in the Arctic (Osica, 2010: 7-8; Łuszczuk, 2011a: 128), it is important to identify main reasons for Polish increased diplomatic activity in the Arctic. Some authors argue that developments in the region are relevant to Polish foreign and security policy to the extent they affect its political and institutional environment (Osica, 2010: 8-10; Tarnogórski, 2009: 2). This refers primarily to cooperation within CBSS, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), which all have expressed their interest in processes above the Arctic Circle. Furthermore, Polish involvement should be seen through the prism of the Baltic Sea region, to which the Arctic is “a natural extension” (Grzela, 2011: 205), that is also politically interconnected (Osica, 2010: 9, 51).

An important factor that significantly contributed to the shift in the Polish approach towards the polar regions was an institutional enhancement within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2006 a new special post was created within the MFA's Department of Legal and Treaty Affairs to deal with the Arctic and Antarctic affairs. It later evolved to the position of "Ambassador for Polar Affairs". The reasons for that could be discerned in a growing global interest in the Arctic after the ACIA release and associated diplomatic opportunities mentioned above. Moreover, the position was meant to promote Polish scientific interests, notably when the International Polar Year 2007-2008 (IPY) was about to start.

The creation of this position, and the appointment of a former deputy minister of foreign affairs and ambassador to Denmark and Libya – Jakub T. Wolski – was a clear indication that Polish engagement in the polar regions was to be strengthened. The tasks of this position include attendance at AC and Antarctic Treaty System's meetings. Previously, these conferences had been mainly attended by ambassadors to the countries where the meeting was being held. This system suffered from lack of coordination, discontinuity and unfocused actions that prevented any policy towards polar regions to be carried out efficiently. Moreover, it was detrimental for Polish scientific interests as it had limited access to the AC Working Groups, which had been conducting important research projects to understand changes in the North and produced knowledge that laid foundations for policy developments. The newly appointed ambassador was also supposed to improve Polish participation in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM).<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, a particularly important driver for Poland's renewed interest in Arctic affairs has been an increased engagement of the EU institutions in debate on Arctic governance and its goal to become an observer at the AC. The subsequent documents of the Commission (2008), the Council (2009) and the Parliament (2008 and 2011) outlined the general, however not entirely coherent (Wegge, 2012: 22-24), direction and principle of gradual development of the EU Arctic policy. Poland supports the general approach stemming from these statements and seeks to be involved in the policy making process (Łuszczuk, 2011b). For instance, it proved to be critical to enrich EU institutions' understanding of and sensitivity to Arctic governance issues (Wegge, 2012: 20). Poland, along with other EU member states that are also AC member states<sup>9</sup> and observers, may provide the EU institutions with essential knowledge, expertise and its own experience with the AC.

## **From Scientific Contributor to Player in Arctic Diplomacy?**

Today, the Stanislaw Siedlecki Polish Research Station (PRS)<sup>10</sup> in Hornsund, operated by the Institute of Geophysics, PAS, is considered the most important Polish asset in the Arctic. The combination of the Station's location within the South Spitsbergen National Park and long-lasting permanent year-round activity provides unique conditions for continued and long-term observations and studies on biodiversity and climate change.<sup>11</sup> These features have been recognized by scientists from multiple countries and by different institutions such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which have chosen Hornsund as their permanent measuring facilities for aerosols levels and ozone layer.

The PRS is one of two permanently manned stations of the European Union member states, along with the joint French-German Arctic Research Base AWIPEV in Ny-Ålesund<sup>12</sup>, and the only non-Arctic state station outside the international scientific research and monitoring base operated by the Norwegian government-driven company 'Kings Bay'. Accordingly, it is fair to conclude that Poland holds a unique scientific position among the non-Arctic actors on Svalbard. This is further reflected in the Svalbard Science Forum, where the PRS is represented separately as the only non-Arctic state facility. The other example of this distinct position is the special Agreement between the Governor of Svalbard and the Committee on Polar Research of the PAS concerning the use of six huts owned by the Norwegian Government.<sup>13</sup>

The contribution of Polish research institutes, headed up by the PAS, and Polish scientists in foreign research centers, although already substantial, is increasing and expanding to other fields, such as the social sciences. Many international projects involving multinational research teams are ongoing in the Polish Polar Station in Hornsund. These activities were boosted during the IPY 2007-2008, which Polish scientists actively engaged in.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Poland actively engages in the Sustaining Arctic Observation Network (SAON) what is reflected by a relatively wide Polish representation in the SAON Board.<sup>15</sup> A clear sign of the Polish position and esteem Poland has earned in polar research is the opportunity to host the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW) in Cracow, in April 2013.

Based on these scientific activities, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken preliminary steps to build a more coherent national approach to the rapidly changing situation in the Arctic within relevant institutions. To this end, the MFA established a special Polar Task Force involving both government officials and scientists actually working in the polar regions to confer on the key issues related to the polar dimension in Polish foreign policy and articulation of central priority points. This

close interaction between science and policy is arguably the most striking feature of the renewed approach to Polish engagement in high latitudes.

Accordingly, Poland seems to be assuming a more ambitious position that might give it greater political leverage in the European and global scenes. Such a multifaceted approach is reflected in the “four pillars” of the Polish approach to the Arctic presented by Under Secretary of State Maciej Szpunar (2011), comprising: 1) recognition that existing international legal framework, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the principle of freedom of scientific research, apply in the Arctic; 2) active engagement in development of the EU Arctic policy, ensuring inclusion of Polish interests; 3) cooperation with regional institutions and organizations, primarily the Arctic Council; and 4) public diplomacy (Borkowski, 2011). From the Polish viewpoint it is essential to further develop the Arctic governance system to be able to respond to the growing interest in these questions, particularly in reference to shipping and utilization of natural resources. According to the Polish position, the Arctic Council is the most appropriate place to discuss these questions (Borkowski, 2010; Szpunar, 2011), therefore it should be further strengthened to efficiently tackle them. Prospectively, it can be said that Poland’s efforts to promote cooperation and compliance with international law originate in the country’s security policy. Given the immediate contiguity of the Baltic region to the Arctic, it is essential for Poland to keep this area stable and peaceful (Osica, 2010: 9; Grzela, 2011: 205).

Specifically, Poland has also formulated its policy priorities pertaining to the AC, and it seems reasonable to perceive them as an integral part of the Polish stance on the Arctic. Overall, these considerations concentrate on participation of Polish scientists in the AC working groups activities<sup>16</sup>, that could be further enhanced. Furthermore, Poland seeks more opportunities to be involved with AC projects and underscores freedom of scientific research as the principle that should be a foundation of the Council’s work. Finally, in the country’s view, it is essential to maintain and develop propitious relations between the Arctic states and observers (Kremer, 2008). Poland has been fairly active in putting these points into action.

For instance, Polish diplomats advocated for an introduction of Deputy Ministers Meetings (DMM) between Ministerial Meetings as a new political level within the AC, and extending the invitation to deputy ministers from observer states. This was partly successful as Polish undersecretaries of state participated in two such meetings – the unofficial meeting in Tromsø in May 2008 (deputy minister Andrzej Kremer) and the first AC Deputy Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen in May 2010 (deputy



minister Jan Borkowski). This formula has not been followed up by the Swedish Chairmanship, as observer deputy ministers were not invited to the DMM in Stockholm in May 2012. The second important enterprise was the AC observers meeting in Warsaw on 26 March 2010 organized to freely discuss non-Arctic states concerns with then Danish SAO Chair Ambassador Lars Møller.<sup>17</sup> The meeting was attended by representatives of all the observer states (both permanent and ad-hoc) as well as the European Commission (Graczyk, 2011: 625-628).

From a Polish foreign policy perspective, the EU Arctic policy concept may be perceived as one of several levels of Polish involvement in Arctic affairs. The EUs main objectives correspond closely to Polish priorities in the region, what has opened a window of opportunity for interplay to develop consistent policies and seek synergy in pursuing common interests (Łuszczuk, 2011b: 26).

