

ESSAY

Poland's membership in the UN Security Council, 2018–19, as a platform for pursuing the objectives of Polish foreign policy

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Abstract

The article analyzes how Poland's membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2018–2019 contributed to the country's foreign policy priorities. It outlines the differing approaches of the Civic Platform and Law and Justice governments toward both involvement in international affairs and efforts to obtain UNSC membership, along with Poland's priorities in the Security Council, whether declared or implicit, as pertains to the pursuit of national interests. Poland's successes include bringing about the establishment of the International Day to Commemorate Victims of Violence on the Grounds of Religion or Belief, the adoption of Resolution 2475 on Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict, and the UNSC presidential statement on the importance of the Geneva Conventions in contemporary armed conflicts. Less obvious, though no less important, was the use of Security Council membership to improve relations with Ukraine and strengthening the alliance between Warsaw and Washington.

Keywords

UN Security Council, UNSC elected members, Poland's Foreign Policy, Ukraine, Poland-US co-operation, UNIFIL

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine how Poland's membership in the UN Security Council in 2018–2019 contributed to the achievement of Polish foreign policy goals. The article is a case study written from the perspective of an insider, i.e., a person involved in Poland's activities in the UNSC in 2018–2019. The author's observations have been compared with documents from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in New York, the UN Security Council, and think tank reports.

The article shares the view that countries benefit from membership in the UN Security Council even if their influence on the functioning of this body is limited. The benefits to be listed include increased opportunities to exert influence, promote the given country's values, build networks, and bolster the country's status. Countries serving temporarily on the UNSC also have easier access to the permanent members of the Security Council, and this access can foster cooperation outside the UN forum.¹

Several works have been devoted to the experiences of Central and Eastern European countries in the UN Security Council. Eduards Gailišs analyzes the role of the Baltic states (Estonia, Lithuania, and to some extent Latvia, which is seeking membership in the UNSC for the period 2026–2027). This author shows that although small countries can successfully chair the UNSC, they usually focus on niche topics, such as the protection of journalists, small arms trade, and the protection of civilians, women, and children in armed conflicts in the case of Lithuania, or human rights, cybersecurity, and environmental security in the case of Estonia. Both countries had limited opportunities to build coalitions and hence they relied on larger countries, primarily members of the European Union.² The case of Sweden, in turn, was discussed from the domestic perspective of competing concepts of the role of the state as “internationalist” or European.³ These works refer to the most recent literature on the subject, which, however, focuses primarily on the influence of UNSC members on the functioning of whole body. The present article takes another tack: in discussing the example of Poland it concentrates on the role of UNSC membership in pursuing the country's foreign policy objectives.

¹ Cf. A.M. Ekengren, F.D. Hjorthen and U. Möller, “A Nonpermanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council Why Bother?,” *Global Governance* 26, (2020): 21–45.

² E. Gailišs, “Small powers as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: A case study of the Baltic States,” *Security and Defence Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2024): 33–54, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://securityanddefence.pl/Small-powers-as-non-permanent-members-of-the-United-Nations-Security-Council-A-case,172983,0,2.html>.

³ U. Möller and A.M. Ekengren, “Domestic Debate and International Office: Sweden in the UN Security Council 2017–18,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2024, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://academic.oup.com/fpa/article/20/1/orad037/7529021>; J. Lundin, “The role of nonpermanent members on the United Nations Security Council,” The case of Sweden, 2017, accessed August 22, 2025, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1481017/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

Poland's membership in the UNSC in 2018–2019 has been assessed quite critically in Polish literature on the subject. Partycja Grzebyk claims that Polish diplomats contributed little in terms of promoting international law and merely repeated existing commitments. Even taking into account its limited capacity, Poland could have achieved significant successes during its UNSC membership.⁴ Similarly, Ryszard Zięba points to a general decline in Poland's involvement in collective security within the UN and the OSCE.⁵ A more positive assessment is presented by Vahid Nick Pay and Przemysław Postolski, who point out that both Poland and South Africa made good use of the existing space to exert influence in the UNSC by acting as norm entrepreneurs.⁶

This article stresses that any assessment of UNSC membership must also take into account its impact on the implementation of a country's foreign policy objectives. The first part will discuss the arguments tabled in the public debate in favor of applying for UNSC membership in 2018–2019. Poland's priorities in the Security Council, both declared and implied, regarding the pursuit of national interests will also be discussed. Subsequent sections will be devoted to Poland's initiatives during its chairmanship of the body in May 2018 and August 2019. This will be followed by a presentation of Poland's cooperation in the UNSC with the United States and European countries, its involvement within a group of countries selected to improve the UNSC's operational methods, and the impact of UNSC membership on Polish domestic policy. The article concludes with an assessment of Poland's use of its UNSC membership to achieve its foreign policy goals.

Poland's effort to win UNSC membership

Poland was a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) five times in the 20th century: four times during the communist period (1946–1947, 1960, 1970–1971, 1982–1983), and once again in 1996–1997, after having regained sovereignty in 1989–1990.⁷ The 2018–2019 term was therefore the sixth in the history of Poland's UN membership.

⁴ P. Grzebyk, "Polska w Radzie Bezpieczeństwa ONZ – niewielkie możliwości, jeszcze mniejsze osiągnięcia," December 14, 2020, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://klubjagiellonski.pl/2020/12/14/polska-w-radzie-bezpieczenstwa-onz-niewielkie-mozliwosci-jeszcze-mniejsze-osiagniecia/>.

⁵ R. Zięba, "Poland's decreasing Activeness for Collective Security at the UN and the OSCE," in *Poland's Foreign and Security Policy, Problems of Compatibility with the Changing International Order*, ed. R. Zięba, 2019, 217–254.

⁶ V.N. Pay and P. Postolski, "Power and Diplomacy in the United Nations Security Council: The Influence of Elected Members," *The International Spectator* 57, no. 2 (2021): 1–17, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2021.1966192>.

⁷ See S. Pawlak, "Główne kierunki inicjatyw polskich w ONZ w latach 1945–2018," in *Polska w instytucjach międzynarodowych w latach 1918–2018*, eds. E. Haliżak et al. (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Państwowe Towarzystwo Studiów Międzynarodowych, 2019), 253–287; Z. Matuszewski, "Rada Bezpieczeństwa w okresie członkostwa Polski (1996–1997)," *Rocznik Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej*, 2018, 89–101.

