The Role of NATO and the EU in Poland's Security and Defence Policy

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The Poles belong to one of those nations that did not own an independent state during the classical time of national development between the 18th century and early 20th century. Furthermore, Poland lost its independence at the same time as the conception of modern nationalism began to conquer Europe. According to Przemysław Grudziński, the lack of a nation state, and especially the historical role of the Russian empire in this explain that the struggle for survival became a strong and integral part of the Polish national conscience, including a part of the Polish security perception after the creation of an independent Poland in 1918 (Grudziński 2008, 72).

The major historical developments affecting Poland during the 20th century – the strategic balancing between Germany and the Soviet Union in the interwar period, the fourth division of Poland as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, and its drift into the Soviet sphere of influence after the second world war – all strengthened this perception of the non-communist Polish political elite. The role of NATO in Poland's security and defence policy is also decisively defined by this consideration, the perception of the Russian threat. This explains not only Poland's active presence in the Alliance but how since its accession to NATO, Warsaw has supported strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance and enlargement to the East (Zając 2014, 191). As it will be seen, Poland's expectations connected to NATO essentially define its relationship to the EU's common security and defence policy.

NATO in the Polish security policy concept

NATO as the key institution of Poland's security appeared rather early in the Polish security policy thinking. We can make this claim despite the fact that the security policy document of the Polish Republic's defence doctrine of February 1990 was based on the strategic concept of assuring its own security. It is important to take into account that at the time of the adoption of the first strategically significant security policy document after the political transition, the Warsaw Pact still existed formally. NATO declared its intention to cooperate with the Eastern and Central European countries only a couple of months later, at the London NATO Summit. Conversely, the document on "The principles of the Polish security policy and security policy and defence strategy of the Polish Republic" adopted in 1992 was unambiguous about the Polish political elite's objective and intention to take Poland into NATO and the Western European Union (Strategia RP 1992, 5). With the acceptance of this document a nearly two year-long debate about the possible models of assuring Polish security came to a conclusion,

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which included the theoretical options of neutrality, a Central European defence alliance, a cooperative security model based on OSCE alongside the accession to Western defence institutions. Warsaw's decision on behalf of NATO arose from the recognition that with the fall of the bipolar world order, the United States remained the sole global great power without a competitor, and it was in the interest of the U.S. to maintain and effectively operate the Alliance (Waltz 2000, 18–39).

The most significant value of the North Atlantic Alliance for Poland is the collective defence clause of Article 5, and the fact that its leading power is the United States, which is seen by the Polish political elite as a world power that can credibly deter Russia from aggressive behaviour. The adherence to hard security guarantees arises from Poland's geopolitical position and negative historical experience. The country is placed in such a region where the interests of great powers often collided, and the Polish nation not once felt betrayed by its European allies. It is enough to point at the beginning of the Second World War when British–Polish and French–Polish mutual defence assistance did not go into effect despite the German and the Russian aggression. The strong impact and continued effect of historical experience was also decisive in other aspects. Although the geopolitical changes occurring in the Western and Southern neighbourhood of Poland after the end of the Cold War were considered positive, Russia in the Eastern neighbourhood was still viewed as a potential threat (Zając 2014, 194). This provides an explanation why Warsaw as a NATO member urged the strengthening of the primary function of the Alliance, essentially the collective defence all along, and usually openly opposed every change (such as the plan to create European defence autonomy, the duplication of capabilities) which was considered to weaken this objective (Kuźniar 2018, 59).

In exchange for the hard security guarantees, the Polish political elite promised and delivered strong Polish security policy, military commitment and solidarity for the Alliance and its members, primarily in relation to the United States. This was not only evident in Poland's serious participation in every major mission of the Alliance since 1996, but by usually siding with the United States in the debates within NATO. Furthermore, sometimes it even went to greater lengths, such as in 2003 when it gave military support for the United States in the war against Iraq (Tálas 2004).

