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Strategic Autonomy and the Defence of Europe – on the Road to a European Army? A perspective from Poland.¹

1. Basic statistics

With a population of slightly over 38 million, Poland is the largest country in central and eastern Europe and the largest among the EU new member states. Since 1989 Poland has been in the vanguard of political and economic changes in the region. In the early 1990s Warsaw adopted a set of comprehensive economic and social reforms, later described as »shock therapy«. Although painful, after a period of protracted economic downturn in the 1990s the economic situation stabilised and the reforms created a firm foundation for growth. Eventually, inflows of foreign direct investment, combined with the unleashing of native entrepreneurship gave birth to one of Europe's most remarkable economic success stories. The period after 2004 is sometimes described as a Polish »New Golden Age«, as over the past 25 years the economy has doubled in size, measured in terms of real GDP (Piątkowski 2015). In terms of GDP per capita (at purchasing power parity), Poland narrowed the gap with western Europe by nearly half, moving from 32 to 62 per cent of the western European average (EU15). After EU accession (2004–2014) cumulative GDP growth in Poland amounted to over 53 per cent.² The EU28 average was 12 per cent and that of the euro area 9 per cent. The average for the countries that joined the EU after 2004 was approximately 32 per cent (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland 2014).

Poland was the only country in the European Union to avoid recession during the financial crisis. Today it is the eighth largest economy in the European Union in real GDP terms and enjoys a healthy 51.3 per cent national debt/GDP ratio, safeguarded by the 55 per cent limit set by the 1997 Polish Constitution.

With an approval rating of 81 per cent (CBOS 2016), the Polish population is today the most EU-enthusiastic of all 28 members. The EU is seen not only as a source of institutional

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² Poland's GDP represents more than one-third of the combined GDP of the new EU member states: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. It also amounts to around 1 per cent of world GDP and Poland has the sixth largest economy in the European Union on a purchasing power parity basis.

modernization and cohesion support, but also as an indispensable factor in Polish stability and security. However, there are deep fissures in this rosy picture, as recent political changes in Warsaw brought to power the neo-conservative and EU-sceptic government of »Law and Justice« Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) party.

2. How are European defence policy and the political objective of a European army discussed in politics?

After the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections, both the President and the government represent one political party. For the first time in recent history one party (PiS) got the majority of seats in the Parliament (Sejm) and was able to form a government without the need for a coalition.

Security and defence issues have risen high on Poland's agenda. This had not been the case until the 2014 annexation of Crimea and subsequent military conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Both events have had a transformative impact on Polish security policy and the perception of threats. In a recent poll, 31 per cent of Poles indicated that Putin's Russia is the greatest threat to security, with Daesh (Islamic State) ranking second on 25 per cent (Instytut Badań Pollster 2016). In consequence, the current policy of the PiS government is aimed, on one hand, at attempting to isolate Russia, and on the other hand at improving Poland's security through more self-reliance and a return to Atlanticism in security policy.

The issue of a European defence policy has been rather a subject of occasional political focus than of systematic analysis and debate. The »European Army« proposal is clearly causing the most controversy. This applies to Jean-Claude Juncker's 2015 call for a European Army (Juncker, 2015). PiS Presidential candidate Andrzej Duda (AD) immediately commented that he supported »the idea under the condition that it does not lead to a weakening of NATO«. He also expressed the opinion that he did »not imagine a separate [from NATO] command of such an army, and that it cannot lead to building barriers between Washington and the EU«. »Let us wait for a concrete proposal. If it is aimed at strengthening our security and NATO structures, or rather building some kind of parallel structures, competing with NATO, I do not accept such competition«, added AD in the midst of the 2015 Polish presidential campaign (Duda, 2015).

Jarosław Kaczyński, party leader and undoubtedly the most prominent political figure in the PiS political camp, also referred to Juncker's proposal:

If this was a project that we [President Lech Kaczyński and Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński] proposed back in 2006, then it would make sense. But this new idea [of Juncker] requires a total reconstruction of the EU. Such an army makes sense only if placed under a unified command ... Therefore a comprehensive deregulation should take place in the EU. Sovereignty should be reintroduced to nation states in all these areas that require sovereign decisions, and [the EU] should refrain from all kinds of ideological intervention. (Kaczyński, 2015)

These and other quotes indicate that the idea of a European Army seems to be acceptable for PiS only under a »different European Union«. Thus it is not surprising that the result of the British referendum on Brexit has been used by the PiS leadership to reveal more details about their ideas on structural changes to the EU:

We have to present a new plan for institutional changes. A certain vision of an EU, forced after the Lisbon Treaty, has been lost [said JK after the Brexit vote]. An EU of nation states should be preserved, at best a confederation. Europe should be a superpower, and nation states should have more internal sovereignty, which is limited today ... The EU should be a real subject of international politics, also in military sphere – we proposed that 10 years ago. Not against NATO, but together with NATO ... To be serious, we should additionally spend 2 per cent of EU GDP on a European army. Of course every country could also have its own national military. If we are ready for such an effort, then such an army would be a partner for the US. (Kaczyński, 2016)