Poland had won agreement for its candidacy in the Eastern European group for the 2010–2011 term, but Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski decided to step aside on behalf of Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁸ The reason was said to be a desire to concentrate resources on the Polish presidency of the European Union, falling in the second half of 2010. However, other countries often seek to create synergies for their activity in the international realm, recognizing that involvement in one arena strengthens their position in another. Germany, for example, was an elected member of the Security Council in 2020, while also holding the EU presidency in the second half of the year.

The Civic Platform government (2007–2015) evinced less ambition to play a role on the global international stage, instead prioritizing co-operation within the European Union. In February 2009, Prime Minister Donald Tusk decided to withdraw Polish soldiers from UN peacekeeping missions: UNDOF in Syria and Israel, UNIFIL in Lebanon, and MINURCAT in Chad and the Central African Republic. The government determined that the pay, special allowances, and pension entitlements of soldiers participating in blue helmet missions generate high costs, and that the experience they gain in patrol operations is of less value than that of combat in NATO's ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) operation in Afghanistan.⁹ Poland's focus on developing independent defense capabilities and limiting engagement abroad was labeled "the Komorowski doctrine", after President Bronisław Komorowski (serving 2010–2015).¹⁰

One also encounters the opinion that the real reason for Poland's withdrawal from the Security Council candidacy was the valid fear of electoral defeat to rival Bosnia-Herzegovina. Because of elections at home, Poland had started its campaign for a seat at the Council late in the race, and the withdrawal from UN peacekeeping operations could be seen by other countries as a sign of Poland's disregard for the role of the UN.¹¹

Competition between countries in Security Council elections can be fierce. In the case of the 2017–2018 term, five rounds of voting for either Italy or the Netherlands failed to produce a result (the last round ended in a 95 to 95 tie with a required

⁸ "2009 United Nations Security Council election," accessed March 27, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_United_Nations_Security_Council_election; "Poland supports Bosnia and Herzegovina," October 9, 2008, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081022025036/http://www.msz.gov.pl/Poland,suports,Bosnia,and,Herzegovina,22176.htm>.

⁹ See "Odpowiedź sekretarza stanu w Ministerstwie Obrony Narodowej - z upoważnienia ministra - na interpelację nr 12328 w sprawie przygotowania misji wojskowych," November 18, 2009, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Iz6.nsf/main/6062DAB9>.

¹⁰ See the address of Poland's President B. Komorowski delivered during the main celebrations of the annual Armed Forces Day, August 15, 2013, accessed April 15, 2025, <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/wydarzenia/4785,Wystapienie-Prezydenta-RP-z-okazji-Swieta-WP.html>; See also J. Czaputowicz, "Ewolucja polskiej polityki bezpieczeństwa: w kierunku strategicznej samodzielności?," *Studia Politologiczne* 34 (2014): 15–31.

¹¹ H. Binkowski, "Rola i usytuowanie kompetencyjno-organizacyjne niestalego członka Rady Bezpieczeństwa ONZ," *Civitas et Lex* 1, no. 21 (2019): 13.

2/3 majority, or 128 votes), and ultimately the two contenders decided to split the term.¹² This option had been introduced in 1955 when 35 rounds of voting failed to produce a winner between the Philippines and Yugoslavia. It was finally agreed that one country would withdraw and the other would resign its seat after a year, after which the former was to be the only candidate in a by-election for the remainder of the term. This same formula saw Poland and Turkey share the 1960–1961 term.

The earliest convenient term for Poland's membership in the UNSC was that of 2018–2019. This was announced in 2012 by Minister Sikorski,¹³ but it was Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski (serving from late 2015 to early 2018) who initiated an extensive election campaign. Polish diplomatic missions were involved, especially the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the UN in New York, headed by Bogusław Winid. Deputy Foreign Minister Joanna Wronecka, held a series of talks with partners, including consultations with UN affairs sections in Moscow. The Law and Justice government (2015–2023) sought to ensure that Poland's foreign policy was seen not only through the prism of our activity in Europe, but also on a global scale. This goal was further to be served by the restoration of a number of Polish diplomatic missions in countries of the South (including Senegal and Tanzania) which had been closed during the Civic Platform government.¹⁴

Poland's competitor in the elections from the Eastern European group was Bulgaria, which had advanced itself in 2003, thereby securing the early support of a number of countries. However, later circumstances favored Poland: Bulgaria withdrew its candidacy in order to press its bid for the UN Secretary General post for either Iryna Bokova or Kristalina Georgieva. When the Eastern European group backed Poland in March 2017, the choice seemed a foregone conclusion. And so it was: Poland received 190 votes, with no votes against and two abstentions, thus winning a strong mandate.¹⁵

Countries applying for UNSC membership usually present the topics they would like to focus on, called priorities. In Poland's case, this was strengthening

¹² "Security Council Elections: Italy and the Netherlands Agree to a Split Term," June 29, 2016, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2016/06/security-council-elections-italy-and-the-netherlands-agree-to-a-split-term.php>.

¹³ R. Sikorski, "Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2012 presented on 29 March 2012, at the 11th session of the 7th Sejm of the Republic of Poland," Polish Foreign Ministers' Policy Addresses in 2005–2024, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Warszawa, 2024), 279; B.E. Nowak, "Wybory i kampania na niestałych członków Rady Bezpieczeństwa ONZ," *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* no. 4 (2014): 145–169.

¹⁴ W. Waszczykowski, "Wystąpienie podczas konferencji prasowej z okazji oficjalnej inauguracji kampanii Polski o wybór do Rady Bezpieczeństwa, Warszawa 16 września 2016 r.," in *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 2015–2018. Przemówienia, wywiady i artykuły*, ed. W. Waszczykowski (PISM, 2024), 170–172; W. Waszczykowski, "Miejsce w RB ONZ to bilet do uczestnictwa w światowej polityce," in *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 2015–2018. Przemówienia, wywiady i artykuły*, ed. W. Waszczykowski, 2024, 482.

