

Ninety Years Since the Coup of Piłsudski

The Strategy of the Intermarium—Part 3

The Intermarium and Poland's integration into the US war alliance against Russia

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1 June 2016

[Part One](#) | [Part Two](#) | [Part Three](#) | [Part Four](#)

May 12 to 14 marks the 90th anniversary of the coup by Józef Piłsudski in Poland with which the Polish bourgeoisie tried to save its rule from the threat of socialist revolution. Today, he is being idealized by large sections of the Polish bourgeoisie and the US imperialist elite.

In large measure, this is bound up with the increasing popularity of his conception of the Intermarium, a pro-imperialist alliance of right-wing nationalist regimes throughout Eastern Europe that was primarily directed against the Soviet Union. The resurgent interest in the Intermarium has been bound up with the increasing drive toward a new world war which, as the ICFI stated in its resolution "Socialism and the Fight Against War," has been accompanied by a revival of geopolitics among the ideologists of imperialism.

This series reviews the history of the Intermarium, the main basis of which emerged in the period leading up to World War I, as a bourgeois nationalist antipode to the United Socialist States of Europe that were proposed by Leon Trotsky.

This is the third in a four-part series. Part I was posted on May 31 and Part 2 on June 1.

Poland and the US encirclement of Russia since 1991

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991 and the destruction of the Stalinist states in Eastern Europe, the Polish state again came to play a strategic role in the calculations of imperialist strategy vis-à-vis Russia and in Eastern Europe more generally. Now, the central imperialist power to which the majority of the Polish bourgeoisie oriented itself, whatever political divisions existed over foreign policy, was the United States. Just as in the interwar period against the Soviet Union, Poland has become a central bulwark against Russia in Eastern Europe for world imperialism.

While the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe opened up vast resources of labor power and raw materials to world imperialism, it has not yet brought them under its full control. Over the past quarter century, the United States has tried systematically to further encircle Russia, militarily and politically. The aim is to install a puppet regime completely obedient to Washington by a forced regime change or, if necessary, war.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in 2004 during the unfolding "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine:

The first Iraq war in 1991 already undermined to a large extent the influence of Moscow in the Middle East. The same process took place in the Balkans following the war on Serbia in 1999. In 2001, in the context of the Afghanistan invasion, the US established military bases for the first time in former Soviet republics and emerged as a presence in Central Asia. Since then, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and to some extent Azerbaijan have allied themselves to the US. One year ago, they helped lift a rabidly pro-Western regime to power in Georgia. In Europe, most members of the former Warsaw Pact, including the former Baltic Soviet republics, have now joined NATO and the European Union. Should Ukraine now switch to the Western camp, Russia would be largely isolated.

These policies were to a significant extent influenced by the conceptions of the Intermarium. Within the United States, a section of the ruling class has long advocated a revival of the Intermarium. A crucial role has been played by Polish-American policy makers, chief among them Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the most influential figures in the American foreign policy establishment. As he himself stressed in a keynote address opening of the Center of Eastern Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in 2003, his geopolitical thinking owed much to the conceptions of the Promethean League.

According to Brzezinski, the central goal of the Center at the CSIS was to reestablish ties with Poland and make use of Warsaw's historic connections with elites throughout Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Brzezinski also maintained a correspondence with Jerzy Giedroyc from the 1960s to the 1990s and financially supported his publication, *Kultura*. As foreign policy adviser to the Carter administration in the 1970s, Brzezinski was one of the chief architects of the US policy to support nationalist movements in the USSR to foster its disintegration.

The work most strongly reflecting the influence of Promethean ideas is Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard* from 1997. Echoing Piłsudski's considerations when invading Ukraine in 1920, Brzezinski wrote:

Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.

Further, Brzezinski formulated his strategic vision for US policy:

In the short run, it is in America's interest to consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia. That puts a premium on maneuver and manipulation in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy, not to mention the remote possibility of any one particular state seeking to do so. By the middle term, the foregoing should gradually yield to a greater emphasis on the emergence of increasingly important but strategically compatible partners who, prompted by American leadership, might help to shape a more cooperative trans-Eurasian security system. Eventually, in the much longer run still, the foregoing could phase into a global core of genuinely shared political responsibility.

While often fighting against significant opposition, Brzezinski has been far from alone with his ideas. According to ex-US secretary of state Robert Gates, Dick Cheney, one of the chief criminals behind the Iraq war, had intended to break up the Soviet Union along ethnic lines in 1991. Gates wrote:

When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, Dick wanted to see the dismantlement not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world.

