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Poland's Security Policy after the Cold War

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Abstract
The three decades after the fall of communism in 1989 proved to be a good time for Poland's national security. A sovereign Poland effectively reconstructed its foreign and security policy from the ground up, following 40 years of Soviet domination. She reorganized her treaty-based relations with neighboring states, consolidated its own borders and rejected old military and economic alliances. The Polish political transformation, although costly in social terms, has made it a democratic and economically successful state, anchored in NATO and the EU, regionally cooperative and selectively engaged in the global agenda - occasionally "punching above its weight". This article deals with the key aspects of Poland's post-1989 security policy. It begins with an analysis of the key historical factors contributing to continuity and change in this policy, stemming from national responses to the changing external environment and evolving state sovereignty. A detailed analysis of Poland's security policy after 1989, covers the following issues: Poland's path to NATO and subsequent national priorities as a member of the Alliance, the role of the USA in Polish security policy, the approach to collective security, and last but not least, the role of European Union. It ends with a reflection on the contemporary challenges confronting the national security policy.

Keywords
Poland, Security policy, NATO, Collective defence, Transatlantic relations

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With the demise of the communist bloc and subsequently its hegemon - the Soviet Union, factors limiting Poland's sovereignty disappeared (Fried, 2019) and existential threats to the state have subsided, most notably the prospect of nuclear war in Europe. Poland's post-1989 transformation, although socially costly, made it a democratic prosperous state, rooted in European and trans-Atlantic cooperation and selectively engaging in global agenda. Its membership into NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004) re-united the nation with the Western community, releasing Poland from the "gray zone trap" between Moscow and the West along the lines of Belarus or Ukraine (Kuźniar, 2001), as well as provided security guarantees and a development stimulus. The logic of "the Polish road to the West", since 1989, was twofold: to create a political organism, resistant to external pressure and acting in solidarity against the threats with other free nations and to lower any possible Western European temptations to deal with superpowers without taking into account the interests of Poland.

The new Polish security policy, was no longer haunted by fear of a territorial aggression mobilizing majority of state's resources. On the other hand, it was challenged by a more complex set of strategic considerations, involving military, political, economic, social and environmental factors, reflected in subsequent national security strategies (Kupiecki, 2015) and policy actions.

Poland's Security Policy - Continuity and Change

Ever since the state regained its independence in 1918, Poland's security policy has been characterized by a paradox of continuous concerns, despite radically changing international circumstances. Consequently, national security policy has always been:

1. Focused on re-constructing and subsequently strengthening the existence of Poland as an independent state: in 1918, after 123 years of its partition between Russia, Austria, and Germany; after World War II and the loss of half of its territory to the Soviet Union, as well as the physical shift of the state borders to the West; and finally after 1989, as a result of four decades of subordination to Moscow.

2. A function of Poland's weakness relative to the power of its two neighbors - Russia and Germany - and their policies.

3. Actively searching for external security guarantees. Since 1918, Poland has been bound by 12 formal alliances: 4 before WWII, 7 after 1944 and 1 after 1989. Only two of them - thenWarsaw Pact and NATO - were multilateral, the rest were bilateral alliances. Most of Poland's alliances were of long duration: the ones with France and Romania lasted 18 years; the longest bilateral alliance with the USSR lasted over 45 years, the Warsaw Pact existed for 36 years, and Poland has been a NATO member since 1999 (Kupiecki, 2018).

4. Characterized by Poland's lack of success in building a regional security platform representing the common interests of states in the Baltic-Adriatic-Black Sea space.

During periods of strategic independence-between 1918-1939, and after 1989, the foreign and security policy of Warsaw was strongly oriented towards Western Europe and the USA. The essence of this direction, apart from a military motive, was the effort to create permanent bonds preventing any possible separate Western agreements with Russia, or Germany at the expense of Poland's interests.

Considering Poland's security policy, attention should be paid to the continuity of the Polish state as an international legal entity and national community, but in three different forms of government from the point of view of sovereignty and decision-making freedom (Harasimowicz, 2013).

The first one was represented by the Second Polish Republic in the years 1918–1939, a sovereign state striving to consolidate its international position with the available foreign policy tools, involving both the League of Nations, as an imperfect form of collective security and bilateral military alliances. That period should be extended until 1944, when the Western governments started withdrawing recognition from the Polish government-in-exile (Karski, 1985).

The second one was communist Poland. Between 1944–1989 it was politically subordinated to the Soviet Union and constrained by the allied relations with communist states (Koszel, 2015). The shift of Polish borders meant territorial gains at the expense of a divided Germany and losses in the East for the benefit of the Soviet republics: Russia, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. However, the lack of treaties guaranteeing new acquisitions resulted in lasting concerns about their permanence. The alliances of the Polish People's Republic carried the illusion of national security, as the country was exposed to the high risk of a nuclear conflict between the two superpowers, which was to take place mainly on Polish territory. From 1955, the Warsaw Pact performed two important functions in Poland's security policy. Outwardly, it was a mechanism deterring any possible aggression from the West. Inside, it disciplined Moscow's satellite states. Amidst the Cold War superpowers' rivalry, Poland was situated as a front-line state of a possible conventional and nuclear conflict. It was part of the offensive plans of the Warsaw Pact and its strategic base. Its political interests, including the international recognition of its borders, had been a hostage to the question of German reunification for over 40 years. Thus, any Soviet protection of Poland meant, above all, the protection of one's own assets in Europe (Weremiuk, 2014).