The largest opposition parties are supportive of European defence cooperation, but ambivalent about a European army. The Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO, which received 24.09 per cent of the vote in the last election) is severely weakened, with many of its leading politicians familiar to foreign and security policy outside the party (such as Donald Tusk and Radosław Sikorski). There is no mention of a European army in PO's programme at all; instead there are many references to the need to strengthen collective defence and NATO's presence in Poland. The party's programme clearly sets the priorities: »We believe that in relations with Russia Polish interests are best represented through the EU in the economic dimension, and NATO in the security dimension« (PO Election Programme 2015). Grzegorz Schetyna, Chairman of PO and former Minister of Foreign Affairs left no illusions about his stance when commenting on the Juncker proposal: »Where will the money come from? Who will pay for it? Who should be responsible for training? ... It is NATO that needs to be strengthened. An EU army is a very risky idea and nice to talk about, but I am for strengthening NATO« (Schetyna, 2015). Similarly sceptical was General Stanisław Koziej, adviser to the previous President Bronisław Komorowski (also PO): »This is a very noble idea, but with no chance of practical implementation. First you have to have a common centre of political power and then its army, not the opposite« (Koziej, 2015).

The traditionally pro-European Social Democratic and left-wing parties³ seem to diverge little from their conservative counterparts in their assessment of the European army project. »*This is only a beautiful idea, but with no chance of realisation*« was the comment of former Prime Minister Leszek Miller (LM), then SLD party leader, to the Juncker proposal. »*Since the EU does not have a genuine common security policy, by definition it cannot have an army, which should be subordinated to a defined political centre. If it were created, then it would be never used, because it would require the unanimous consent of 28 countries*«,

³ These are currently outside Parliament: United Left Coalition (Zjednoczona Lewica, 7.55 per cent of the vote in the last election) and the Razem Party (3.62 per cent).

concluded Miller (Miller, 2015). Nevertheless, the left in Poland is traditionally open to further integration, also in the common defence area. If a concrete project would surface, the left could be relied on to show support.

Nowoczesna.pl, a new liberal party headed by Ryszard Petru (RP, 7.6 per cent provided for the vote at the last election) is silent on the issue of defence cooperation in its party programme. Despite this, its young, well-educated and liberal electorate position this political movement as a potential ally for more ambitious defence integration projects. »To meet the challenges, European nations need more, not less cooperation« were the words of RP at the annual Allianz Forum in Berlin (Petru 2016). »Less words, more concrete actions«, he added in reference to the current state of European integration.

The two remaining parties in the Parliament Kukiz'15 (8.81 per cent) and PSL (Peasant's Party, 5.31 per cent) are unclear in their attitudes towards more advanced projects in European defence, with the former rather against and the latter more progressive.

3. How are European defence policy and the political objective of a European army discussed in the security community?

The return to Atlanticism in security policy is broadly visible also in the Polish security community and in the media. Only a few conferences and debates organised by NGOs have been devoted to discussing EU security and defence policy; the majority have adopted a broader approach, including NATO and the United States. This is not only an unintended consequence of the NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016, but generally reflects the scepticism of the majority of Polish security experts with regard to European defence capabilities. Symptomatic in this regard were the reactions to the presentation of Javier Solana's report »More Union in European Defence?« in Warsaw (More Union, 2015). The Report argued that the necessary defence integration should amount to a »European Defence Union« (EDU), defining in a forward-looking manner the shape of such a Union as the cornerstone of a comprehensive, civil-military security architecture in Europe. *Gazeta Wyborcza* (the largest Polish newspaper) published an interview in which Mr Solana presented the main ideas of his report. The headline of the interview was »Poland does not need any NATO bases« (Solana, 2015), a phrase that he actually used, but which was not intended to be the key message. These words of the former NATO Secretary General were afterwards criticized by many commentators. »He has lost contact with reality« was one of the more diplomatic comments under the web version of the interview.

After the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the Russian–Ukrainian conflict the public narrative in Poland on defence issues became highly militarised. Phrases such as »military exercises«, »NATO battalions«, »forward deployments«, »deterrence«, »ballistic missile defence«, »territorial defence«, »hybrid warfare«, »rotating presence«, »little green men« and so on are widespread in the media. An unexpected but symptomatic career was made by the

expression »Suwałki Gap«, describing the area in north-east Poland between the Kaliningrad region and Belarus, bordering Lithuania. It was coined after the Cold War »Fulda Gap«, which was expected to experience thousands of Soviet tanks rolling into West Germany in the case of a military conflict. In the Polish media the »Suwałki Gap« has a firm presence in all political-security discussions, serving as an example of how unprepared Poland and NATO are to confront a potential military attack from Russia. It remains to be seen whether this domination of military vocabulary is a permanent trend, but it does indicate the prevailing mood.

