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From Absorption to Agency: An Entrepreneur's Voice in the Debate on a New Model for Poland's Development

The fundamental diagnosis presented by Marian Gorynia, Łukasz Hardt, and Marek Kośny is correct: Poland has achieved remarkable success in catching up with the West, but the sources of that success are gradually being exhausted. From the perspective of an entrepreneur, I would add one observation. The challenge is not to find a new set of economic policy instruments. We are facing a choice between an economy that efficiently implements ideas developed elsewhere and an economy that transforms its own ideas into products, technologies, organizations, and brands present on international markets. This also requires transforming the education system from one based on memorization to one focused on analysis, creativity, and innovation.

The model that has brought us this far was not a mistake. Low labor costs, foreign capital, imported technologies, exports, and integration into European supply chains enabled us to close a gap that we had been unable to overcome for decades. The real problem will arise only if we regard a solution that was appropriate for one stage of development as sufficient for the next. Poland cannot compete permanently on low labor costs while quickly learning to operate technologies designed by others. The next stage requires a transition from absorption to agency and creativity.

Economic agency does not emerge simply from declaring a commitment to innovation. It develops where capital, knowledge, courage, effective organization, and the ability to bring projects to completion come together. After several decades of running a company, I have learned that an idea has value only when someone takes responsibility for it. Money must be committed, the right people recruited, risks accepted, mistakes and delays overcome, and ultimately customers convinced that something better than existing solutions has been created. In business, as in applied science, reality is the ultimate test.

This is why distinguishing between expenditure and investment is crucial. Investment is not merely the allocation of funds but a commitment to future results. Without competent staff, effective processes, market demand, and sound management, even substantial spending may fail to generate economic value.

This is particularly evident in the pharmaceutical industry. The path from idea to product is long and complex: research, technology development, process validation, quality assurance, regulatory compliance, manufacturing, logistics, and patient trust. No link in the chain can be omitted without creating a risk of compromising quality. A high value-added economy is not built on isolated "innovations" but on organizations capable of combining knowledge, delivered through a modern educational system, with disciplined execution.

Entrepreneurs do not need a state that tells them which products to make or which markets to enter. They need a predictable state. Investments are made for many years, not for the duration of a single political term. Every sudden change in legislation, taxation, or financing rules increases the cost of doing business for years to come. Uncertainty has a price. An entrepreneur who does not know the rules under which they will operate will postpone decisions, scale down projects, or choose a safer market.

A strong market requires an effective state: functioning courts, stable laws, high-quality education, infrastructure, energy security, and protection of property rights. The proper form of support is the assurance that arbitrary risks will not be introduced.

The same perspective should be applied to cooperation between academia and business. We have discussed it for years, yet too often it begins with the signing of a letter of intent and ends with reports on projects, grants, and subsidies. Genuine cooperation starts with a jointly identified problem. An entrepreneur should clearly define what is needed: a new product, improved productivity, reduced energy consumption, or a shorter process. A scientist should have the freedom to search for answers, including the

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possibility of failure. Both sides must define responsibilities, intellectual property rights, timelines, and methods of evaluating results.

The objective is not to subordinate science to the immediate needs of business. Fundamental research is essential, even when its outcomes are distant and unpredictable. Rather, the system should reward those who can translate knowledge from the laboratory into practice. Research, patents, prototypes, and implementation are different stages of the same journey, not competing worlds. If an entrepreneur commits their own resources, they have the right to expect measurable progress. If a scientist takes genuine research risks, they should not be evaluated in the same way as a provider of routine services.

The second major test of Poland's new development model will be demographic change. As the working-age population declines, automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence cease to be trends and become necessities. However, purchasing technology must not be confused with transformation. A poorly designed process remains a poor process after digitalization, just faster. Artificial intelligence will not replace strategy, responsibility, or industry expertise. What it can do is enhance the capabilities of people who understand their work, can formulate problems correctly, and can evaluate the results they receive.

The greatest limitation, therefore, will not be access to tools but the quality of competencies and organizational structures. We need people who combine knowledge with practical action, can work in teams, challenge established patterns, and take responsibility for their decisions. Education should not primarily reward the reproduction of textbook knowledge. It should cultivate the ability to identify problems, formulate hypotheses, test them, and carry projects through to successful outcomes. Science should generate practical, applicable knowledge.

The next step must be a strong international presence of Polish companies. We need our own brands, technologies, intellectual property, sales networks, and regulatory expertise. Together with government administration and trade counselors at Polish embassies, a strategy must be developed to support the international expansion of Polish enterprises.

This does not mean rejecting foreign capital. On the contrary, Poland's integration into the European Union's single market remains one of the country's greatest development achievements. Business maturity, however, means not being merely a recipient of foreign capital, technologies, and rules but becoming a co-creator of them.

Profit is not a flaw in a company. Without profit there can be no investment, wage increases, research, resilience to crises, or capacity for risk-taking. Yet profit achieved at the expense of quality or people is illusory. Companies operate within a broader environment and benefit from resources they did not create themselves: education, infrastructure, security, work culture, and social trust.

Properly understood pragmatism therefore suggests that responsibility and profitability are not opposites. Profit is a condition for responsible development, and responsibility is a condition for sustainable profitability. Poland is home to many companies that have spent years reinvesting, developing their workforce and competencies, and continue to make strategic decisions domestically. Such firms are particularly valuable because they combine capital with responsibility for the place in which they operate. Economic policy should support their growth, succession, and international expansion, but without creating privileged groups protected from competition. The authors are also right to point out the costs of polarization. A state-owned enterprise should not invalidate previous investments every time its CEO changes. We may disagree on methods, but in matters of security, demographics, education, energy, digitalization, and the basic conditions for doing business, we need continuity. Capital is committed where institutions are credible. I therefore see the Poznań Declaration as an invitation to cooperation. Its success will not depend on the number of sound proposals it contains but on the ability to select priorities and implement them consistently. Every project must have an owner, a schedule, a source of financing, and a measurable outcome. In a private company, no project is considered completed simply because many meetings have been held and the budget has been spent. What matters is whether a new product was created, quality improved, or the production process shortened.

I believe we speak far too little about artificial intelligence—the technological revolution we are currently experiencing. This is a mistake, because the coming years will transform our economic, social, and probably political reality.

A new model of development for Poland will not emerge overnight, nor will it be implemented through a single piece of legislation. It will arise from thousands of decisions made in companies, laboratories, schools, local governments, and state institutions. The role of public policy is to create conditions in which it pays to think long term, invest, experiment, and take responsibility.

Poland has proven its ability to catch up with the West. Now it must learn how to co-create it. It is not enough to describe a new development model. We must create the conditions for its implementation in everyday practice. Entrepreneurs, scientists, public administration officials, and politicians should work together to build a strategy for Poland for the next five to ten years and implement it consistently, much as China has done in recent years.