When Warsaw formulated its intention to join NATO in 1992, the Polish leadership expected that Poland would join an alliance based on collective defence. However, since the middle of the 1990s, NATO has taken on an increasing number of operations outside the borders of its members – realising the concept of the out-of-area missions of the 1991 Rome Summit – and has increasingly formed into a collective security organisation. Although Poland participated in these missions actively or, according to many, even above its strength, it was always one of those NATO members which thought that the capabilities of the Alliance should be developed in a way that preserves the balance between collective defence and out-of-area engagement (Klich 2009). Some Polish security policy experts close to the government even expressed such opinions that the operations conducted outside of the Article 5 regions had a negative impact on the prestige of the Alliance (Wągrowska 2004). Although NATO's engagement in the Balkans was considered to be successful, the interventions in Afghanistan (2002–2014), in Iraq (2003–2011) and later in Libya (2011) were viewed as failures, since they did not result in more stable states and political situation (Smalec 2012; Kuźniar 2018, 60). Moreover, Warsaw – together with the Baltic

states – already assessed after the August 2008 Georgian–Russian war that Russia poses an increasing threat to the Central European countries (Tálas 2014). This was emphasised by Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorwski to U.S. officials, noting that while previously Russia was considered to pose a direct threat to Polish security only in a 10–15 years time frame, after the five-day war, this period decreased to 10–15 months (Gazeta.pl 2010). From this point on, Warsaw stressed even more firmly the need to strengthen the collective defence and territorial defence tasks of the Alliance, and in the context of Polish–American relations, the pretence for additional security guarantees provided by the United States came up more often (Ek 2008, 6). Since the country cannot formally receive such guarantees, Warsaw sought to take a role in such security policy questions, where Poland positions itself as an indispensable actor in the context of the security of the United States and the North Atlantic Alliance. In the past decade, the European installation of the U.S.–NATO missile defence system gave the best opportunity for Poland to advance this goal (Koziej 2008; Nycz 2013; Adamczyk 2014).

The Polish leadership could claim its first major success in strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance at the 2010 Lisbon Summit. Although the strategic concept adopted at the summit assigned three main responsibilities to the alliance – collective security, crisis management, cooperative security – the document made it clear that collective defence is the priority (Strategic Concept 2010, 7). At the 2012 Chicago Summit, the most important success for Warsaw was the decision of the NATO member states to deploy a missile defence system in Europe with one of its key components to be based in Poland (Pietrzak 2012, 61; Zając 2014, 197).

The 2014 Ukrainian developments (the annexation of Crimea and the support for Eastern Ukrainian separatists) further shifted the Polish leadership's attention towards strengthening the collective defence function of NATO. As a result, one of the most prominent Polish security policy experts, Stanislaw Koziej defines our era as a "new Cold War" (Koziej 2018, 1). In 2014, at the UN general assembly, Polish President Bronisław Komorowski stated if not in such a stark fashion, but in a similar mood, that the world is beginning to return to the politics of great power sphere of influence, which led to numerous confrontations and conflicts in the past (Komorowski 2014). It is not a coincidence that in March–April 2014, the Alliance decided to strengthen the members of the Eastern flank of NATO with rotational military presence as a result of a Polish initiative (Zając 2014, 197–198), which was followed by numerous steps which sought to strengthen collective defence at the 2014 Newport Summit (Csiki et al. 2014). From the perspective of Polish security, the basing of 4,500 NATO troops – within NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) programme – in the Baltics and in Poland has a considerable significance (EFP Factsheet 2018). Similarly, the increase of the number of U.S. troops stationed in Poland within a bilateral defence cooperation framework is also important for Warsaw (Atlantic Resolve 2018).

Alongside strengthening collective defence and deepening Polish–American military relations, the leadership in Warsaw also puts a significant emphasis on the development and increase of its own military capabilities. This is reflected in not only the increasing defence expenditures, with reaching 2.2% of GDP spent on defence by 2020 and targeting 2.5% by 2030 (Palowski 2017a), but in setting serious modernisation plans for the Polish armed forces which it seeks to achieve (Palowski 2017b; Palowski 2018). Alongside membership, the debates in the Alliance also give further incentives for Warsaw to pursue this path,

which is viewed by the Polish decision-makers as an increasing internal weakness since 2014 (Fryc 2014; BMA 2017).

NATO's "open door policy" and Poland

In addition to its support for strengthening the collective defence function of the Alliance, since its membership in 1999 Poland has been one of the most active supporters of NATO enlargement. This was the case with the Baltics – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – until 2004, Ukraine and Georgia from 2006, and Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and even Macedonia. Poland, together with other Central European countries, the United States and Canada made the greatest efforts in connection to the enlargement at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. As it is known, the Croatian and Albanian accession was secured, in case of Ukraine and Georgia, they could not convince those with opposite views that NATO should lay out a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for the two countries. According to Polish analysts, it was primarily thanks to Warsaw – and personally President Lech Kaczyński – that the Alliance declared: these countries will in the future be part of NATO, and the Alliance would begin a systematic cooperation with them (Madej 2008; Legucka 2010).

The Polish support of the membership of the Baltic states, Ukraine and Georgia was closely connected to the so-called ULB (Ukraine, Lithuania, Belorussia) doctrine which was framed by two Western Polish emigrants, Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski during the 1970s on the pages of the French *Kultura* magazine, which was very popular until 2014 in post-Cold War Poland. Giedroyc and Mieroszewski depart from the notion that the strongest guarantee of Poland's security is the creation of the independent statehood and independence of these countries, and the recognition of their current borders by Poland, with the normalisation of relations between Warsaw and Moscow (Unger 2009, 151–156; Urbańczyk 2015, 309–322). While the first element of the doctrine was well received since it was a continuation of Józef Piłsudski's concept, the latter stirred up a huge debate among the post-war Polish emigrants, since it suggested that the Polish society should accept the loss of historical Polish territories detached in 1939 (Najder 2010). The post-1989 popularity of the concept that reflected the post-Yalta international realities was further confirmed by the fact that Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski mentioned the ULB doctrine in his 2014 national assembly statement (Sikorski 2014). However, many dispute the notion that the normalisation of relations between Warsaw and Moscow was part of the concept outlined by Giedroyc and Mieroszewski. Many among the Polish politician and security policy experts only view independent Ukraine, Lithuania and Belorussia as a buffer zone that keeps Russia away from Poland (Gazeta.pl 2010).

The Polish position on NATO enlargement was not altered by the Ukrainian conflict (the annexation of Crimea, the Eastern Ukrainian separatism and its Russian support). Former President Bronisław Komorowski, as well as current President Andrzej Duda has repeatedly come out in strong support of the Alliance's open door policy (Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe 2014; Gazeta Prawna 2017; Jagiellonia 2018). This is important even if the decision-makers in Warsaw are also aware of the fact that in the forthcoming years, the NATO accession of Ukraine and Georgia does not have much political and security policy reality.

Poland's participation in NATO's crisis management activities

As it has been already mentioned, there is a twofold feature in Poland's relations with post-1991 NATO. Warsaw prefers hard security guarantees with urging the strengthening of the collective defence as the basic task of the Alliance, and openly or less so openly criticised every aspiration (such as NATO's shift of attention towards out-of-area operations in the 1990s) which was considered to be a threat to collective defence. The position of the Polish leadership was well reflected in the 2007 Security Strategy of the Polish Republic, which includes the following:

"Poland […] supports NATO's selective engagement in stabilization missions outside Europe, provided, however, that the Alliance maintains a credible potential and is fully capable of collectively defending its member states, and also accounts for the impact of NATO's non-European operations on the course, pace and costs of modernization and transformation of Allied armed forces, including Poland's" (National Security Strategy 2007, 10).