¹⁵ S. Zaręba, "W poszukiwaniu właściwego miejsca. Polska w Radzie Bezpieczeństwa w latach 2018–2020," *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* no. 4 (2019): 80–93.

international law, preventing conflict, and countering new security threats. Poland stressed the need to respect the principles of the inviolability of borders and the sovereignty of states and to renounce military force. It also sought to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. It was also urgent to seek to bolster the protection of religious communities and promote inter-faith dialogue.¹⁶

These issues were both broad enough to be of interest to a larger group of countries, and important from a regional perspective. They were also consistent with Poland's status as a medium-sized country located in the vicinity of a revisionist power, arising at the same time from aspirations to go beyond the framework of a medium-sized country by attempting to play a key role in the Central and Eastern European region via becoming involved to some extent in global politics. Poland thus presented itself as a country engaged in global politics while pursuing strategic interests in its neighborhood.¹⁷

From the perspective of an individual country's foreign policy, UNSC membership offers a unique platform for enhancing its prestige and pursuing national interests. In Poland's particular case, this involved the desire to use Security Council membership to support Ukraine and improve relations with Kyiv, develop multidimensional co-operation with the United States, and buttress the country's position within the European Union.

Did Poland succeed in realizing its intentions during its term in the United Nations Security Council? In the first part of his paper I will present the principles of the UNSC and Poland's initiatives during its chairship of the body in May 2018. Next, I will discuss Poland's co-operation in the UNSC with the United States and European countries. The next part will be devoted to Polish initiatives during its second chairship of the UNSC in August 2019, and Poland's involvement within a group of countries selected to improve the UNSC's operational methods. The impact of UNSC membership on the adoption of the National Action Plan required by UNSC Resolution 1325 and the return of Polish soldiers to UN peacekeeping operations will also be described. Critical voices and the significance of Poland's UNSC membership for the country's foreign policy are presented in the conclusions.

United Nations Security Council members act on behalf of all UN members to maintain international peace and security. In 2018–2019 the Security Council functioned in a more complex international situation than during Poland's previous term in 1996–1997. The number of crises and UN peacekeeping missions increased,

¹⁶ J. Czaputowicz, "Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2018 presented on 21 March 2018, at the 60th session of the 8th Sejm of the Republic of Poland," Polish Foreign Ministers' Policy Addresses in 2005–2024, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 2024, 525, 526.

¹⁷ Pay and Postolski, "Power and Diplomacy in the United Nations Security Council: The Influence of Elected Members."

resulting in the greater intensity of UNSC meetings. Divisions within the UNSC deepened, and it became more difficult to find the consensus necessary to adopt resolutions or issue statements by the chair. In 2018–2019, there were 546 formal Council meetings and 254 consultations held behind closed doors. These figures do not include informal meetings, such as the Arria format, which do not require the consent of all Council members.

The Security Council is composed of five permanent members, the P5 – and ten elected members, the E10. The existing division of the P5 into the P2 (Russia and China) and the P3 (Western members of the UNSC) was compounded within the latter group by the US's independent course and the emergence of a rift between France and the UK over the latter's withdrawal from the European Union. The United States challenged the budgets for UN peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which France prioritized. France and Britain, in turn, criticized the US administration's decision to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and terminate the nuclear agreement with Iran. There were also differences over how to overcome the violence in Libya and the recognition of the election results in Venezuela.¹⁸

Countries have particular leverage in the months in which they hold the UNSC presidency. Under the current rules, representatives of the fifteen member states sit behind the table in alphabetical order and move one seat counterclockwise each month. The country at the top of the table presides over the Security Council for that month. Since there are fifteen member states, more than the number of months in a year, some of them hold the presidency only once during their term. Poland held the UNSC presidency in May 2018 and again in August 2019.

Chairship is granted to a country, not an individual. Most often it is held by the Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, who carries out the instructions of his/her Foreign Ministry. When the president or the foreign minister participates in a UNSC meeting, they act as the Council's chair.

The chair's tasks include convening Council meetings, preparing briefing papers on given topics and representing the UNSC to other institutions and the media. The Council's chair oversees international crises, settles disputes, and mediates between conflicting parties.¹⁹ These activities can be realized outside UN headquarters in New York – for example, through direct talks between the foreign minister of the country holding the Council's chairship and his/her counterparts in the countries in dispute (such an instance occurred in the conflict between India and Pakistan over the status of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, further described below).

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, "Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy," accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/b001-council-despair-fragmentation-un-diplomacy>.

¹⁹ I. Pogany, "The Role of the President of the U. N. Security Council," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1982): 231–245; L. Sievers and S. Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 193–242.

In the first months of 2018, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, and Peru respectively held the chairship of the Security Council. Poland's involvement in the initiatives of these countries was also a form of preparation for the UNSC presidency in May 2018.

Kazakhstan focused in January 2018 on issues concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and confidence-building measures, as well as regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The UNSC debates chaired by Kazakhstan were attended by the President and Foreign Minister of Poland.²⁰ In February 2018 Kuwait held a high-level briefing on the importance of the UN Charter, which was attended by the Polish foreign minister.²¹ The organization of an informal session on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and a donor conference for the reconstruction of Iraq were also important achievements. The adoption of Resolution 2401, which established a 30-day ceasefire in Syria, was deemed a Kuwaiti success by the public. The hallmark of Kuwait's membership in the Security Council was its commitment to streamlining the body's work.

The Netherlands, in turn, adopted an ambitious agenda for March 2018, including five Security Council meetings on the reform of UN peacekeeping missions, the role of women in peacekeeping and security, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the impact of climate on Lake Chad's water resources, and the problem of hunger in armed conflict. These topics, not directly related to international problems then unfolding, did not attract the attention of the public, which was focused on implementing the Council's resolution on the ceasefire in Syria.²²

During its chairship of the UNSC in April 2018, Peru focused on issues of conflict resolution and post-conflict peace and stability, along with the role of women in peace and security. A high-level debate on youth, peace, and security was attended by the Polish Foreign Minister.²³ Peru issued UNSC press statements on the attack on the UN stabilization mission in the Central African Republic and the peace process

²⁰ Statement of the President of the Republic of Poland Mr. A. Duda High Level Debate of the UN Security Council, January 18, 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.president.pl/news/statement-of-the-president-of-the-republic-of-poland-mr-andrzej-duda-high-level-debate-of-the-un-security-council,36613>; United Nations S/PV.8162 Security Council Seventy-third year 8162nd meeting Friday, January 19, 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.8162>.