This may make the Polish voice better heard and provide the country with valuable instruments to secure its interests by aligning them with or including them in EU Arctic policy. For instance, one of the conclusions of the EU Parliament's (EP) resolution from 20 January 2011, emphasizing a need for full access for international teams of scientists to carry out research in this area, was proposed by the Polish Member of the EP, Jarosław Wałęsa (Łuszczuk, 2011b: 22; Grzela, 2011: 203).

Moreover, in November 2011, during Poland's first ever presidency of the EU Council, Poland organized a working meeting of senior MFA officials from all of the EU member states (though not all attended) to discuss EU Arctic policy. It aimed at increasing dynamics of policy development at the member states' level through better coordination. The meeting was followed by a briefing for the Arctic states about the outcomes (Senior Polish MFA Official, personal communication, December 14, 2011). In addition, Poland has officially supported EU efforts to be accorded AC observer status on different occasions, including at AC meetings. These examples clearly illustrate Poland's efforts to play an active role in developing and influencing the EU Arctic policy (Grzela, 2011: 200; Osica, 2010: 8).

To some extent, Poland has a comparative advantage over other AC observer states due to continuous representation at nearly all the AC meetings<sup>18</sup> since 2006 by Ambassador Jakub T. Wolski. This exceptional standing among state observers enriches understanding of developments and heightens the sense of moods and attitudes among the Arctic actors. Yet another key factor in increased Polish diplomatic activity in the Arctic is the highly entrepreneurial role played by Ambassador J. T. Wolski, who succeeded not only in elevating Arctic issues higher in the foreign

policy agenda, but also in consolidating the Polish scientific community from multiple fields to provide the MFA with their expertise on developments in polar regions.

The importance of Arctic developments to outside players such as the EU, or Asian states striving to obtain an observer status at the AC, has generated further favorable circumstances for the Polish foreign service by opening new avenues to build special relationships with this particular group of actors. It is submitted that given Poland's limited capabilities compared to other external entities, it has been able to specialize as an intermediary state in regional relations. To play any role in such settings, medium or small states such as Poland have to concentrate on areas in which they have a comparative advantage (Schroeder, 1994: 125; 1998: 3-5). Accordingly, Polish diplomats seem to be making use of their well-established and non-controversial position in the region to act as advocates for other non-Arctic entities, which gives them an added advantage in relations with non-Arctic states and extra diplomatic leverage in both the AC and the EU. In some cases non-Arctic states sought the opportunity to consult on Arctic issues with Poland during official visits, which may suggest that the country is perceived as a pacesetter in regard to involvement of outside actors (Senior Polish MFA Official, personal communication, October 20, 2010; Graczyk, 2011: 581).

Initiatives at the multilateral level are underpinned and complemented by a network of bilateral relations with the Arctic states. Poland holds consultations on Arctic affairs with respective northern countries at different diplomatic levels. The highest form of interaction to date was a letter from Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski to his Swedish counterpart Carl Bildt on strengthening of mutual cooperation in the Arctic. This diplomacy channel is of particular importance for the country's Arctic related foreign policy as it allows it to survey Arctic states' positions, bridge gaps in knowledge and explore potential areas for cooperation and engagement.

Increased activity within public diplomacy completes the picture of Poland's renewed and broadened interest in Arctic affairs. The Polish MFA has supported various conferences and seminars<sup>19</sup> aimed at discussing common misperceptions and misunderstandings of the situation in the Arctic. The important thing to note in this connection is that at two events the Polish government was represented at the relatively high level of deputy foreign ministers, who at each occasion presented main Polish interests and goals in the Arctic.

## **A Polish Arctic Policy?**

Long-standing scientific activity is a crucial foundation of Polish presence and foreign policy in the Arctic, which might be characterized as a continuous exchange between science and diplomacy, with primacy on the former one. This aptly illustrates the Polish approach to polar affairs, which is based entirely on the scientific interests and thus does not involve either controversial or challenging issues in relations with the Arctic states (Eyres, 2010) nor excessive ambitions with regard to Arctic politics.

Given the Arctic states' reluctance towards external entities, notably within the AC, it seems pertinent to build confidence, transparency and mutual understanding. One way to achieve this is to define the role(s) and formulate statements of interest. The processes unfolding in the Arctic may affect Poland's political, security, and institutional environments (Osica, 2010: 8; Łuszczuk, 2011b: 1) creating a need to adopt an adequate position. However, it is important that such a document would not be just a passive and derivative policy built on the priorities of organizations such as EU and NATO, but rather an active and conscious policy process meeting Polish capabilities and aspirations. Not taking action would likely result in Poland losing direct influence on the factors and processes shaping its international environment (Łuszczuk, 2011a: 130). Moreover, a well-defined policy might facilitate carrying out coherent and coordinated actions by various Polish institutions. In the latter context, the concept of a Polish polar policy in relation to scientific research in the Arctic and Antarctic is not entirely new and can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the Council of Ministers passed a number of resolutions establishing a legal framework for Polish research activity in polar regions (Machowski, 1993: 205).

Over the past four years<sup>20</sup> a great deal of effort has been made to develop a Polish approach to the polar regions. A closer inspection of official statements (Kremer, 2008; Borkowski, 2010, 2011; Szpunar, 2011) reveals that the issue and focus areas have varied during this period. Nevertheless, they now seem to have crystallized and may well become central points in an officially formulated document in the near future. Importantly, it will most likely cover both polar regions, bearing in mind all the differences between them (Szpunar, 2011). Key aspects of a possible Polish polar policy will include freedom of scientific research; role of observers in the AC; EU efforts to be granted Observer status; compliance with international law and norms; and development of the EU Arctic Policy and public diplomacy (Kremer 2008; Borkowski 2010, 2011; Szpunar, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

When assessing Polish engagement in Arctic affairs, it is important to set it in a wider context of general non-Arctic involvement in Arctic research and political institutions. Specifically, Poland's capabilities and resources need to be compared to other actors' potential to act in different issue-areas. Poland as the only state from the former Soviet bloc (excluding Russia) maintains its permanent research stations in the Arctic (Svalbard) and has been involved in regional institutions (AC and BEAC) from the outset. Moreover, the crucial and now also inherent dimension of Polish interest in Arctic affairs is the EU Arctic policy that is currently under development. Poland's political engagement in the Arctic takes place at the following levels: 1) Arctic regional (within the AC); 2) Arctic sub-regional (within the BEAC/BEAR); 3) European regional (within the EU); and 4) bilateral (with Arctic and involved non-Arctic states), and includes various issue-areas ranging from promotion of freedom of the scientific research to enhancement of stability and security in the North.

Although Poland's activity is often constrained by limited capacity, the country seems to compensate for that by an increased number of diplomatic actions and initiatives that allow for contributing to the ongoing debates on some of the most salient issues. Poland starts to convert its traditional research based activity to political gains. To certain extent it emerges from the necessity to protect its scientific interests, but also aims at strengthening the position in regional and European affairs. In this particular instance, a lack of any claims and interests related to shipping and exploitation of natural resources may be considered as an advantage in the perception of Poland as an advocate for closer cooperation between Arctic and outside actors that can contribute to regional stability, especially by alleviating the highly politicized and vexed question of non-Arctic involvement. It does not mean, however, that Poland postulates a complete opening of the Arctic for all the actors, who may discern their own interests in the region. On the contrary, Poland emphasizes the importance of understanding the rules that apply in the Arctic Council and the region, and its policy priorities seem to be in line with the Arctic states' stances in this regard.

Polish policy is focused on practical and actual problems of the Arctic and does not engage in discussions on matters that are not within its range. This may be perceived as a good understanding of the processes and phenomena occurring in the region, especially when it comes to concerns being raised by the indigenous peoples organizations in reference to observer status in the AC (AAC, 2007; ICC, 2010). Poland also seems to be considering these developments in relation to organizations to

which it is a member. Based on scientific capacity and knowledge that have been built for decades (Grzela, 2011: 196), Polish policy makers will have more diplomatic leverage in shaping institutional policies. A prospective EU Arctic policy congruent with Polish interests may facilitate their promotion in Arctic institutions.