On the other hand, it is a fact that from a very early stage in the middle of the 1990s, Poland began to participate with rather significant contributions in NATO's crisis management operations, including out-of-area operations, as a way to demonstrate its commitment to the Alliance.

The Polish armed forces began to take part in NATO's operations in the Balkans even before its accession and in the majority of European and non-European NATO missions. In 1995, with 660 troops in the IFOR in Bosnia, with 300–500 troops between 1996–2004 in SFOR, with 140 troops in the Albanian AFOR and with 800 troops in KFOR in Kosovo in 1999, where 250 Polish troops are still present. Between 2001–2003, Poland sent 25 soldiers to the Amber Fox and Allied Harmony operations in Macedonia; in 2004, it supported securing the Olympics in Athens with a 52-strong chemical unit (Distinguished Games). During 2005–2011, Polish naval forces contributed to the Active Endeavour maritime operations (26–215 personnel), since 2006, the Polish Air Force was engaged in the Baltic Air Policing mission aiming to defend and control Baltic airspace six times (70–110 personnel). Poland took on its share in NATO's operations outside of Europe. Between 2002–2014, it participated in the operations of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, first mainly with reconstruction tasks, from 2008 taking on the responsibility of the military stabilisation of the Ghazni Province (Polish Task Force White Eagle). From the initial 300 personnel, the number in the Polish contingent increased to 1,200 between 2004–2006, and to 2,600 between 2008–2010. With this level of contribution, the Afghan mission was the largest Polish engagement in stabilisation operations, with also undertaking advisory and training roles between 2009 and 2014 (NTM-A). In 2005–2006, Warsaw sent 140 troops to NATO's Swift Relief mission in Pakistan which provided humanitarian assistance to tackle the consequences of a major earthquake, and between 2005 and 2011, 15–20 personnel was sent to support NATO's training mission in Iraq (NTM-I). Poland also continues to take part in NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan with 120 troops (Zając 2014, 202–205; Ożarowski 2014, 277–293; Lasoń 2015, 121–129; Błazeusz 2016).

Alongside the NATO missions, Poland also joined the U.S.-led Afghan, Kuwaiti and Iraqi stabilisation operations. Between 2002–2009, Poland participated with 120–180 troops in the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and between 2003–2008 with

a 180–2,500-strong contingent in the Iraqi Freedom military stabilisation operations. The gradual increase in Polish participation in NATO's operations in Afghanistan was enabled by the decrease of Polish military presence in Iraq from 2005 (from 2,500 in 2003 to 1,700 in 2005, 1,400 in 2006, 900 in 2007 and 20 in 2008) (Błazeusz 2016). Poland's policy shift towards Afghanistan received criticism. Some experts considered NATO's excessive commitments in Afghanistan to be a misguided strategic decision and criticised Polish leaders for over-committing the Polish Armed Forces to a dead-end mission (Koziej 2012, 37–38). From the middle of the 2000s, the Polish society increasingly opposed the participation of Polish troops in the Afghan mission even though the initial support for the mission stood at 45–57%, in contrast to the participation in the Iraqi mission, which was opposed (CBOS 2007). The change in the public perceptions was due to more factors: it became clear that instead of peacekeeping roles, Polish troops are engaged in stabilisation operations with significant combat action taking place, and with 44 fatal casualties by 2014 in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the majority of the Polish society – alongside the experts – did not believe in the success of the mission (CBOS 2007; CBOS 2009; CBOS 2010; Lorenc 2008).

From 2013, the sentiment that Poland needs to significantly reduce its expeditionary commitments grew stronger even among the Polish leadership. One of the most important proponents of this position was President Bronisław Komorowski. In February 2014, the National Security Office operating alongside the presidency published a document named Komorowski Doctrine, which summarised the new direction of Polish security strategy in four points:

1. The Polish Republic needs to shift its strategic priorities from expeditionary participation to tasks directly connected to its own security, including the defence of the state.
2. The capability for self-defence is the key pillar and guarantee of the country's security.
3. Alongside territorial defence, the capability for countering unexpected events should be a Polish speciality within NATO and the European Union, especially in those circumstances, when it is difficult to form a consensus in the Alliance.
4. Poland needs to strengthen its strategic relevance in the international sphere, represent its strategic interests in international organisations, and seek to form them according to Polish strategic expectations (Fryc 2014).

The new strategic direction of the Polish security policy – which became a part of the National Security Strategy of 2014 (Strategia RP 2014) – maintained the unique role of NATO and the United States in Poland's security. It also puts emphasis on strengthening the national capabilities, foremost due to the appearance of such threats, in which Warsaw is uncertain about the solidarity of the allies based on the emergence of a consensus in the Alliance (Fryc 2014, 52–56). As a result of these developments at present, the security of the Polish Republic is based on four pillars: the development of national capabilities, collective defence of NATO, the special relationship with the United States and membership in the European Union.

The common security and defence policy of the European Union in the Polish security and defence policy concept

The Polish elite that came to power after the political transition and the dissolution of the bipolar world order saw the European Union foremost as an international organisation, which enables its economic modernisation (Szynol 2014, 211). As we already mentioned, Warsaw viewed NATO as the organisation that had relevance for its security and opposed every European ambition what it found to be weakening the North Atlantic Alliance. As a result, it accepted the Petersberg Declaration of 1992 of the Western European Union (WEU) with caution, and adopted – cautiously, but firmly – the critical stance of Washington about the Western European ideas of WEU during the 1990s (Zięba 2002; Kuźniar 2018, 57–59). The Polish leaders maintained this distrustful position after the European Council decided in Köln in 1999 to establish the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) (Szynol 2014, 210). For a long time after this summit, Polish diplomats consistently used the term European security and defence identity during their negotiations instead of European security and defence policy, reflecting that while Warsaw supports the security cooperation of the members of the European Union within the boundaries of NATO, it does not support an independent and autonomous European security institution (Zając 2014, 192). The Polish leadership was foremost sceptical about an effective EU security and defence policy due to the significantly diverging strategic interests of the EU members and believed that the EU lacks that integrative force the U.S. provides in NATO.

Between 1999–2011, the initially distrustful Warsaw gradually arrived to supporting CSDP. The Polish behaviour began to change paradoxically after the debates in the EU about the Iraqi war and the U.S. intervention in Iraq. As it is well known, Poland belonged to those countries that supported the military intervention of the United States in Iraq and took part with military force in the operations (Tálas 2004, 45–57). This might have been one reason why the Polish leadership quickly recognised that Washington made a wrong and costly decision by launching the war against Iraq. Furthermore, Warsaw could also experience that despite its critique in 1999, the institutional formation of the CSDP began and in 2003 the first two EU crisis management operations took place (EUFOR Concordia, EUFOR Artemis); this signalled that the EU members are capable of harmonising their security policy objectives after all (Kuźniar 2018, 60–61). These developments forced the Polish leadership to review their previous position, not to mention another aspect. As a new member of the EU, Poland that has always prioritised security and defence, could hardly afford from a political perspective to be left out of such an EU initiative.

The first Polish step took place in May 2003, when Warsaw offered 1,500 troops for the execution of the EU Petersberg tasks. Subsequently, from the spring of 2004, Poland participated in the development of the EU Battlegroup concept and decided to create a multinational battlegroup together with Germany, Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia, within the Weimer Triangle with Germany and France (Weimar Battlegroup) and within the Visegrád cooperation framework with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (Visegrád Battlegroup) (Zięba 2012, 160–162). The change in the behaviour of Poland was well reflected in the fact that Poland took up the role of a framework nation in all three EU Battlegroups. The Polish leadership also contributed to the European Defence Agency since its formation in July 2004, with the hope of finding international cooperative opportunities and new

markets for the Polish defence industry and influencing the direction of the European military capability development. To a limited extent, it also contributed to the development of the EU's civil crisis management capacity (Zięba 2012, 162–163).

The growing Polish trust in the European security and defence policy was also demonstrated by the increasing contribution of Warsaw to the EU crisis management operations. While Poland participated with only 17 Polish troops in the EU's Operation Concordia in March 2003, it sent 130 troops to the EUFOR RD Congo mission supporting the Congolese elections in June–November 2006, 275 Polish troops participated in EUFOR Althea which took over the role of SFOR in March 2004, and 350 took part in EUFOR Tchad in 2008–2009. In the latter two missions, Warsaw provided the third and fourth largest contingents, and Polish troops made up 10% of all the EU forces. The participation in the EU's civilian crisis management missions was only symbolic (2–3 personnel) until December 2008, but subsequently, Warsaw sent a 120-strong contingent to the EULEX Kosovo.

The trust towards the European security and defence policy was further strengthened by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. Partly its solidarity clause, which declared that the Union and its members would assist with all available means in the event of terror attacks, natural or man-made disasters, Warsaw perceived this clause in a way that collective defence was created in the two respective areas; and partly the 42 (7) Article of the Treaty, which explicitly contains a collective defence provision (Lisbon Treaty 2009, 41, 146). The change in the Polish opinion was well recorded by a new approach of the Polish leaders that emphasised three pillars of Poland's security: NATO, the EU and the United States. The three pillars were officially elevated to doctrinal level in 2009 by Foreign Minister Władysław Sikorski (Kuźniar 2012, 339–340).

However, the growing trust towards the European Union as a security policy actor stalled in the end of the 2000s and began to weaken again. The different crises (the great economic crisis of 2008–2009, the Euro crisis, demographic crisis, identity crisis, secularisation which is considered by the Poles as a sign of crisis, the 2015 migration crisis) affecting Europe and the West had a decisive effect in this, together with some of the crisis management decisions of the European Union considered to be slow and false by the Polish leadership. Another significant factor that contributed to this was that the EU usually responded poorly to the crises in its neighbourhood (the 2008 Georgian–Russian war, the Arab Spring beginning in 2011 and the events of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014). Serious concerns were also raised in Warsaw about the unanimously decreasing defence expenditures in Europe as a result of the 2008 economic crisis, and about Europe unable to improve its military capabilities, which led Europeans to continuously commit their defence to NATO and the United States. It also viewed with criticism and concern the decision of the U.K. and France to launch an intervention against Libya in 2011 without a political strategy and without taking into consideration the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan and considered the EU weak in responding to Russia's Ukrainian policies in 2014 (Kuźniar 2018, 62–64; Csiki 2014). The internal EU debates about the future of the EU and the handling of the migration crisis also had a destructive effect on Polish trust, not to mention the fact that in 2015 a Eurosceptic political force came to power in Poland, which articulates a sharp critique against the Union's internal and external policies, and at times presents the EU as a threatening factor to the Polish sovereignty in its political communication (Kuźniar 2018, 66).

As a result of all these developments, Poland now founds itself in a unique situation. On the one hand, it formally recognises that since 2016, numerous steps have been taken in the EU (such as the global strategy, the European defence action plan, new NATO–EU cooperation agreement, the activation of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO), which also provides Poland an opportunity to deepen European security and defence policy cooperation (Analiza 2018; Gotkowska 2018; Terlikowski 2018). On the other hand, the decision-makers in Warsaw view these initiatives connected to the prospect of deepening cooperation as questioning and weakening Polish sovereignty and continue to remain distrustful about the effectiveness of the European common security and defence policy. They intend to build Poland's security policy – while keeping the pillar of the European Union – again on NATO, the bilateral relations of the United States and on its defence capabilities (Pełczyńska-Nałęcz 2017). As a result, although Poland participates in all European defence initiatives mentioned – and it could not do otherwise if it views itself as a middle power – it is not as proactive as it could be expected of a European middle power.

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