²¹ United Nations S/PV.8185 President: Members: Agenda Security Council Seventy-third year 8185th meeting Wednesday, February 21, 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B6BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_8185.pdf.

²² S. Zaręba, "Kazachstan, Kuwejt i Holandia na czele Rady Bezpieczeństwa ONZ – wnioski dla Polski," PISM, 63 (1636), 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/Kazachstan_Kuwejt_i_Holandia_na_czele_Rady_Bezpiecze_stwa_ONZ__wnioski_dla_Polski.

²³ United Nations S/PV.8241 President: Members: Agenda Security Council Seventy-third year 8241st meeting Monday, April 23, 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B6BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_8241.pdf.

in Colombia.²⁴ The experience of the above four UNSC presidencies indicated that addressing important global issues in the context of the region the presiding state represents lent additional legitimacy to the presidency. Overloading the agenda with scheduled events can limit the time and resources necessary to respond appropriately to current events. The Security Council's presiding state is judged primarily on its effectiveness in responding to current crises that attract the attention of world public opinion.²⁵

Poland's chairship of the UNSC in May, 2018

The monthly presidency of the UNSC provides a country with the opportunity to schedule meetings that will serve to achieve its foreign policy objectives. The experience of elected members shows that they have placed on the agenda issues such as the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, nuclear proliferation, small arms and light weapons, and justice and the rule of law.²⁶

A country traditionally presents its program for the month in which it chairs the Security Council. Poland's priorities for May 2018 included security issues, protection of people in armed conflicts, respect for fundamental rights, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine.²⁷ A notable event was the UNSC briefing on the reform of peacekeeping operations with the participation of senior military commanders, during which a new approach to mission mandates was discussed, one taking into account the desired improvement of peacekeepers' security. At the time, Poland was striving to rejoin UN peacekeeping operations.

President Andrzej Duda chaired a high-level meeting on the role of the Security Council in ensuring compliance with international law in the context of peacekeeping. In the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and attempts to change borders by force, President Duda stressed the importance of international law and the obligations of states to settle disputes by peaceful means.²⁸ The Council also held an open debate under the leadership of Poland on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Participants stressed that achieving this goal requires adherence to international humanitarian law and holding accountable those who commit crimes

²⁴ Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Peru (April, 2018), Annex to the letter dated November 12, 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://documents.un.org/access.nsf/get?OpenAgent&DS=S/2018/1015&Lang=E>.

²⁵ Zaręba, "Kazachstan, Kuwejt i Holandia."

²⁶ J. Langmore and R. Thakur, "The Elected but Neglected Security Council Members," *The Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2016): 108.

²⁷ J. Czaputowicz, "Priorytety przewodnictwa Polski w Radzie Bezpieczeństwa ONZ. Wystąpienie w Warszawie podczas spotkania z korpusem dyplomatycznym. 26 kwietnia 2018 r.," in *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 2018–2020. Przemówienia, wywiady, artykuły*, ed. J. Czaputowicz (PISM, 2023), 531–535.

²⁸ Statement of the President of the Republic of Poland at the High Level Debate of the UN Security Council, May 17, 2018, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.president.pl/news/statement-of-the-president-of-the-republic-of-poland-at-the-high-level-debate-of-the-un-security-council,36713>.

against civilians, in which area the International Criminal Court should play a central role. More than 50 million civilians, including women, children, and people with disabilities suffered from conflicts in urban areas in 2017. Poland supported limiting the Council's use of the veto in cases related to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.²⁹ The debate prepared the ground for the adoption of Resolution 2467, which called for a focus on victims and the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict.³⁰ UN Secretary-General António Guterres participated in both of these debates as a briefer.

However, of greatest political significance are the Security Council's debates on the immediate security situation in conflict areas. During Poland's chairship of the Council in May 2018, there was a briefing on the security and humanitarian situation in Ukraine. The European members of the UNSC were reluctant to bring Ukraine to the Council, while Poland was supported by the United States. In her speech, US Ambassador Nikki Haley demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from eastern Ukraine and Crimea as a condition for lifting sanctions. Dutch Foreign Minister Stephanus Blok, in turn, called on Russia to accept responsibility for the downing of the Malaysian passenger plane MH17, which caused the deaths of nearly 300 people.³¹

Poland's foreign minister, who chaired the session, proposed the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission, one to be stationed along the Russian-Ukrainian border in conflict-affected areas. Its mandate was to include co-ordinating the withdrawal of foreign troops, overseeing public order, and ensuring conditions for elections. The proposal also included the appointment of a special envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the conflict in Ukraine to monitor the security situation on the ground and co-ordinate the activities of UN agencies and specialized organizations.³²

Poland's proposals were not accepted due to a lack of support from the permanent members of the UNSC. According to an influential think tank, France opposed the UN peacekeeping mission because it feared undermining the role of the Normandy

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, *The Security Council's open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict*, 22 May, 2018 (Warsaw, 2018); J. Czaputowicz, "Poland's position on key issues related to international humanitarian law in the UN Security Council in 2018–2019," in *Poland and Spain – Border Countries of the European Union*, eds. M. Mizerska-Wrotkowska and J.L. Martinez (Schedas, 2022), 13–34.

³⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2467 (2019), S/RES/2467(2019), accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-2467-2019-sres24672019>.

³¹ M. Schwartz, "Dutch Official Says Russia Must Accept Blame for 2014 Attack on Jet," *The New York Times*, 2018, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/29/world/europe/russia-malaysia-flight-17.html>; See also United Nations, "8270th Meeting (PM), As Civilians Bear Brunt of Four-year-old Conflict in Ukraine, Continued Ceasefire Violations Test Credibility of Global Community, Officials Warn Security Council," SC/13357, May 29, 2018, accessed March 23, 2025, <https://press.un.org/en/2018/sc13357.doc.htm>.

³² Statement delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. J. Czaputowicz at the Security Council on 29th of May, 2018 during the briefing on the situation in Ukraine, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://dziennikurzedowy.msz.gov.pl/resource/29.pdf>.

format.³³ France and Germany, the latter of which was preparing itself for membership in the UNSC in 2019–2020, were also opposed to the appointment of a UN envoy to Ukraine, preferring to handle relations with Moscow on their own.³⁴ This gave them the opportunity to develop beneficial co-operation with Russia, including the import of energy resources and the construction of Nord Stream 2. Although Poland's proposals were not accepted, the Security Council's debate played a positive role in maintaining the international community's interest in unfolding events in Ukraine.

The UNSC discussed the situation in Ukraine only once in 2017, while it discussed it eight times in 2018–2019. At Poland's initiative, an informal Group of Friends of Ukraine was established, which included EU members of the Security Council, the United States, and the EU Delegation to the UN. Poland's support for Ukraine at the Council contributed to closer and deeper co-operation between the two countries, culminating in the establishment together with Lithuania of the Lublin Triangle in July 2020.

While holding the chairship of the UNSC in May 2018, Poland also chaired a series of regular debates, sanctions committee briefings, and reviews of UN mission mandates on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Middle East peace process, and the situation in Iraq and the UN Assistance Mission's activities there. Two meetings focused on Europe: the UN Mission in Kosovo and the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Poland's chairship of the UNSC in August, 2019

Poland next presided over the UNSC in August 2019. This is usually a rather sleepy month in New York owing to vacations, but this time it was different due to unexpected international events and Poland's efforts to make good use of its chairship to achieve its goals.

On June 20, 2019 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2475, which Poland initiated with the support of permanent member Great Britain, and was dedicated to persons with disabilities in armed conflict. The resolution points out that the victims of modern armed conflicts, often being conducted in cities, are civilians, especially vulnerable groups: women, children, and people with disabilities.³⁵ This was the

³³ International Crisis Group, "Council of Despair? The Fragmentation of UN Diplomacy."

³⁴ International Crisis Group, "The UN Security Council between Rifts and Reform," July 13, 2023, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/un-security-council-between-rifts-and-reform>.

³⁵ Polish success at the UN forum – Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 2475 on protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict, June 20, 2019, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/polish-success-at-the-un-forum-security-council-unanimously-adopts-resolution-2475-on-protection-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-armed-conflict>; B. Ruminowicz, "Advancing towards inclusive peace and security: Persons with disabilities and Security Council Resolution 2475," *IRRC* no. 922 (November, 2022), accessed April 22, 2025, <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/advancing-towards-inclusive-peace-and-security-persons-with-disabilities-sc-resolution-2475-9223>.

first-ever UNSC resolution adopted at the initiative of Poland. In follow-up, on August 2, 2019 Poland convened an open debate on strengthening the international system for the protection of children in armed conflict.³⁶ Poland had initiated the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and was an active member of the informal group of experts on children in armed conflict.

An unanticipated event that Poland's UNSC chairship had to deal with was the adoption of a law by the Indian parliament on August 5, 2019, changing the status of the city of Jammu and the province of Kashmir. Pakistan accused the Indian parliament of lacking a legal basis for the decision and demanded that the dispute be brought to the Security Council.³⁷ Pakistan was supported by China, the United States considered the issue an internal Indian matter, while Russia and the European Union said the conflict should be resolved through talks between the two countries. The Polish foreign minister held telephone conversations with his counterparts from Pakistan and India, and Polish Ambassador Joanna Wronecka convened in New York closed consultations between UNSC members, and this helped defuse tensions. In late August 2019, India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Warsaw.³⁸

One major event was a briefing to mark the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law with the participation of the International Red Cross President Peter Maurer and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, among others. Elected members of the UNSC have the practice of supporting each other at the Council through the participation of ministers in jointly organized events. Thus the Polish foreign minister participated in the debate inaugurating Germany's UNSC chairship in April 2019. Poland led the adoption of the UNSC presidential statement (PRST), stressing the importance of the Geneva Conventions in modern armed conflicts, and this was the first such time in the history of our UN membership.

Presidential statements require the consent of all Council members. Russia challenged provisions recalling that states have a duty to punish those who have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, claiming that the language agreed to in the specific context of Resolution 2467 on sexual violence, but applied in the more general context of international humanitarian law, would

³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "The Security Council's open debate on children and armed conflict," August 2, 2019.

³⁷ M. Nichols, "Pakistan asks U.N. Security Council to meet over India moves in Kashmir," *Reuters*, August 14, 2019, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-asks-un-security-council-to-meet-over-india-moves-in-kashmir-idUSKCN1V31ZC/>; A. Bhaumik, "Poland at centre of India-Pakistan diplomatic war," *Deccan Herald*, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/poland-at-centre-of-india-pakistan-diplomatic-war-754356.html>.

³⁸ India's foreign minister visits Poland for the first time in 32 years, August 29, 2019, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/indias-foreign-minister-visits-poland-for-the-first-time-in-32-years>.

expand the scope of the Council's message. The compromise was to omit the contested wording and strengthen the resolution's language elsewhere.³⁹

Reinforcing the protection of freedom of religion and belief was also one of Poland's priorities in the Security Council. Poland had experienced positive co-operation with the Catholic Church in 1945–1989, when the Church was an ally of society in the struggle for freedom and democracy.⁴⁰ In March 2019 Poland joined the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, led by the United States and Canada, and the position of Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Religious Freedom was created within the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Poland also worked closely with the United States within the framework of the International Religious Freedom Alliance, established in February 2020.⁴¹

With the support of sponsoring countries – namely, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Nigeria, Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq – Poland succeeded in establishing an International Day to commemorate victims of violence based on religion or belief. The resolution submitted by Poland expressed concern about frequent acts of religious violence, stressed the responsibility of states to protect people belonging to religious minorities, recognized the importance of inter-faith dialogue, and called on international organizations and societies to commemorate the victims of religious violence on August 22.⁴²

On the day this commemoration was observed for the first time, Poland convened an Arria-format meeting on the situation of people belonging to religious minorities in armed conflict. The panel featured Yazidi refugee freed from ISIS captivity, Ms. Dala Khairo, Central African Republic activist Sali AbdoulAziz, and the human rights activist from Pakistan Naveed Walter. The latter received the Polish Foreign Minister's Pro Dignitate award, given for outstanding commitment to human rights and uncompromising efforts in defense of the rights of the persecuted.

Of greatest political significance, however, was the UNSC debate on challenges to peace and security in the Middle East, a continuation of Poland's co-operation with the US in the area. The debate was chaired by the Polish foreign minister and attended by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Israeli Foreign Minister

³⁹ Statement by the President of the Security Council, August 20, 2019, accessed April 5, 2025, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/{65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9}/s_prst_2019_8.pdf; Security Council Report, "Presidential Statement on International Humanitarian Law," August 20, 2019, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2019/08/presidential-statement-on-international-humanitarian-law.php>.