Overall, it is fair to say that Polish involvement in the Arctic is based on a realistic estimation of potential and felicitous utilization of strengths and assets (Łuszczuk, 2011a: 132), which makes the country's diplomatic actions in reference to the Arctic relatively effective. The Polish approach to the polar regions seems to have been developed in a cautious, but ambitious manner, aiming at both securing the country's scientific interests and seeking opportunities to strengthen relations with Arctic states through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

## Notes

1. Poland is involved in both polar regions. The state holds a consultative status to the Antarctic Treaty since 1977 and maintains the Antarctic Polish Station Henryk Arctowski in the Admiralty Bay, King George Island since 1977. In the Arctic it has a "permanent" observer status at the Arctic Council (since the inception of the forum in 1996, officially confirmed in 1998) and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) - since 1993. Polish research institutes maintain several research stations on the Spitsbergen island (Svalbard Archipelago), and the oldest and biggest one among them - the Stanislaw Siedlecki Polish Polar Station at Hornsund - is operated year round.
2. For more information on Polish exploratory and scientific activities in the Arctic from the 19th to 21st century see: Machowski, 1993: 203-206; Barr, 1985; Birkenmajer, 2008, Eyres, 2010; Puczko, 2007.
3. Treaty between Norway, The United States of America, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Ireland and the British overseas Dominions and Sweden concerning Spitsbergen, signed in Paris 9th February 1920 [hereinafter the Svalbard Treaty]. It entered into force on 14 August 1925. 'Svalbard' is the name given by Norway to the entire archipelago, while 'Spitsbergen' is a name of its largest island.
4. Article 5 of the Treaty stipulates conclusion of conventions "laying down the conditions under which scientific investigations may be conducted" in the archipelago. There is, however, no convention regulating scientific activities on Svalbard.
5. The Svalbard Science Forum may be now considered a substitution for convention on scientific activity stipulated by the Svalbard Treaty (cf. Machowski 1995, 20).
6. Other observers are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Great Britain and USA.

7. The other states accorded this status are: France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Spain.
8. Poland hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in 2002, in Warsaw.
9. There are three EU member states among the AC Member States: Denmark, Finland, Sweden. Two further Arctic states, Norway and Iceland are closely interconnected within the European Economic Area. Moreover, Iceland applied for the EU membership in July 2009. Greenland left the European Economic Community in 1985, but has a special relationship with the EU as one of the Overseas Countries and Territories. For instance, Greenlanders have EU citizenship.
10. For a history of the station and Polish expeditions to Svalbard see: Puczko 2007. There are also five seasonal Polish stations on Spitsbergen maintained by universities from Wrocław, Lublin, Poznań, Toruń and Kraków.
11. Comprehensive information about activities carried out in Hornsund can be found at the station's website: [http://hornsund.igf.edu.pl/index\\_en.php](http://hornsund.igf.edu.pl/index_en.php).
12. British, Dutch and Italian stations operate seasonally and are not permanently manned. The same apply to Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian stations. Thus, Polish and German-French stations are the only year-round ones among the non-Arctic states. See: [http://www.kingsbay.no/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=127&Itemid=118](http://www.kingsbay.no/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=127&Itemid=118).
13. The Agreement is available under this link:  
[http://www.kbp.pan.pl/images/stories/pliki/4268\\_001.pdf](http://www.kbp.pan.pl/images/stories/pliki/4268_001.pdf)
14. For a brief overview of Polish activities under the IPY 2007-2008 see:  
[http://classic.ipy.org/national/HAIS%206\\_Jan09/HAIS-6%20E%208%203%20Poland.pdf](http://classic.ipy.org/national/HAIS%206_Jan09/HAIS-6%20E%208%203%20Poland.pdf)
15. For information about the SAON Process see: <http://www.arcticobserving.org/background>.  
See also: <http://www.arcticobserving.org/board/board-members>
16. Polish scientists are engaged primarily in the workings of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), e. g. the „Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost” (SWIPA) project.
17. For press release about the meeting see:  
<http://www.msz.gov.pl/Warsaw,Meeting,of,Arctic,Council,Observer,States,34660.html>.
18. Except one SAO meeting in Ilulissat in April 2010 because of the volcanic ash cloud from Iceland.
19. For instance, the first ever conference on new processes developing in the North entitled “On Top of the World – Addressing Challenges of the Arctic Region” was organized by the Danish and Norwegian Embassies in Warsaw and the Polish think-tank DemosEuropa, with support from the Polish MFA in March 2010. The event was attended by several AC Senior Arctic Officials and experts from the Arctic states and Poland. A year later, in March 2011, another seminar “A More Accessible Arctic: Myths, Facts and Issues Ahead” was held at the Embassy of Canada in Warsaw as a joint project of the Canadian diplomatic post and the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). For a press release see:  
<http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/poland-pologne/highlights-faits/Arctic.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>
20. For the first time Polish policy priorities within the AC and in the Arctic were publicly stated in May 2008 in Tromsø, Norway by undersecretary of state Andrzej Kremer.

## References

- AAC. (2007, March). Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Arctic Council: A Discussion Paper. *Arctic Athabaskan Council*. Retrieved (05.12.12) from, [http://ac.npolar.no/filearchive/AAC\\_Arctic\\_Council\\_Future\\_Dec\\_2006.pdf](http://ac.npolar.no/filearchive/AAC_Arctic_Council_Future_Dec_2006.pdf)
- Axworthy, T. S., T. Koivurova, & W. Hasanat (Eds). (2012). *The Arctic Council: its place in the future of Arctic Governance*. Toronto: Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program & the University of Lapland.
- Barr, W. (1985). Imperial Russia's Pioneers in Arctic Aviation. *Arctic*. 38(3), 219-230.
- Birkenmajer, K. (2008). Editorial - The journal Polish Polar Research – a vivid record of the Polish and international bi-Polar scientific activity. *Polish Polar Research*. 29(1), 3-4.
- Borkowski, J. (2010, May 27). Statement at the Arctic Council Deputy Ministerial Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Borkowski, J. (2011, February 21). Odpowiedź sekretarza stanu w Ministerstwie Spraw Zagranicznych - z upoważnienia ministra - na interpelację nr 20265 w sprawie roli i miejsca Arktyki w polityce zagranicznej Polski (Response of the secretary of state in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – on behalf of Minister – to MEP question no. 20265 on the role and place of the Arctic in Poland's foreign policy). Retrieved (01.7.12) from, <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/IZ6.nsf/main/5227F2FE>
- Eyres, H. (2010, February 20). Exploration or exploitation? *Financial Times*. Retrieved (05.3.12) from, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/48713966-1ce5-11df-aef7-00144feab49a.html>
- Graczyk, P. (2011). Observers in the Arctic Council – evolution and prospects. *The Yearbook of Polar Law*. 3, 575-633.
- Graczyk, P. 2012. The Arctic Council Inclusive of Non-Arctic Perspectives: seeking a new balance. In Axworthy, T. S., T. Koivurova, and W. Hasanat (Eds). *The Arctic Council: its place in the future of Arctic Governance* (pp. 261-305). Toronto: Munk-Gordon Arctic Security Program & the University of Lapland.
- Grzela, J. (2011). Rola i miejsce Arktyki w polityce zagranicznej Polski (The role and place of Arctic in the Polish foreign policy). In R. Czarny (Ed.). *Daleka Północ w globalizującym się świecie* [Special Issue]. *Studia Humanistyczno – Społeczne*. 5, 183-206.
- Heininen, L. (2011). Arctic Strategies and Policies: Inventory and Comparative Study. The Northern Research Forum & the University of Lapland.
- ICC. (2010, February). The Role and Application Process of Observers in the Arctic Council. Views from the Inuit Circumpolar Council. *Inuit Circumpolar Council* (Draft).
- Jania, J. (2010, March 26). *Statement at the meeting of Arctic Council Observer States*. Warsaw, Poland.
- Joenniemi, P. (1989). Competing images of the Arctic: a policy perspective. In O. R. Young (Ed.), Arctic Environmental Cooperation [Special Issue]. *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, XII(3), 111-122.
- Koivurova, T. (2009). Limits and possibilities of the Arctic Council in a rapidly changing scene of Arctic governance. *Polar Record*. 46(2), 146–157.
- Kremer, A. (2008, May). *Statement at the Deputy Ministers Meeting*. Tromsø, Norway.
- Machowski, J. (1993). IASC as legal framework of international scientific cooperation in the Arctic. *Polish Polar Research*. 14(2), 177-207.
- Machowski, J. (1995). Scientific activities on Spitsbergen in the light of the international legal status of the archipelago. *Polish Polar Research*, 16(1-2), 13-35.