Among recent analyses by Polish experts on the subject of a European Army one in particular should be mentioned, Justyna Gotkowska's »European Army in a German edition«, written and published under the aegis of a government think tank, the Centre for Eastern Studies (Gotkowska, 2016). The article reviews German reactions to the Juncker proposal and draws conclusions about the goals and substance of the initiative. The author argues that the proposal is not going in the direction of an EU army, but rather reflects the »Framework Nations Concept« presented by Berlin in 2012 and adopted by NATO in 2014 in Newport. The main goal of such cooperation would be to enhance the integration and interoperability of national armed forces without introducing innovative military decision-making at the EU level. As such it would not undermine NATO. In the opinion of the author, however, full implementation of the German concept of framework nations could lead to medium- to long-term military and thus political dependence of the smaller partners on the German »cluster« of political and military decision-making in Berlin. On the other hand, Germany would surely not be ready to give up part of its sovereignty and agree to the participation of partners in decision-making on sending German troops abroad, which requires consent from the Bundestag on each occasion.

The article represents a significant trend in the contemporary Polish narrative, which seeks everywhere the »deeper« interests of – in particular – two players, Russia and Germany. It has already become a habit of a noteworthy number of commentators and »experts« to uncover »suspicious« foreign interests in almost everything that appears from either Moscow or Berlin.

This phenomenon is clearly fuelled by the political conflict between the major parties in Poland, but the reasons are more complex. The world is seen – by the majority of politicians, experts and the media – much more from the perspective of threats than of chances and opportunities. And the threats are usually limited to those stemming from Russia's policies (actions) or those originating from the EU/Germany. This phenomenon is clearly to be associated with the emergence of many internet portals and newspapers that are ideologically close to the right-wing national-conservative Law and Justice Party. Since the political change in 2015 such circles have received substantial funding from the government and state-controlled enterprises, enjoying wider access to public media and government co-organised conferences and debates. The overwhelming narration of military, economic

and political threats to Poland – which are »almost around the corner« – clearly plays into the hands of the political majority, which portray themselves as the only true protectors of Polish national interests, making a progressive and results-oriented integration debate very difficult.

4. What is public opinion on these issues?

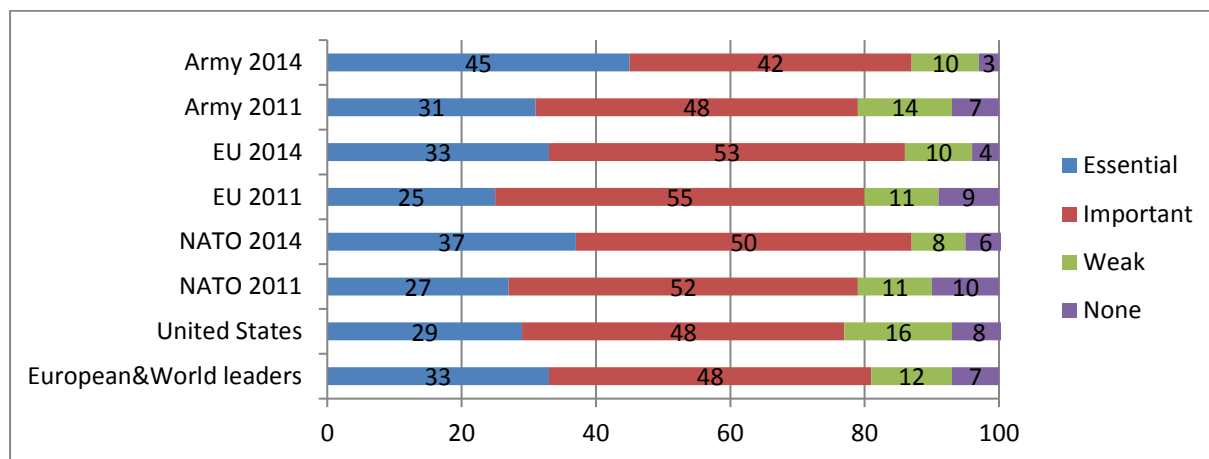
Throughout 2014, threats to Polish independence came to the fore in public opinion polls. In a survey commissioned at the end of 2014 by the National Security Bureau, the majority of people (54 per cent) referred in this context to the situation in Ukraine and the imperialist policy of Putin's Russia (CBOS, 2014). Some (6 per cent) openly expressed fears of military aggression from Russia. Others (5 per cent), however, spoke generally about the possible outbreak of war and the threat from other countries. There were also some opinions (3 per cent) that Poland is too involved in the affairs of Ukraine; that its policy towards Russia is too aggressive. The situation in Ukraine has often aroused reflections that Poland is unprepared for a possible war and that there are no real allies who in the event of armed conflict would come to Poland's defence.