⁴⁰ S. Sowiński, "Polityka i religia w Polsce po roku 1989," in *Religia i polityka zarys problematyki*, eds. P. Burgoński, M. Gierycz and D.W. Elipsa, 2014, 658–685.

⁴¹ Minister J. Czaputowicz attends inauguration of International Religious Freedom Alliance in Washington, D.C., February 6, 2020, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/usa-en/minister-jacek-czaputowicz-attends-inauguration-of-international-religious-freedom-alliance-in-washington-dc>.

⁴² Seventy-third session Agenda item 74 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on May 28, 2019, accessed April 4, 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/73/296>.

Israel Katz and a number of Arab foreign ministers, among others. Pompeo criticized Iran's negative role in the Middle East and described the Warsaw process as one of the most meaningful foreign policy initiatives of President Donald Trump's administration.⁴³

The UNSC chairship can also be an opportunity for a country to showcase important ideas, initiatives, and historical figures. In August 2019 Poland presented at the UN headquarters in New York an exhibition dedicated to Rafał Lemkin, the Polish-Jewish lawyer who initiated the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Poland's co-operation with the United States and EU members of the UNSC

Observers agree that the permanent members need the support of non-permanent members to increase the legitimacy of the measures taken and thereby to maintain the authority of the Council so that other countries voluntarily abide by its decisions. In other words, the inclusion of the E10 members in the decision-making process ensures that the UNSC is perceived as more representative of the world.⁴⁴ The elected members' weakness, in turn, is the deficit in institutional memory that results from long breaks between their presence in the Council, as this requires rebuilding their knowledge of how the Council operates.

Poland sought to use its membership in the Security Council to establish broad co-operation with the United States. US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley supported Poland's initiative to hold a Council debate on the situation in Ukraine in May 2018. The United States, in turn, presided over the Council in September 2018, which, in view of the UN General Assembly session, was a convenient time to hold high-level meetings. President Andrzej Duda participated in a briefing led by President Donald Trump on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, while the Polish Foreign Minister attended a debate on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula chaired by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Poland supported US initiatives to closely monitor Iran's commitments, uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention, and enforce Pyongyang's compliance with its obligations under the UN Charter.⁴⁵

⁴³ Poland urges UN action to help civilians in Mideast, August 21, 2019, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7785/artykul/2357638.poland-urges-un-action-to-help-civilians-in-mideast>; United Nations, "Press Briefing by US Secretary of State and Polish Foreign Minister on Middle East," August 20, 2019, accessed February 5, 2025, <https://media.un.org/photo/en/asset/oun7/oun735842>.

⁴⁴ J. Farrall *et al.*, "Elected Member Influence in the United Nations Security Council," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 33, no. 1 (2020): 101–115.

⁴⁵ Statement of the President of RP at the UN Security Council Session, September 26, 2018, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.president.pl/news/statement-of-the-president-of-the-republic-of-poland-at-the-un-security-council-session,36819>; Statement delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. J. Czaputowicz at the Security Council 27th of September, 2018 during the briefing on North Korea, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://dziennikurzedowy.ms.gov.pl/resource/27.pdf>.

Poland co-operated with the United States in ensuring security in the Middle East by jointly organizing a Middle East conference in Warsaw in February 2019. The Warsaw Process, initiated at the event, was dedicated to countering terrorism, preventing ballistic missile proliferation, strengthening maritime and aviation security, cyber-security, energy security, resolving humanitarian and refugee issues, and furthering respect for human rights.⁴⁶

In 2018–2019, the UNSC had five EU member states: permanent members France and the UK, and the elected members Poland, the Netherlands, and Sweden in 2018, and Poland, Germany, and Belgium in 2019. Following Britain's withdrawal from the European Union and Norway's taking a seat in the Western Group, the number of EU UNSC members decreased to three in 2020 (France, Germany, and Estonia, which replaced Poland).

Poland co-operated with EU members of the Council by maintaining a consistent position with them during votes and taking joint initiatives on Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁷ Together with Sweden and the Netherlands, Poland held a briefing on the risks to health officials during armed conflicts. In co-operation with Sweden, we called an informal Security Council meeting on human rights in Crimea. We also co-operated with the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Kosovo and on a strategic review of UNMIK.

We co-operated with Germany on the situation in Ukraine and on opposition to the reduction of the arms embargo in the Central African Republic. Germany was also involved with Poland in organizing Arria format meetings on people with disabilities, children born of sexual violence, and the prevention of crimes under international law. Together with Germany and France, Poland co-organized a meeting on health protection in armed conflict in light of UNSC Resolution 2286, while we jointly organized an Arria-format meeting with Belgium on the reintegration of children involved in armed conflict and collaborated on a resolution concerning cleaning up mine-fields.

With the EU elected members of the Council, Poland put forward a proposal for best practices for the functioning of the Council. This included increasing the activity of the European Union Delegation to the UN, strengthening the importance of a common EU position, taking initiatives at the UN, and providing information to those EU states that are not sitting on the UNSC.⁴⁸ Poland also served as a briefer on the work of the UNSC for these states on five occasions. Observers

⁴⁶ Warsaw Process, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/warsaw-process>; On the Warsaw conference and controversy it sparked see J. Czaputowicz, "Polska i Trump. Jak zostaliśmy bliskim sojusznikiem USA," 2025, 131–190.

⁴⁷ Zaręba, "W poszukiwaniu właściwego miejsca," 90, 91.

⁴⁸ The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, European cooperation in the United Nations Security Council – examples and lessons learned by the EU UNSC members in 2018, December 7, 2018. European cooperation in the United Nations Security Council – experiences of elected members Poland, Belgium and Germany in 2019.

noted that despite the views of the government in Warsaw, sometimes considered Eurosceptic, Poland took a pro-EU position in the Council.⁴⁹

Endeavors to improve the UNSC's operating mode

Elected members of the UNSC chair subsidiary bodies such as sanctions committees, which require thorough factual preparation on both the sanctioned country and the situation in the region. A weakness of the sanctions committees has been the frequent violation of the code of silence by some members of the Council and the blocking of the work of the sanctions committees,⁵⁰ which requires involvement in administrative matters that consume the energy of non-permanent members of the Council.