- Major, C. & Steinicke, S. (2011). EU Member States Perceptions of the Security Relevance of the High North (Working Paper FG02/FG03-WP No 4/5). Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Retrieved (10.2.12) from, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/wp\\_mjr\\_ste\\_Geonor\\_Oktober\\_2011.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/wp_mjr_ste_Geonor_Oktober_2011.pdf)
- Łuszczuk, M. (2011a). Uwarunkowania polskiej polityki zagranicznej wobec regionu Arktyki (The conditions for the development of the Polish foreign policy towards the Arctic). In A. Jarosz, K. Olszewski (Eds.), *Polityka zagraniczna III RP. 20 lat po przełomie. Tom I: Koncepcje, bezpieczeństwo, kwestie prawne i polonijne* (121-134). Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika (Nicolaus Copernicus University Press).
- Łuszczuk, M. (2011b). Propozycje założeń stanowiska strony polskiej wobec dokumentów unijnych dotyczących prawno międzynarodowej i politycznej problematyki rejonu Arktyki (Study prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, February/March 2011).
- Nilson, H. R. (1997). Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS): Process and organization, 1991-97. An assessment. *Rapportserie* No. 103. Oslo: Norwegian Polar Institute.
- Osica, O. (2010). The High North as a New Area of Cooperation and Rivalry [Special Issue]. *Przegląd Natoliński*. I(4), 3-54.
- Oude Elferink, A. G. (1992). Environmental Protection in the Arctic - the Rovaniemi Process. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*. 24(3), 128-130.
- Puczko, M. (2007). 50 Years of the Hornsund Polish Polar Station (Spitsbergen, Svalbard). Warszawa: NAVIGA.
- Schroeder, P. W. (1994). Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory. *International Security*. 19(1), 108-148.
- Schroeder, P. W. (1998). Making a Necessity of Virtue: The Smaller State as Intermediary Body. *Austrian History Yearbook*. XXIX(part 1), 1-18.
- Schroeder, P. W. (2004). *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Skubiszewski, K. (1991). Sejm Exposé by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the RP, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Warsaw, 26 April 1990. *Recueil de Documents*. 2(1991). Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs.
- Skubiszewski, K. (1992). The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Poland in 1991. Sejm Exposé of the Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Warsaw, 27 June 1991. *Recueil de Documents*. 1992/XLVIII. Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs.
- Svalbard Treaty. 1920). Treaty concerning the Archipelago of Spitsbergen, The United States of America, Great Britain and Ireland and the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Sweden, February 9, 1920, T.S. 41. In *League of Nations. (1920). Treaty Series. Publication of Treaties and International Engagements Registered with the Secretariat of the League of Nations*. 2(1), 7-19. Retrieved (05.8.12) from, <http://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/lon/volume%202/v2.pdf>
- Szpunar, M. (2011, February 24). *Wystąpienie Podsekretarza Stanu Pana Macieja Szpunara na polsko-kanadyjskiej konferencji arktycznej* (Speech presented at the joint Polish-Canadian conference "A More Accessible Arctic: Myths, Facts and Issues Ahead"). Warsaw, Poland.
- Tarnogórski, M. (2009). Arctic Claims—Political and Legal Aspects. *Bulletin*, 21(21), 41-42.



- Wegge, N. (2012). The EU and the Arctic: European foreign policy in the making. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*. 3(1/2012), 6-29.
- Young, O. (1998). *Creating Regimes: Arctic accords and international governance*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.