After 1989, the Third Republic of Poland, rebuilt the state's sovereignty, its strategy and policy, embedding national security in the transatlantic alliance system (NATO) and the European Union. The Atlantic Alliance is of central importance to Poland as a form of collective defense, and together with the EU, it is also a factor enabling the "densification" of ties between member states, and solidifying regional military cooperation in Central Europe (Madej, 2013; Kupiecki, 2013).

Poland's Security Policy after the Cold War

The end of the Cold War brought the paradox of reducing the risk of a major war outbreak, while increasing uncertainty in Central and Eastern Europe due to the situation in the Soviet Union embraced by imperial nostalgia, domestic unrest and a quick decay of its power, accelerating its withdrawal from hegemonic positions abroad (Dębski & Hamilton, 2019). For Poland's security policy, the new situation brought about as many political opportunities as it did reasons for prudence, necessitated by domestic reforms, the shadow of Soviet military presence in Poland and the West's general support for changes, yet with no readiness to open its organizations to new members.

In 1989 Poland began its democratic and economic renewal, involving a revision of membership in post-communist economic structures and alliances in foreign policy terms. The essence of this process was expressed in the catch*y* slogan of *return to the West*. However, for the subsequent Polish governments, the top priority was to consolidate the democratic changes and to minimize the external threats. They feared Soviet revanchism, the implosion of a weakening empire, and the general destabilization that would *derail* the Polish transformation. The directions of Polish foreign and security policy, referred to - after the prime minister's and foreign minister's names - as the "Mazowiecki-Skubiszewski line", (Kużniar, 2009) involved:

- striving for EU membership and expanding the network of contacts with its member states. The most important aspect among the latter were Poland's relations with Germany and France, as well as the so-called Weimar Triangle - a platform for political cooperation created in 1991 and focused on European integration and international security,

- considering NATO membership as a source of security guarantees for Poland and the importance of cooperation with the USA as a factor enhancing their credibility,

- strengthening regional cooperation in Central Europe in order to shape common interests and mutual support in the processes of integration with the West,

- establishing good - neighbourly relations with Russia and separately with the successor states of the USSR. The "Russian factor" in Polish and Turkish policymaking was brilliantly compared by Özgün Erler Bayır (Erler Bayir, 2015).

The vision of Poland stuck in a *gray zone*, filled only with hopes for collective security, animated Poland's preventive actions in the security policy field. Emerging short-lived alternatives to *the road to the West* were quickly rejected. These included, among others: concepts of neutrality, relying on the regional security system based on the CSCE, the creation of a sub-regional collective security system, or an alliance within Central Europe, retaining some form of ties with the USSR/Russia or a "partial" NATO membership. The geo-strategic location of Poland (or the apparent *naivete* of the above concepts) ruled-out the adoption of any of them, as they were deemed to bring about merely an illusion of remaining on the sidelines of a possible future conflict, and could even amplify the risk of international marginalization. Poland could more effectively secure its own interests as a member of Western institutions.

Gradually, this process started to move forward, in its early phase (1989-1993) being determined by the following events and processes:

1. Moscow's actions, trying to suppress independence movements in its *internal empire* (primarily in the Baltic states) and pushing its former satellites to act. Ultimately, the Warsaw Pact and COMECON were dissolved in 1991 and in September 1993, the last Russian units stationed in Poland returned home. This meant that the obstacle stopping Poland from pursuing more vigorously its Western ambitions was removed. Simultaneously, it signaled the emergence of the Russian veto over any future NATO enlargement.

2. The treaty-based settlement of relations with Germany (1990) and the legal closure of the Polish western border problem. It allowed for this issue to be taken off the Polish security agenda. Between 1990–1993, state treaties were signed with all of the state's neighbours (including Russia).

3. The evolving relations between the West and the USSR (and later with the Russian Federation) related to the stabilization of Central and Eastern Europe, but in a way that would not re-fuel Russian imperialism, and harm the prospect of a peaceful relationship with Moscow and democratisation of Russia. The re-unification of Germany, which required Soviet cooperation and the conclusion of negotiations on the conventional disarmament in Europe, also remained to be settled. The gradual resolution of these problems accelerated the West's decisions to expand NATO (Goldgeier, 1999; Asmus, 2002; Goldgeier&Shifrinson, 2020), but did not change its attitude towards Russia, whose security interests were to be respected - even at the cost of lowering the future military status of Central Europe in the Atlantic Alliance.

4. The future place of the united Germany in the European security system. The reunification took place in October 1990, