Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

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# The gray zone between peace and war is shrinking fast

On November 14, two operatives tried to sabotage the railway line running from Warsaw into Ukraine.

An explosion destroyed a section of track near the village of Mika, while another incident damaged power lines near Gołąb station, forcing a train carrying 475 passengers to make an emergency stop.

Had it not been for the driver's quick reaction, there would have been fatalities.

According to subsequent media reports, the damage was caused by three explosive devices placed several dozen centimeters apart.

Then, in a speech before the Polish parliament, Prime Minister Donald Tusk shared findings from the Polish prosecutor's office and special services (in cooperation with allied countries), which determined that the alleged perpetrators, Yevhenii Ivanov and Oleksandr Kononov, were Ukrainian citizens who had arrived from Belarus – a Kremlin client state – and returned there immediately afterwards.

One had previously been convicted in the Ukrainian city of Lviv for acts of sabotage, and the other is a resident of Russian-controlled Donbas.

It is standard practice for the Kremlin to use Ukrainians to carry out attacks on Poland, which Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski has described as state terrorism.

The attackers are usually recruited from occupied territories, where it is easy to force cooperation by threatening the target's family.

## Russian provocations are becoming more frequent

In this case, Polish authorities already knew the saboteurs' biographical details and faces, and they have claimed that both were acting on Russia's behalf.

The attackers used a military-grade C4 explosive device, detonated using a 300-meter cable as the train passed – a modus operandi consistent with previous instances of Russian sabotage.

Positioning the explosives on a curve atop a fairly high embankment suggests an intent to derail the train.

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In this way, the Russians could signal their ability to inflict severe damage on the rail lines used to transport weapons to Ukraine.

Russian provocations in Poland are becoming more frequent and more dangerous.

In May 2024, agents acting on behalf of Russia caused a huge fire in a shopping center on Marywilska Street in Warsaw, and also set fire to a paint factory in Wrocław.

Thousands of people lost their belongings and their jobs. In both cases, the accused were caught and convicted. Then there was the September 2025 incursion by 19 drones on Polish territory – an event that garnered widespread media coverage around the world.

All these cases could have resulted in casualties, but fortunately did not. But the latest case is different, because causing casualties appears to have been the specific intent.

## Russia wants to deepen political polarization in Poland

There is every reason to expect further escalation. The gray zone between peace and war is shrinking fast.

Russia wants to drive a wedge between Poland and Ukraine, deepen the already extreme political polarization in Poland, and empower

domestic forces hostile to the European Union.

Those who speak of a Polish departure from the EU have been gaining ground and chalking up some spectacular successes.

In a speech delivered on November 11, Poland's Independence Day, the new right-wing president, Karol Nawrocki, did not once mention Russia as a threat.

Instead, he directed his ire at the EU. "The President of Poland will never allow us to become once again the peacock and parrot of nations, passively repeating what comes from the West," he declared. "Some Polish politicians are ready to give away Polish freedom, independence, and sovereignty piece by piece to foreign institutions, tribunals, and foreign EU agendas."

Despite repeated invitations, Nawrocki has refused to make the short trip to Kyiv to talk to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

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The Kremlin well knows that Jarosław Kaczyński's populist Law and Justice (PiS) party was galvanized by Nawrocki's election and will use any excuse to attack Tusk's government.

Even when Tusk was delivering his purely informative, sober-minded speech after the rail attack, he was repeatedly interrupted by hostile shouts from the PiS faction.

Likewise, Nawrocki used the occasion to criticize the government for not keeping him properly informed.

He is now demanding regular briefings from the heads of the security services, who answer exclusively to the prime minister.

He has even refused to sign recent appointments for intelligence and counterintelligence positions – an unprecedented violation of norms.

These are the same state services that deal with neutralizing attacks such as the one that has just occurred.

## An army of useful idiots

Nawrocki is also refusing to approve judicial nominees who resisted pressure from the former PiS government's justice minister, Zbigniew Ziobro.

Their only fault was to refer in their rulings to European court decisions finding Ziobro's actions to be incompatible with EU law.

Never mind that Ziobro faces embezzlement charges and has fled to Hungary – Russia's most dependable ally within the EU.

And never mind that one of Ziobro's associates, the former judge Tomasz Szmydt, has fled to Belarus.

Nor is PiS the only problem for Tusk and others who still support Polish democracy and EU membership.

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The even more extreme, anti-Ukrainian Confederation party is growing, as is Grzegorz Braun's openly pro-Russian, anti-Semitic Korona party, whose support in recent opinion

polls exceeds the 5% electoral threshold.

These groups turned out in force on Independence Day. Nawrocki, Kaczyński, and Braun all marched in a procession of anti-Ukrainian nationalists and fascists organized by the Confederation.

If parliamentary elections were held today, polls suggest that PiS and the Confederation would form the next government.

With Poland on track to build Europe's largest military, the rest of the EU must worry that it could soon have to contend with an army of useful idiots.

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