One scholar wrote in a recent study that just as the Intermarium was never an official policy in Poland, it has never been an official policy in the US. However, sections of the ruling establishment have been supporting it for many years. In addition to Brzezinski, this includes Madeleine Albright, secretary of state in 1997-2001, and Alexander Haig, who was secretary of state under Ronald Reagan and supreme allied commander for Europe, in charge of US and NATO troops in Europe. While the US ruling class has been divided over whether or not to pursue the "Promethean project," it has clearly helped shape US foreign policy over the past decades.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, the encirclement of Russia is an integral part of the US strategy for world domination, in which the territories that used to be part of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' state play a central role. In the language of geopolitics, they constitute largely what is termed "Eurasia," a concept shaped by the British imperial strategist Halford Mackinder in the early 20th century. As Mackinder argued, control of Eurasia was central to control of the world. Within this framework, the states constituting the suggested Intermarium-alliance occupy a strategic role.

For US imperialism, the fate of Eastern Europe and Russia and the strategy of the "Intermarium" are subordinate to the broader goal of world domination. In order to achieve this, the so-called Eurasian landmass is considered crucial. As Brzezinski put it:

Ever since the continents started interacting politically, some five hundred years ago, Eurasia has been the center of world power. ... [I]t is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America.

In Brzezinski's words,

Eurasia is the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played.

Throughout the past quarter of a century, Poland has played a key role in implementing these policies. The US was the key driving force behind the admission of Poland and the Baltic States into NATO. It enthusiastically supported their accession to the European Union (EU), hoping, not without reason, that they would form an important pillar of US foreign policy in Europe, particularly as a counterweight to the EU's dominant imperialist powers, Germany and France. In return, Poland has been the main pillar of NATO military expansion to Russian borders. Warsaw has supported the build-up of the nuclear missile shield that is directed against Russia and has sent troops supporting the US imperialist invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Poland has spent more on its military than all other countries that joined NATO since 1989 combined. Poland's drastic militarization was made possible not least of all thanks to the United States. Since 1996, the year before Poland joined NATO, the total US government military sales to the Polish government have been worth some \$4.7 billion, according to a report by the Congressional Research Service from March 2016.

Moreover, Poland has been a central hub for the networks associated with the "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia and for the support of the pro-Western opposition movement in Belarus. All of these movements for "democracy" are infiltrated not only by various secret services but are also closely intertwined with the local far-right movements, many of which have historic ties to the "Promethean project."

Jerzy Giedroyc, who remained politically active throughout the 1990s and died only in 2000, has become one of the greatest influences on Polish foreign policy. In 2005, the Polish Sejm declared 2006 the "Year of Jerzy Giedroyc" and celebrated his ideas by referring to the recent US-backed "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, which received substantial support from the Polish government. In its official resolution, the Sejm stated:

The breakthrough achieved in Polish-Ukrainian relations during the "Orange Revolution" in Kiev and the reactions of Poles to the Ukrainian struggle for the right to self-determination and democratic elections number among the Editor's [Giedroyc's] real and most resounding victories.

When it was in government for the first time, from 2005 to 2010, the right-wing nationalist Party of Law and Justice (PiS) undertook numerous initiatives to build up military and political networks and cooperate with Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, and the states of the Visegrad group (Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic). President Lech Kaczyński (PiS), who died in a plane crash in 2010, was well known for his aspirations to revive the Intermarium. In this, he had an ally in the Georgian president, Mikhail Saakashvili, who was brought to power by the US-backed color revolution in 2003. To underline their commitment to Prometheanism, on November 22, 2007, both presidents dedicated a statue of Prometheus in Tiflis.

Paul Globe from the Institute of World Politics hailed Warsaw's policies in an article, entitled "Prometheanism Reborn," writing:

First, Warsaw continues to promote democratic change and a Western rather than Moscow orientation in the other countries

around the periphery of Russia. ... Second, it has become the leader of what might for want of a better term be called “the Baltic-Nordic caucus” within the West, a grouping of countries led by Poland and Estonia who want to ensure that the northeastern portion of Europe is more closely tied to the West. ... And third, Poland has become even more important as a center for the study of the peoples and politics of Eurasia, not only by attracting scholars and journalists from east and west as the pre-war Promethean League did but also, again recapitulating the earlier experience, conducting research and issuing publications that are helping to define how each side views the other.



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