Although the current political establishment clearly favours Atlanticism as the main security option, Polish public opinion is more balanced in its assessments. Obviously, the respondents listed NATO as the leading organisation ensuring the security of Poland (nearly two-fifths define it as essential) (CBOS 2014). Interestingly, however, only slightly less important in public opinion are the European Union and European or world leaders. Less important is also the perceived influence of the United States than the EU for the security of Poland (29 per cent to 33 per cent). The survey results show, therefore, that Poles associate Polish security in a slightly greater extent with membership of the European Union than with the alliance with the United States.

As compared with 2011, the respondents clearly attribute greater importance to international organisations and institutions (NATO and the EU) in ensuring Poland's security, as compared with 2011. The analysis of existential threats to Polish sovereignty from 1991 onwards shows that the source of such concern is primarily Russia (previously the USSR) and its policies. Respondents perceiving such threats predominated in numbers at the beginning of 1991, when the Soviet Union still existed. After its collapse most respondents ceased to be anxious about independence and their numbers gradually decreased over the next few years. Everything changed with the conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia. In April 2014 almost half of respondents (47 per cent) expressed real concerns about the threats to independence. In the following months, as the conflict in the East settled down, the feelings decreased. Currently, despite the still fragile situation in Ukraine, the majority of Poles do not see risks to the country's independence (64 per cent; 29 per cent still see a threat). However, these numbers probably changed last year due to the

predominant military-oriented and anti-Russian narrative of the current political majority (CBOS, 2014).

Figure 1 On whom, in your opinion, does the security of Poland depend? How much influence on national security do they have?



Source: CBOS 2014.

Public opinion primarily expects Poland's own armed forces to cope with potential international threats (92 per cent). At the same time there is a broad consensus (88 per cent) that Polish security should also be based on defence cooperation within the framework of international alliances (the EU and NATO). Slightly less importance is attributed to the bilateral alliance with the United States, although the postulated role of this country in ensuring Polish security is also high.

A similar, balanced approach to NATO, the EU and European defence is usually presented in mainstream media (TV, radio, press). There is, however, a fairly broad consensus that because of the nature of the greatest threat (Russia and its policies) it is NATO – with the principal role of the United States (its military and nuclear power) – that provides the ultimate security for Poland. The European Union is often described as being too prone to engage in a policy of *detente* with Russia at the expense of the interests of smaller central and eastern European countries. Some EU governments – Germany, Italy and France – are portrayed in the media as being too much influenced by domestic large businesses and putting their particular interests over the security needs of central and eastern Europe states. The result of such a narrative is that the EU – at least in the security and defence dimension – is assessed as less reliable in providing hard security than the US backed North Atlantic Alliance.

In recent months the attitude of EU capitals to the policy of sanctions against Russia has become a sort of litmus test of how much this alleged influence is gaining ground in western

Europe. Those who are for the continuation of sanctions are said to be adopting the right strategy and those against are »certainly« doing so because of business lobbying and Russian propaganda and are clearly breaching the principle of internal EU solidarity. Deeper thoughts on how to engage Russia, which is and will remain Poland's largest and most important neighbour, rarely surface in the media discussion.⁴ The idea of a European Army is rarely an issue for discussion in the mass media, being put in the context of a »European Union in trouble« and therefore as an unrealistic concept. More emphasis is put on NATO and bilateral cooperation, including the arrival of US and German military units for training in Poland.

5. The driving forces

As a direct result of the annexation of Crimea and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, fear of a politically and militarily resurgent Russia seems to be the primary driving force in the majority of political and expert debates. Immigration from Muslim countries is another, although clearly exaggerated⁵ and instrumentalised for internal political reasons by the ruling Law and Justice Party.

Poland's unstable and partly autocratic Eastern neighborhood has been seen as a challenge for the past two decades. NATO and EU expansion in terms of a policy of cooperation and reconciliation were seen as the main policy antidotes and promoted by consecutive Polish governments. The failure of the EaP Vilnius Summit and the following Russian-Ukraine conflict marked the turning point also in Polish security debates. Instead of conducting a policy of stabilisation and proliferation of European values and standards, with the EU Eastern Partnership as flagship project, Poland has turned inwards and focused on own subjective security needs. This process started even before the events in Ukraine, with the fatal crash of the Polish Tu-154M government plane on 10 April 2010. All on board the presidential plane died, including the Polish President Lech Kaczyński and his wife. Deterioration of Polish-Russian relations started thus much earlier than 2014 and was fuelled by conspiracy theories claiming Russia's involvement in the 2010 plane crash. To add to this

⁴ The above is even more visible in the public media, where all important management and journalist posts have been allotted – as a result of a special law adopted by the PiS-dominated Parliament – to PiS-sympathizing officials and journalists. It has become everyday practice that independent experts and politicians are only occasionally invited for comments, debates and discussions in the PiS-dominated public media. In consequence the assessments presented often obviously falsify reality, one side-effect of which is an unprecedented decline in the number of viewers of public TV channels, especially the main news programmes.

⁵ Poland is still a net-emigrant country and not seen as a settlement target by potential immigrants from Muslim countries. Relatively low income levels, cultural differences, no traditions and no significant Muslim (or ethnic) settled immigrant groups are just a few of the negative immigration factors.

picture, the PiS politician who was heading the party commission inquiring into the crash,⁶ Antoni Macierewicz (AM) became defence minister of Poland in November 2015.

With a rising Russia and mild Euroscepticism on the part of the Polish government, NATO and US engagement in Europe are regarded as the ultimate guarantee for Polish security. Aside from political reasons, the main motives for prioritising NATO over EU defence cooperation are the capabilities of the US and its »added value« to NATO. As one Polish expert puts it,

at the strategic level, Moscow still directs its primary focus on the Pentagon's military profile in Europe. ... Seen from Russia's perspective, the alliance's strength derives mostly from American participation and the deployment of US forces – along with nuclear weapons – in Europe. Consequently, in deterring a Russian attack, coercion or probe of the alliance, the capabilities of Poland and other individual NATO countries – with the possible exception of nuclear-armed Britain and France – will most likely make a difference to Moscow only if they can be deployed together with the US forces. (Kulesza 2016)

Bordering a politically and militarily aggressive Russia is and probably will remain in the foreseeable future the key element in all Polish security considerations.

The election of Donald Trump as next US President, and especially his isolationist declarations during the election campaign could potentially alter the Polish pro-US attitude. President Andrzej Duda, Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski (WW), Prime Minister Beata Szydło and Jarosław Kaczyński have expressed rather muted satisfaction with the surprising win of Trump, despite obvious sympathy for his political camp. His election boasts about NATO and the alleged pragmatic approach towards Putin's Russia were sources of confusion. As the Polish strategy to isolate Russia goes way beyond the fragile Western consensus on »stick and carrot«, Trump's possible pragmatic U-turn (new reset) on Russia would be seen as a game-changer for the PiS government. Therefore Warsaw hopes that Washington under Trump will not derail the policy of deterrence. If that is the case, the current government is likely to pursue a policy to become »Trump's best partner« in Europe.

For the time being, official Warsaw seems to be cautiously inclined towards enhanced cooperation on CSDP, as proposed in Mogherini's Implementation Plan on Security and Defence that is to be officially presented to the December 2016 European Council. Such an approach is reflected in voting on defence cooperation in the European Parliament. In a recent vote on European Defence Union on 22 November 2016, the European Parliament's resolution was adopted by a simple majority of 369 MEPs. PiS MEPs abstained, while 255 MEPs voted against (PE 2016).

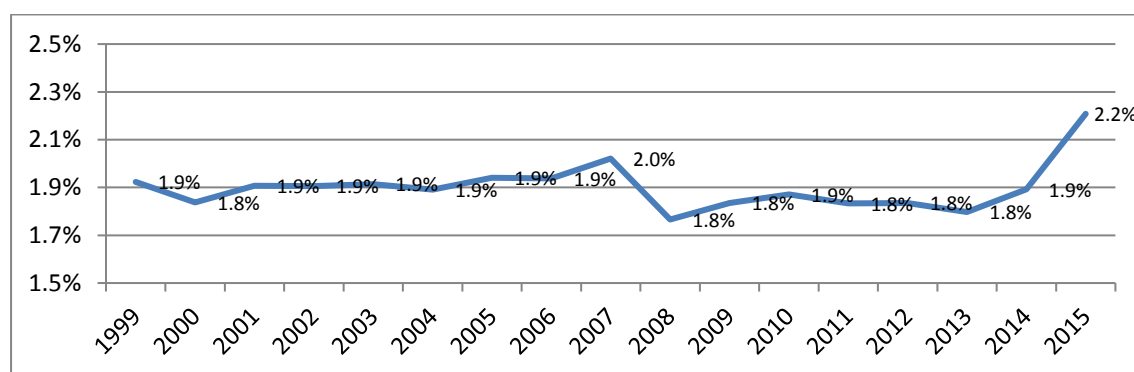
⁶ This commission was established to undermine the government's official report (Komisja Millera), which argued that pilot error was the main reason for the plane crash in Smolensk. The Interstate Aviation Committee (MAK) tasked with investigating the crash by the Russian Federation came to the same conclusion.

6. How has the defence budget developed over the past five years; what future developments are expected?

In Poland, a country strategically located on the European lowlands between Russia and Germany, the military has always occupied an important role in the state and society. Consequently, the Polish army has always been one of the largest on the European continent. In the European Union, with close to 100,000 active personnel (2015), it is the sixth largest after France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Defence expenditure amounts to around 10.496 billion USD (NATO, 2016), ranking seventh in the EU and ninth in NATO. Relative to GDP, Poland spends well over the 2 per cent NATO goal (Figure 1), which is in fact met by few NATO countries. With over 32 per cent of the budget spent on equipment modernisation, Poland ranks second (after Luxembourg and before the United States) in NATO, well above the Alliance's 20 per cent guideline.⁷

Figure 2 Defence expenditure in Poland as a proportion of GDP



Source: NATO/SIPRI 2016.

The armed forces are expected to carry out a full spectrum of military tasks. They are divided into four branches, the army (46,000), the air force (16,500), the navy (8,000) and others (29,500), including Special Forces (2,500). The governing PiS Party opted in its election programme for increasing the numerical strength of Polish armed forces to 120,000, with an option for an additional 30,000. Aside from that, a new Law on Territorial Defence is going through parliament, and foresees the creation of light voluntary territorial defence brigades in the 16 regions of the country, starting with those in the east. The total manpower of these Territorial Defence brigades will amount to 35,000. The main goal of these forces shall be to support operational forces in combat operations, counter hybrid warfare and

⁷ The Act on the Technical Modernization of the Armed Forces (adopted 25 May 2001) imposed on the government the legal obligation to allocate in each national budget at least 1.95 per cent of GDP on defence, 20 per cent of which has to be allocated to technical modernization.

terrorism and tackle natural disasters. Simultaneously, the PiS intends to further raise defence expenditure to 2.3 per cent of GDP (Konwencja, 2015).

Poland's armed forces have undergone a profound transformation in the past 25 years from a conscription-based army to a smaller, more professional and capable entity. The peak of the transition was achieved in 2008 with the abolition of conscription. Since then the focus of the reforms has been on strengthening the level of professionalization and technical modernisation.

Despite considerable investment, the Polish armed forces are still based mainly on obsolete weapons systems. The majority of the army's armoured and mechanised units are based on Soviet T-72M tanks (350 vehicles, around half in use) and 232 of its local upgrade PT-91s. The country's only armoured division (11th Armoured Cavalry, stationed in Żagań in the west of Poland) was recently equipped with 247 Leopard 2A4 and 2A5 main battle tanks, obtained from surplus Bundeswehr stocks. The mechanised forces are based on 1,268 legacy BWP-1 infantry fighting vehicles and 240 BRDM-2 armoured reconnaissance vehicles. The motorised infantry has over 700 modern (from 1,000 ordered) wheeled 8x8 Rosomak armoured personal carriers, a locally developed and produced version of the Finnish AMV.

With the procurement of 48 new F-16 Block 52+ multi-purpose combat aircraft in 2003, the air force is the most modern branch of the armed forces. The US-made airplanes are supplemented by 32 Mig-29 Soviet-era fighters, still successfully used at two air bases (Minsk Mazowiecki and Malbork). Sixteen of them will see limited modernisation and extended use beyond 2020. The same applies to legacy Su-22M4s strike aircraft; 16 out of 32 will see their service extended by up to 10 years. The fleet of training aircraft is also quite modern with eight newly acquired M-346 Masters (currently being delivered) and 28 PZL Orlik turbo-prop trainers. Airlift capabilities are based on 5 C-13E Hercules, 15 CASA C-295M and 25 light PZL M28 Bryza aircraft. The army's aviation fleet is based on legacy Soviet-era airframes: 31 Mi-24 attack helicopters, 29 Mi-8/17 and 48 Mi-2 transport helicopters, which will be slowly phased-out of operational use in the next 5–6 years. The most modern are locally produced 43 W-3 Sokół multi-purpose helicopters, intended to remain in service until 2026.

The navy's principal vessels comprise two ex-US »Oliver Hazard Perry« frigates and 3 Orkan class missile boats, equipped with modern Swedish RBS-15 Mk 3 anti-ship missiles. This is supported by an undersea fleet of one Orzel (Soviet Kilo class) and three Sokół (originally Norwegian Kobben) diesel-electric submarines. The navy's maritime weakness is the reason for establishing two coastal defence units equipped with 72 NSM (Kongsberg's Naval Strike Missiles) and independent radar and optical/infrared guidance systems.

Among all the new EU and NATO member states, Poland has been the most active participant in international military missions and assignments. Stabilisation missions in Kosovo and combat engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan have strongly influenced the

Polish military. They were instrumental in transforming the armed forces into a more professional and capable, though much smaller, military. In the opinion of General Marek Tomaszycy, Operational Commander of the Polish Army:

There is no field of military life, which would not achieve improvement through missions in Iraq and Afghanistan ... The army received new equipment, and converted the training system to be more efficient ... even the decision to change to a professional army was based in part on the experiences of these missions. [With these missions Poles had become] world recognizable experts in the military field. (Tomaszycy 2016)

However, these missions were also resource-consuming and costly, draining the military budget of capital needed for technical modernisation. The previous government adopted a new doctrine, named after a former state president, the »Komorowski doctrine«, focused on territorial (national) defence capabilities, instead of participation in foreign deployments, which were phased out.⁸ After 2014 the doctrine was enriched by the goal of developing national deterrent capabilities.

The abovementioned political decisions were financially framed within the ambitious Technical Modernisation Programme in the amount of 120 billion PLN (around 27 billion EUR). It foresees, among other things, the procurement of new means to combat ballistic missiles and provide mid-range air defence (Wisła program), short-range air defence (Narew), extended standoff attack capabilities of the fleet of 48 F-16 Block 52+ multi-purpose fighters (Lockheed Martin JASSM cruise missiles) and coastline defence (Kongsberg NASM missiles). Additionally it includes the procurement of 50 multi-purpose helicopters and 24 attack helicopters, new artillery systems (locally developed self-propelled howitzers KRAB, RAK mortars on 8x8 Rosomak chassis, long range MLRS rocket systems), submarines (ORKA) and long-range combat UAVs.

Table 1 Main priorities of the Polish armed forces' Technical Modernisation Programme

Programme	Formal launch of procedure	Main bidders	Selection	Planned delivery	Value
Mid-range air and missile defence (Wisła)	2013	Raytheon MEADS MBDA	Improved Patriot (Raytheon)	2019-2025	20 billion PLN (4.5 billion EUR)
Short-range air defence (Narew)	2014	8 bidders, mainly Polish with international partners		From 2019	11 billion PLN (2.5 billion EUR)

⁸ The new PiS government decided, however, to join the mission combating Deash (ISIS) and in July 2016 sent four F16 airplanes to Kuwait, together with a small contingent of special forces.

Multi-purpose helicopters	2013	Airbus, Lockheed Martin, AgustaWestland	Airbus EC725 Caracal	From 2017	13.3 billion PLN (3 billion EUR)
Attack helicopters (Kruk)	2014	Airbus, Bell, Boeing, TAI		From 2020	4 billion PLN (910 million EUR)
Attack drones (Gryf, Zefir)	2014	3 offers from US and Israel		From 2018	4 billion PLN (910 million EUR)
Warships (Miecznik, Czapla)	2013	PGZ (Pol)			7 billion PLN (1.6 billion EUR)
Submarines (3 ships) (Orka)	2013	DCNS, TKMS, Saab, Navantia		From 2018	8 billion PLN (1.8 billion EUR)

Source: Ministry of Defence 2016, Polityka Insight 2016.

Since coming to power, the new PiS government has repeatedly announced its intention to change the priorities of the TMP. The new Minister of Defence (MoD), Antoni Macierewicz, has criticised the plan as »unfeasible« and requires twice the estimated funding (235 billion PLN instead of 120 billion). What followed was the review of two major tenders that were negotiated by the previous government for the purchase of 50 EC725 Caracal helicopters and improved Patriot missile systems (Raytheon). The latter was upheld after Raytheon promised to invest 50 per cent of the contract value in the Polish defence industry. The former – as indicated earlier – has been cancelled. Instead, the MoD announced direct negotiations with companies that have helicopter production facilities in Poland (Leonardo Helicopters (Świdnik) and Lockheed Martin (Mielec).

The TMP flagship projects falling behind schedule are a signal of another important change that occurred during the previous government and has gained in importance with the new one. Plans to establish a competitive defence market in Poland have been abandoned and all state-owned defence companies are being consolidated in one state-controlled group, the Polish Defence Group (PGZ, Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa).⁹ As a consequence, the PGZ is increasingly shaping the MoD's weapons policy.¹⁰ The main subject of preliminary negotiations with foreign weapons suppliers is what they can offer Polish industry, not the needs or expectations of the armed forces. PGZ does this from a position of strength, suggesting that the fate of contracts depends directly on the scale of involvement of domestic industrial partners (Polityka Insight 2016). However, the track record of domestic

⁹ It comprises over 60 companies with around 18,000 employees.

¹⁰ Trade union leaders do not hesitate to send letters demanding the resignation of top military decision-makers responsible for the procurement of military equipment.

state-owned military hardware producers is rather bleak, with substantial public funds being wasted on obsolete equipment or for the purpose of bailing-out particular defence companies.¹¹

7. Has there been experience with bilateral or multilateral cooperation in the past five years, or is such cooperation planned?

The Polish armed forces are experienced in military to military (mil-to-mil) cooperation. Of particular importance is cooperation with Germany. Both countries have just celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the 1991 Treaty on Friendship and Good Cooperation. It supplemented the 1990 Treaty on the Polish-German Border, which sealed this fundamental issue between Poland and re-united Germany. The significance of both treaties and both countries' membership of the EU and NATO cannot be underestimated; for the first time in its history Warsaw and Berlin belong to the same values-based alliance, providing for close political, economic and military cooperation. Thus permanent working contacts are maintained with the German Bundeswehr. Polish units using ex-German equipment (among other things Leopard 2A4/A5s) are supplied within the German's army supply chain. In 2014 and 2015 both ministers of defence – Tomasz Siemioniak and Ursula von der Leyen – participated in their respective high-level conference for senior staff of the armed forces. This cooperation is developing despite political differences on attitudes and strategy towards Russia.

In general, Polish foreign policy has also been traditionally aimed at constructing regional political alliances in central and eastern Europe, where the Visegrad Group (V4) is the most prominent example. This has proven successful in the process of NATO and EU enlargement, where regional cooperation frameworks made it possible to promote regional interests in these organisations. The template of regional cooperation has recently been applied to military collaboration, as envisaged by the March 2015 Declaration of the V4 defence ministers entitled »Long-term Vision of the Visegrad Countries on Deepening Their Defence Cooperation« (Visegrad 2016).

The Visegrad Four (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) set up the V4 3,700-man strong¹² EU Battlegroup within the post-2004 EU commitments. It achieved operational readiness at the end of 2015 after 18 months of preparations and was on formal standby for combined EU operations from January–June 2016. The operations are commanded from a new operational centre in Krakow, Poland. In June 2015 the V4 defence ministers declared their intention to keep part of the operational assets as a V4 standing capability for both

¹¹ Examples of such projects include a single ORP Gawron/Ślązak corvette (15 years in construction and four times over budget (SMW shipyard, currently over 1.5 billion PLN)) and the KRAB SPH UPH-NG chassis built by Stalowa Wola.

¹² Half of the group were Polish soldiers; Czechs provided 728, Hungary 640 and Slovakia 460 troops, respectively.

EU and NATO operations (Visegrad 2016). The future of this declaration under the new Polish government is unclear.

Poland is also the main driving force behind establishing a common Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian Brigade (abbreviation: LITPOLUKRBRIG), which is a multinational task force consisting of units from the Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian armies. An agreement on its creation was signed on 16 November 2009 and the unit was finally formed on 19 September 2014. Headquarters were officially opened in Lublin on 25 January 2016, in a ceremony attended by the defence ministers of the three countries. The national components are stationed in their respective countries and gather together only for exercises and foreign missions. The unit is intended to be used to fulfil tasks given to it by NATO, the EU and the United Nations.

In principle, military cooperation and regional initiatives are well received and evaluated by the public and experts. This kind of collaboration is perceived as strengthening the network of alliances which could pay off in a potential crisis situation developing in Poland's neighbourhood. Experts emphasize that bilateral and regional cooperation is an excellent learning ground for practical interoperability, as the language and procedures used are fully compliant with NATO and EU standards (Gotkowska and Osica, 2012).

Various reasons are given for this kind of bilateral and multinational cooperation in the region, which differ among particular sub-regions (Baltic states, Nordic countries, Visegrad Group, South Group [Bulgaria, Romania]). Strengthening EU military cooperation also comes up as an important incentive, but is definitely not prioritised; sometimes it is seen rather as a reaction to the weakness of EU-based cooperation, as indicated by the Libya operation and falling defence expenditures in EU countries (Gotkowska and Osica, 2012). On the other hand, none of these countries wants to see such cooperation weaken NATO; it is rather focused at complementing exercises and initiatives undertaken under the Alliance's umbrella. This belief is undoubtedly deeply embedded in Polish strategy, too.

In October 2016 the defence ministers of the four largest EU powers (Rettmann 2016) laid out plans on European defence in a letter. The substance of the letter received fairly positive comments from experts as a timely and proper reaction to the possible consequences of Brexit. It has not received an official reaction from the Polish government. However, the letter has been used in public debates as an argument that Poland has been excluded from the avant-garde of EU defence integration. The Polish defence minister was not invited to co-sign the letter, which would be – in other political constellations – self-evident, taking into account the size and contribution of Poland to EU security and defence. The publication of the letter came just a few days after the Polish government was informed about the cancellation of the contract awarded to Airbus Helicopters for the procurement of 50 EC-725 Caracal helicopters, worth around 3.5 billion euros. This decision, along with the later diplomatic disagreement between France and Poland, has led to a significant deterioration

of political relations and trust, peaking in the postponement of bilateral governmental consultations and the Weimar Triangle session, scheduled for November in France (MSZ 2016). These worrying developments are further weakening the basis for Polish cooperation in EU defence projects.

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