

The Pan-European Transport Corridor III from The Polish Geopolitical Perspective

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The Pan-European Transport Corridor III serves as potentially important linkage bringing together countries of Intermarum region, namely Poland, Germany and Ukraine in the parallel perspective. At the same time it seems that its role in being a passage leading to Asia may be questioned in the context of historically created transport networks that have played an important role in shaping the history of Europe and of the world. It does not mean, however, that it does not play an important role from Poland's geopolitical perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the article is to analyze the Pan-European Corridor III from the Polish geopolitical perspective. Although many experts are reluctant to use geopolitics as a method of space analysis from the political activity perspective accusing it of environmental determinism, ideologisation of science or even pseudoscience, it also has plenty supporters who claim that it is valuable in terms of becoming acquainted with the reasons of certain political events (the retrospective perspective), an analysis of the present political life and a projection of events that may occur in the future (the futuristic perspective). I do not think that geopolitics is the only and infallible means to conceptualize reality, but I assume that it is of great heuristic importance owing to which it is possible to analyse the Pan-European Corridor III from the Polish geopolitical perspective.

To begin with, it is essential to point out that the concept of 'geopolitical perspective' is subjective and refers to the way a given participant of political life perceives certain fragment of space (or the whole of it). The most common, although not exclusive, is the state-centric perspective (apart from this perspective an imperial one proposed by Tomasz Gabiś, a researcher from Wrocław, and the achievement of the French *Hérodote school* in the field of geopolitics of regions should be mentioned).

For the needs of this speech I followed the state perspective, although in the prospect of further research the role of the regions that constitute the Pan-European Corridor III is worth emphasizing.

2. TRANSPORT AND EUROPE'S POSITION ON THE MAP OF EURO-ASIA

Transport has always been a fundamental impuls for the development of civilisation, exchange of goods and ideas. What is more 'Along with the efficient financial system and professional activity it is a third kind of a peculiar "bloodstream" in the economic processes'.¹ As Mark Blacksell states 'Many important symbols of state control derive from transport and transport networks. In majority of the countries it is the state that is responsible for roads and their construction. At least since the times of the Roman Empire (...) roads are regarded as a way of unifying individual regions into one organism'.² The above statement is still true in the 21st century although apart from water and overland

¹ *The Poland 2030 Report*, scientific edit. M. Boni, The Board of Strategic Advisers to the Prime Minister of Poland, Warsaw 2009, p. 119.

² M. Blacksell, *Geografia polityczna*, Warsaw 2008, p. 36.

transport, air transport has come in to play. Bearing this in mind, a decision to create Pan-European Transport Corridors in March of 1994 was a significant element regarding Europe's, especially European Union's, political future³. It is worth pointing out that contrary to the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T's) which are a part of the Trans European Networks (TEN)⁴ the project was not only Union's⁵. At present the significance of the division is decreased⁶. The idea of close connection between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe in the official documents may be justified in many ways, however, geopolitical meaning of such connection is clear: it intergrates the East and the West (European Union) in terms of economy and civilization, and gives the latter one a chance to enhance its potential in comparison with the States and Asian countries. Efficient transport networks are vital for the tightening of trade relations, and are a tool by means of which *Neo-medieval* European Empire (term proposed by Jan Zielonka)⁷ will extend its influence beyond the Eastern lines. The literature regarding the subject states that 'Transport is of crucial importance for the social and economic development of Europe, and for that reason it is significant in the economic politics of European Union'.⁸

³ *Activities of the Conference: Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of Transport and Reports Approved 1997*, OECD Publishing, s. 11. Accessed through <<http://books.google.pl>> (20.09.2009).

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/basis_networks/basis_networks_en.htm> (20.09.2009).

⁵ It is not always stated in the geopolitical literature. See: L. Moczulski, *Europa Ojczyzn 2004. Geopolityka, gospodarka, cywilizacja*, Warsaw 2003, p. 220

⁶ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries Guidelines for transport in Europe and neighbouring regions*. Document available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0032:FIN:EN:HTML> (21.09.2009).

⁷ J. Zielonka, *Europe as Empire. The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

⁸ J. Brdulak, *Infrastruktura transportowa*, [in:] *Geografia ekonomiczna Unii Europejskiej*, scientific edit. I. Fierla, Warszawa 2007, p. 277.

Another matter which is important for the geopolitics is an increase, by means of construction of transport corridors, in the meaning of transport of people and goods beyond Europe-to Asia. In relation to Poland it indicates that 'Poland should strive to take over (from the former USSR) as much of the transport as possible (...). When it comes to land transport from Europe to Asia it should be the same'.⁹ From the perspective of geopolitical standards efficient transport corridors helping to eliminate the employment of sea trade are a tool for the rejection of the hegemony of the sea power (the United States). Halford J. Mackinder, a British scholar in the field of geopolitics, was aware of such a hazard, however, in relation to Great Britain. In 1904 at the meeting of the Royal Geographical Society in London he warned: '*A generation ago steam and the Suez canal appeared to have increased the mobility of sea-power relatively to land-power. Railways acted chiefly as feeders to ocean-going commerce. But trans-continental railways are now transmuting the conditions of land-power (...). In the matter of commerce it must not be forgotten that ocean-going traffic, however relatively cheap, usually involves the fourfold handling of goods – at the factory of origin, at the export wharf, at the import wharf, and at the inland warehouse for retail distribution; whereas the continental railway truck may run direct from the exporting factory into the importing warehouse. (...) it is inevitable that a vast economic world, more or less apart will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce*'.¹⁰ Mackinder warned against the situation when Eurasian economies would not need the support of sea power. At present, owing to the construction of transport networks with the Pan-European Transport Corridor III among them, we may observe that Europe and Asia come closer. Even though the process is still in progress¹¹, it is

⁹ T. Markowski, *Geopolityczne położenie Polski – szanse jego wykorzystania*, [in:] *Jak wykorzystać geopolityczne położenie Polski?*, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2006, p. 43.

¹⁰ H. J. Mackinder, *The Geographical Pivot of History*, „The Geographical Journal”, No. 4. April 1904, vol. XXIII.

¹¹ According to Edwin Mendyk 'The Transport Corridors III and IV through Kiev-Tashkent lead by means of middle, Euroasian rail road to China. Nowadays, the corridors are used in different ways, and usually do

predictable that it will have a significant influence on Poland, Germany and Ukraine since it will bond the countries.

3. INTERMERE MACROREGION AND THE PAN-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR III

From the very beginning of geopolitics the scholars distinguish a region on the European continent they refer to as Middle Europe (*Mittleuropa, l'Europe Centrale*). It is a region which Poland belongs to, and as states Zbigniew Rykiel the concept is not culture or physical bound but is of political nature only¹². The region is often called Intermarum/ Isthmus accordingly to the Polish geopolitical tradition dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. Leszek Moczulski marks off the borders of Intermarum very widely as it is pictured on the following map.

Moczulski stated that 'The Republic of Poland is a geopolitical keystone helping the countries of Intermarum in the process integration with the Eastern Europe. Poland unifies into one territorial unit eight countries. It enables to take a decisive step from the perspective of the whole Europe: the East joins the West. (...). At the same time, owing to the fact that Poland is a part of EU further integration with eastern and south-eastern countries is possible'.¹³ It is worth to juxtapose this remark with the graphic visualisation of 'second lung' of Europe by Andrzej Piskozub. They are very similar.

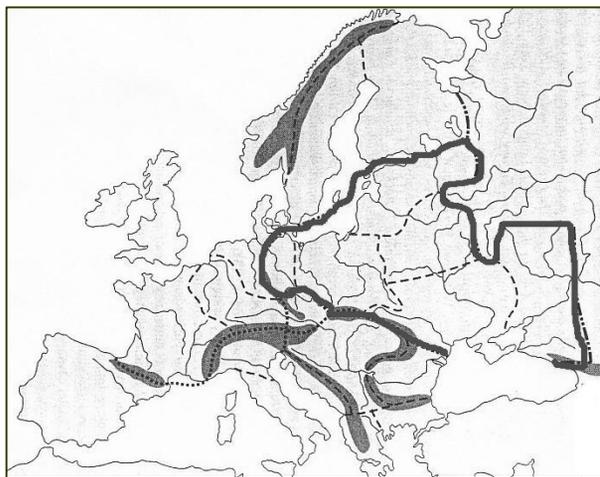


Figure 1. Geopolitical location of Intermarum Macroregion.
Source: own study on the basis of: L. Moczulski, *Geopolityka. Potęga w czasie i przestrzeni*, Warszawa 1999, p. 139.



Figure 2. Europe's 'second lung' between ethnic Russia and 'iron curtain' 1945-1989

Source: A. Piskozub, 1998, p. 64 [in: *Jak wykorzystać geopolityczne położenie Polski?*, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2006, p. 17.

not match the potential capacity of the main lines.' E. Mendyk, *Usprawnienie obsługi euroazjatyckich łańcuchów logistycznych w transporcie kolejowym*, „Logistyka” 3/2003, p. 63.

¹² Z. Rykiel, *Podstawy geografii politycznej*, Warsaw 2006, p. 179. See also L. Moczulski, *Narodziny Międzymorza*, Warsaw 2007, p. 78 i n.; id, *Geopolityka. Potęga w czasie i przestrzeni*, Warsaw 1999, p. 140.

¹³ L. Moczulski, *Europa Ojczyzn...*, p. 245.

Communication and transport networks development are vital for serving this purpose. However, Leszek Moczulski omits the Pan-European Transport Corridor III when he presents Europe's natural routes. He explains it with the fact that on the map there is only the main natural route running along the Danube River (which he refers

to as ‘Central Trans-European route’¹⁴). Yet, he points out that the Pan-European Transport Corridor III is within the borders of a network of roads connected to this natural route and is its most Northern branch¹⁵.

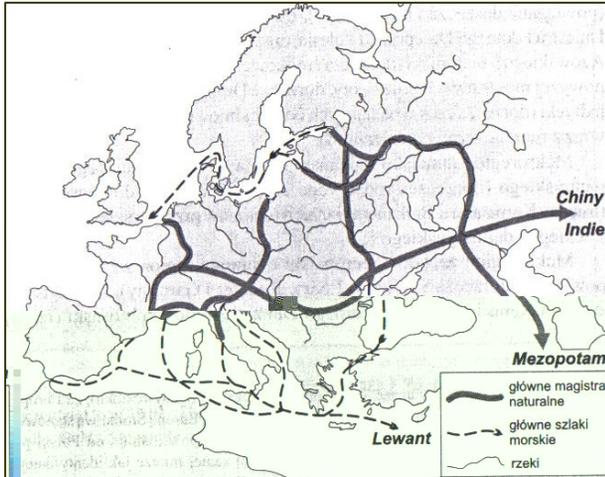


Figure 3. Main natural routes according to L. Moczulski
Source: L. Moczulski, *Geopolityka. Potęga...*, p. 146.

However, it is necessary to point out that L. Moczulski also omits the Pan-European Transport Corridor III when he pictures natural routes in the European Plain.

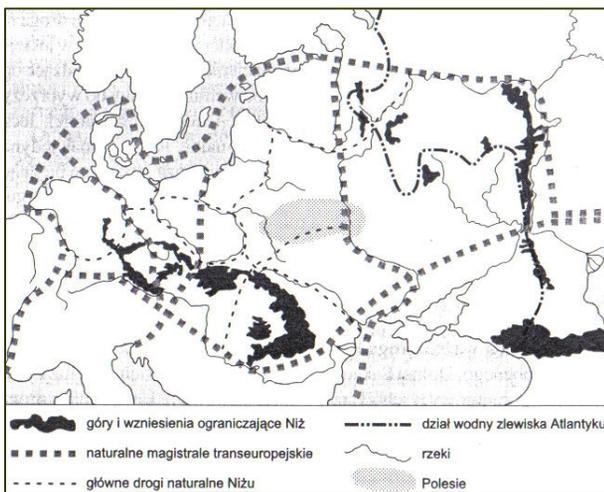


Figure 4. Natural routes in the European Plain.
Source: L. Moczulski, *Geopolityka. Potęga...*, p. 161.

What is more, in his opinion ‘both main natural routes running westward branch and follow the north-eastern and the south-eastern border of the Plain via Western Europe. This way they surround the macroregion. Therefore, the network of huge natural cross-European routes runs around the Plain¹⁶. It indicates that the Pan-European Transport Corridor III links the countries in the area of Intermarum only, not the west and the east. Andrzej Piskozub comes to a similar conclusion: ‘In the economic perspective territory of Poland bridges the huge transit between Germany (...) and Ukraine, the broadest and the most densely populated country in the area of ‘European second lung’¹⁷. Thus, is the Corridor of trans-European importance?’

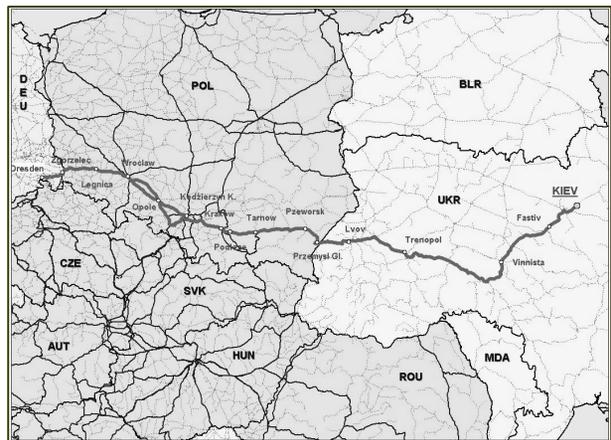


Figure 5. The Pan-European Transport Corridor III
Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
www.unece.org/trans/main/ter/Countries/Corridors/corr3.jpg
(24.09.2009)

4. POLISH GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Potentially Poland plays a significant role in the communication system. It is believed that ‘Our country due to its central location in Europe will be very important for the international transport, not only the automotive transport’¹⁸. Four Transport Corridors run through Poland:

¹⁴ Idem *Narodziny...*, p. 50

¹⁵ L. Moczulski, an interview from 25.09.2009. The interview is the author’s possession.

¹⁶ Idem, *Geopolityka. Potęga...*, p. 154-155.

¹⁷ A. Piskozub, 1998, p. 76-77. *Za: Jak wykorzystać geopolityczne położenie Polski?*, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2006, p. 20.

¹⁸ J. Brdulak, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

- Helsinki-Tallinn-Riga-Kaunas-Warsaw (via Baltica), with a IA brach Riga-Kaliningrad-Elblag-Gdansk;
- Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod;
- Berlin-Wroclaw-Katowice-Przemysl-Lviv-Kiev, with a VI branch Dresden-Krzywa (Legnica);
- Gdansk-Katowice-Zylina, with a VIA branch Grudziadz-Poznan and a VIB branch Czestochowa-Katowice-Ostrawa.¹⁹

It is necessary to point out that at the moment on the top 30 TEN-T projects list which are to be commenced before 2010²⁰ and terminated around 2020²¹ there is no Pan-European Transport Corridor III infrastructure. It is a reason for a certain gap on the map where the most significant routes in the opinion of EU were marked up.

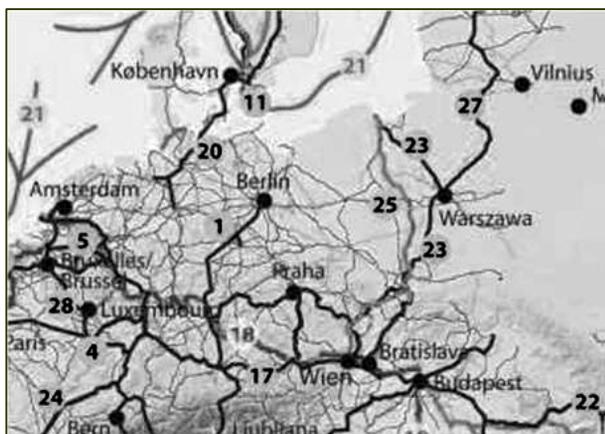


Figure 6. The TEN-T's priority projects (fragment)

Source: *TEN-T priority axes and projects 2005*, p. 12. The publication available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/maps/doc/ten-t_pp_axes_projects_2005.pdf (21.09.2009).

¹⁹ Bogdan Kawalko, *Transeuropejskie sieci infrastrukturalne w układzie polsko-ukraińskim*, „Nasze Forum. Biuletyn Informacyjny Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Administracji w Zamościu”, No. 20, October 2003. Available at: <<http://www.wszia.edu.pl/wydawnictwa-wszia/nasze-forum/nasze-forum-nr-20/transsieci.htm>> (21.09.2009).

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/maps/maps_en.htm (21.09.2009).

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/maps/30_priority_axes_en.htm (21.09.2009).

On the other hand, according to the guidelines enclosed in *The Poland 2030 Report*, the target communication system of Poland contains a route within the Transport Corridor III.



Figure 7. Targets of communication infrastructure until 2030.

Source: *Raport Polska 2030*, op. cit., p. 124.

Table 1. Financial perspective of 30 priority projects (excluding Galileo).

TEN-T Priority projects	1993/96 - 1999 EU 15	2000-2006 EU 27	2007-2013 EU 27
Cost (€ billion):			
TEN-T 30	32,65	93,7	154
- New Member States (EU 12)			16
- Old Member States (EU 15)			138
Community contribution (€ billion)			
Programme			
TEN-T	1,35	2,80	5,4
Cohesion Fund	3,83	7,0	12,3
ERDF	1,46	4,81	4,7
EIB Loans and guarantees	9,78	16,1	25
Total Community contribution (€ billion)			
Grants	6,64-20,3%	14,61(15,6%)	22,4(14,5%)
Grants and loans	16,42-50,3%	30,71(32,8%)	47,4(30,8%)
Other resources (national)	16,23-49,7%	63-67,2%	106,6-69,2%

Source: *TEN-T funding in figures*

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/funding/doc/funding_figs.pdf (21.09.2009).

It is a great challenge because it is planned to allocate considerable sums of around 22.4 million (only grants are taken into accounts; loans are excluded) for the realization of the priority projects. The Table 1 shows the details.

From the Central-East European perspective it is worth ascertaining that according to L. Moczulski the enlargement of the European Union changed the direction of 'communication lines' (the phrase used by the author) in Europe.

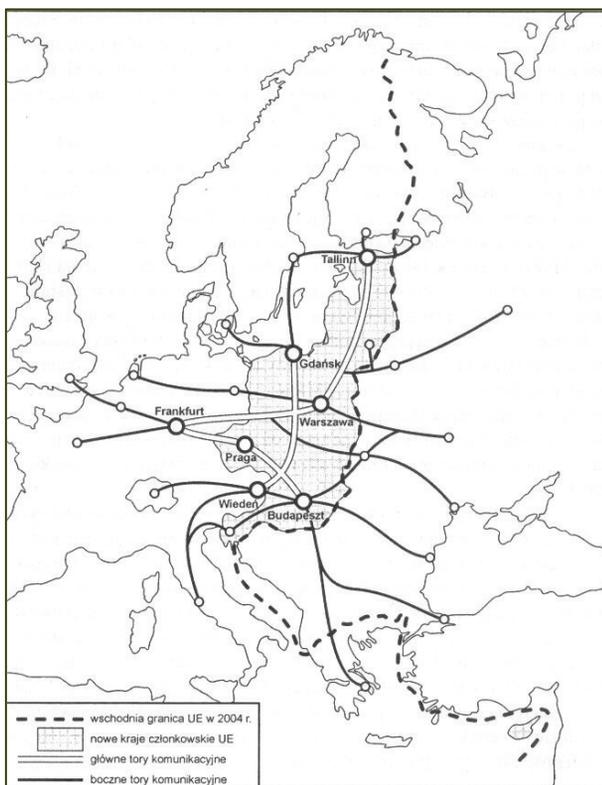


Figure 8. Communication lines in Europe after the 2004 enlargement.

Source: L. Moczulski, *Europa Ojczyzn...*, p. 223.

Moczulski appreciates the role of the Pan-European Transport Corridor III (which he describes as 'communication line'), however, at the same time criticises the system of transport networks for the fact that it was designed at the times of bipolar division when Poland was politically dependant on the USSR which had a vested interest in the road system²². It does not change the fact that the Pan-European Transport Corridor III in the new geopolitical reality of

Europe has a chance to become one of the elements of the Berlin-Warsaw-Kiev alliance²³. It seems that it is also significant for Europe-Asia route. Yet, this prospect is less probable due to the natural Trans-European routes system in the parallel perspective. It necessary to point out that the influence of the Pan-European Transport Corridor III on the stimulation of the economic activity in the regions it runs through is relatively small²⁴ which does not affect the domestic potential of a given region, and in consequence the country's.

Taking current political events into account, the issue of Euro 2012 will be a significant trial not only in terms of organization, but also in terms of creation of the geopolitical base. Ukraine is not a member of EU which causes communication problems. Radosław Sikorki stated that 'the football fans from Wrocław or Gdansk will rather travel by planes than cars'²⁵, however in the long-term perspective it is necessary to link our Eastern neighbour with the West. It is indisputable that it is one of the priorities of our foreign policy consistent with the Polish geopolitical perspective.

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²³ W. Kazanecki, *Germany, Poland, Ukraine – Building an Alliance in International Sphere – Geopolitical Aspect*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Międzynarodowy. Wrocław International Review”, No. 1/2007, Year I, Wrocław 2007, pp. 71-83.

²⁴ See A. Raczyk, *Zmiany aktywności gospodarczej w III Paneuropejskim korytarzu transportowym*, „Logistyka i Transport”, No. 1(4)/2007.

²⁵ *Informacja ministra spraw zagranicznych o założeniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2008 r.*, „Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 15 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 7 maja 2008 r.”, Warsaw 2008, p. 91.

²² L. Moczulski, an interview from 25.09.2009.

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