Ambassador Joanna Wronecka chaired the sanctions committees on Sudan, South Sudan, and Iraq. At the time, Sudan attached more importance to being removed from the US's list of countries supporting terrorism than to the issue of implementing the sanctions regime. South Sudan, on the other hand, disputed the reports of the UN mission's experts, but relations between the sanctions committee chairwoman and Juba normalized after the imposition of the arms embargo and the conclusion of a renewed peace agreement. In the case of Iraq, the committee succeeded in achieving a significant reduction on the list of sanctioned entities. Poland also served as vice chair of the sanctions committees for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Yemen, and North Korea.

A serious limitation on the influence of elected UNSC members is the system of penholding, i.e., the practice of exercising leadership in particular areas by the permanent members of the Security Council – usually France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The penholder initiates issue-related activities such as convening meetings, conducting negotiations, and drafting documents.⁵¹ In some cases, particularly when the UNSC's permanent members are in conflict, the penholder's function can be assumed by non-permanent members – for example, Kuwait and Sweden with regard to the humanitarian situation in Syria. In contrast, there was no clear penholder in matters regarding Ukraine, and thus Poland could initiate meetings, with documents being prepared by various countries, including France, Russia, and the United States.⁵²

⁴⁹ H.N. da Silva, "United in Adversity? The Europeanisation of EU Concertation Practices in a More Divided UN Security Council," *EU Diplomacy Paper* 02, 2019, 20.

⁵⁰ See E. Carisch, L. Rickard-Martin and S.R. Meister, *The Evolution of UN Sanctions From a Tool of Warfare to a Tool of Peace, Security and Human Rights* (Springer Nature eBook, 2017).

⁵¹ "The Penholder System, Security Council Report No. 3, 2018," December 21, 2018, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/{65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9}/Penholders.pdf>.

⁵² I. Martin, "Elected Members Today: Overcoming the Handicaps," in *Elected Members of the Security Council: Lame Ducks or Key Players?*, eds. N.J. Schrijver and N. Blokker (MA: Brill Nijhoff, 2020), 42–55.

In order to exert effective influence on UNSC documents, non-permanent Council members form coalitions with permanent members. Poland, with the support of the UK as a penholder, led the UNSC to meet in the Arria format and adopt Resolution 2475 on the protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict.⁵³ In turn, in March 2018, at the initiative of non-permanent members of the Council – Bolivia, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, and Sweden – a presidential statement on the humanitarian situation in Yemen was adopted. This came about after convincing the UK as a penholder to request the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to prepare information on the humanitarian situation in the country.⁵⁴

France and Germany promoted multilateralism and the EU agenda at the UN, which Poland also supported. Germany was granted co-penholder status in several cases and for the first time used a “twin presidency” formula with France. Indonesia and South Africa, in turn, focused on the problems of the South and more often adopted a position closer to China and Russia (e.g., on Venezuela). Kuwait, on the other hand, tended to take a position aligned with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on Middle East issues.⁵⁵ Poland co-operated with Kuwait in reforming the UNSC's operational methods, thereby confirming a new culture of co-operation among elected members across regional divides.

Poland supported the demand for better adaptation of the UNSC to modern realities, but without taking a definitive position on specific proposals.⁵⁶ The exception was support for limiting the right of veto in cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁵⁷ Polish diplomats were however active in the Kuwait-led Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG-Doc), which sought to increase efficiency, the UNSC's transparency, and the influence of elected members. During Poland's tenure, this working group adopted eight documents that dealt with issues such as allowing elected members of the Security Council to observe the negotiation of UNSC documents in advance, the Council's

⁵³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 (2019), Adopted by the Security Council at Its 8556th Meeting, on June 20, 2019, accessed April 5, 2025, [https://undocs.org/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://undocs.org/s/res/2475(2019)); J. Allen, “Remarks by Ambassador J. Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council on Resolution 2475 on Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict,” Gov.uk, June 20, 2019, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/landmark-resolution-on-persons-with-disabilities-in-armed-conflict>.

⁵⁴ A. Boutellis, “Lessons from E10 Engagement on the Security Council,” November, 2022, accessed April 2, 2025, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2211_Lessons-from-E10-Engagement.pdf; Security Council Report, “Yemen: Briefing on the Humanitarian Situation,” September 20, 2018.

⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, “Council of Despair? The Fragmentation.”

⁵⁶ See P. Pacuła, “Zarys problematyki reformy Rady Bezpieczeństwa ONZ,” *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe* 4 (2015): 63–79.

⁵⁷ W. Waszczykowski, “Wystąpienie podczas otwartej debaty Rady Bezpieczeństwa ONZ pt.,” [Conflict prevention and sustaining Peace], in *Polityka zagraniczna Polski w latach 2015–2018. Przemówienia, wywiady i artykuły*, ed. W. Waszczykowski (New York, January 10, 2024), 252.

annual report to the General Assembly, and visits by the UNSC and representatives of countries providing military contingents to UN missions.⁵⁸

Permanent members, however, saw the group's proposals as a threat to their dominant role in the Council. Russia pointed out that the group's proposals would lead to increased divisions in the Council, and the United States and China expressed a similar view. France and the United Kingdom were more receptive to the group's demands.⁵⁹ Russia and the United States also opposed the Netherlands' draft resolution on improving the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

The influence of UNSC membership on domestic politics

UNSC membership mobilized Poland's state institutions to adapt Polish legislation to the recommendations set forth in UNSC Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security". The idea was to increase women's participation in decision-making processes for ensuring peace and security and to strengthen the protection of women and children in armed conflicts. Poland was implementing the Agenda's provisions within the framework of policies on equal treatment, humanitarian and developmental aid, and on counteracting discrimination against women in public life, but did not implement the National Action Plan envisaged in the Agenda. This weakened Poland's position within the UN and hindered the realization of other goals.

In preparation for applying for UNSC membership, Poland joined the Focal Points Network, a forum for the exchange of experience and good practices. At the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, work on the National Action Plan was undertaken in the spring of 2018 and was adopted by the Council of Ministers.⁶⁰

The United Right coalition government (dominated by PiS – the Law and Justice party) also led Poland's return to UN peacekeeping operations. For a time in the late 1990s, Poland ranked first in terms of the number of soldiers participating in blue helmet missions. However, the Civic Platform government decided to withdraw Polish soldiers from this activity, seeing no tangible benefit for the country.

States value participation in UN peacekeeping missions and are reluctant to allow others to do so, so the resumption of this activity was not straightforward. However, talks with Secretary-General Antonio Gutierrez and his deputy for peacekeeping operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix led to the reintegration of the Polish military contingent into the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. In the fall of 2019, 230 soldiers

⁵⁸ "Noty Przewodniczącego Rady Bezpieczeństwa z 27 grudnia 2019 r," accessed April 5, 2025, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/subsidiary/wgdocs/notes>.

⁵⁹ Pay and Postolski, "Power and Diplomacy in the United Nations Security Council," 1–17; International Crisis Group, "Council of Despair?"

⁶⁰ See A. Gasztold, "Krajowy Plan Działania na rzecz realizacji Agendy ONZ dotyczącej kobiet, pokoju i bezpieczeństwa na lata 2018–2021," Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Warszawa, 2018), accessed March 30, 2025, <https://archiwum.rcb.gov.pl/krajowy-plan-dzialania-na-rzecz-realizacji-agendy-onz-dotyczacej-kobiet-pokoju-i-bezpieczenstwa-na-lata-2018-2021/>.

from the 12th Mechanized Brigade, equipped with Rosomak armored personnel carriers, became part of the Irish contingent. Poland thus gained the opportunity to positively influence the circumstances in this inflammatory region of the Middle East and to take part in meetings of countries participating in UN peacekeeping operations, even after the end of its term in Security Council.⁶¹

The positive assessment of Poland's UNSC membership also helped the country achieve the high score of 124 votes in the elections to the UN Human Rights Council for 2020–2022. Poland therefore won the opportunity to continue its commitment to upholding human rights in the occupied territories of Ukraine and Georgia, defending freedom of religion and belief, and protecting civilians during armed conflicts, especially children, women, and people with disabilities.⁶²

Conclusions

In 2018–2019, the UNSC adopted 106 resolutions, including one at Poland's initiative, along with 35 presidential statements, including one during Poland's chairship. Poland provided high-level representation at more than twenty Security Council meetings: President Andrzej Duda attended three meetings and chaired one of them, the Foreign Minister attended fourteen (including one in the Arria format) and chaired six as chair, while other ministers or senior representatives of the Office of the President represented Poland at five meetings.⁶³

Confirmation of opinions citing a general decline in Poland's involvement in collective security within the UN was not found. The importance of the UN in Poland's foreign and security policy indeed diminished after its accession to NATO in 1999, as manifested by the resignation of its candidacy for the Security Council for the 2010–2011 term and the Civic Platform government's withdrawal from UN peacekeeping operations.⁶⁴ However, this trend was reversed after the 2015 elections, as demonstrated by Poland's active membership in the Security Council in 2018–2019, and its return to UN peacekeeping operations in 2019. The increased significance for Polish leaders of multilateral diplomacy was also confirmed by Poland's assumption of the OSCE chairship in 2022.

⁶¹ "Poland confirms Partnership with Ireland in UN Mission in Lebanon," April 1, 2019, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-defence/press-releases/poland-confirm-partnership-with-ireland-in-un-mission-in-lebanon/>; S. Nowacka, "The Role of Poland's Return to UNIFIL in its Policy Towards the Middle East," July 25, 2022, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://pism.pl/publications/the-role-of-polands-return-to-unifil-in-its-policy-towards-the-middle-east>.

⁶² R. Tarnogórski, "Polska członkiem Rady Praw Człowieka, Komentarz," PISM, no. 55, October 25, 2025.

⁶³ MFA, "Polish Membership in the UN Security Council 2018–2019," January 28, 2020, accessed April 5, 2025, https://issuu.com/msz.gov.pl/docs/polish_membership_in_the_un_security_council_2018-.

⁶⁴ Zięba, "Poland's decreasing Activeness for Collective Security at the UN and the OSCE," 217–254.

Some researchers argue that Poland made good use of favorable conditions, its diplomatic capabilities, as well as of both formal and informal mechanisms of influence to promote the strengthening of international law.⁶⁵ Among Poland's significant achievements were the adoption of Resolution 2475 on Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict, the statement by the UNSC President on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, and the establishment of an International Day of Commemoration for Victims of Religious Violence. Poland's UNSC membership also contributed to the adoption of the National Action Plan required by UNSC Resolution 1325 and the return of Polish soldiers to UN peacekeeping operations.

Membership in the United Nations Security Council should be evaluated not only in terms of the initiatives carried out, but also in terms of the implementation of the country's foreign policy goals. Poland raised violations of international law, Russia's occupation of Crimea and the Donbas, and restrictions on Ukraine's rights in the Black and Azov seas.⁶⁶ This stance at the UNSC forum contributed to the improvement of relations between Poland and Ukraine, culminating in the creation of the Lublin Triangle in July 2020, a new format of co-operation between Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania.

Poland's membership in the UNSC was also an important instrument for establishing co-operation with the United States, and this resulted in the February 2019 Middle East Conference in Warsaw, the Warsaw Process, and joint participation in the Alliance for Religious Freedom. This co-operation also led to the signing of an agreement on enhanced military co-operation in August 2020.

Poland strengthened its image as a state that is responsible and committed to resolving conflicts in various parts of the world. This attitude resulted in closer co-operation with EU states in the UNSC, as well as with Kuwait, Indonesia, and India. In recognition of the professionalism of Polish diplomats, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka was appointed to the post of High Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Lebanon after the end of her term.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability statement

No data associated with this article.

⁶⁵ Farrall *et al.*, "Elected Member Influence."; A. Wolska, "Kadencja Polski w Radzie Bezpieczeństwa ONZ: Ostrożnie z pochwałami?," EUROACTIV.pl, January 27, 2020, accessed March 30, 2025, <https://www.euractiv.pl/section/bezpieczenstwo-i-obrona/news/kadencja-polski-w-radzie-bezpieczenstwa-onz-ostroznie-z-pochwalami/>.

⁶⁶ A. Kozyska, "The Republic of Poland in the United Nations Security Council (2018–2019) and the Ukrainian Question," *International Relations of Ukraine: Scientific Searches and Findings* no. 31 (2022): 38–61, accessed April 5, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.15407/mzu2022.31.038>.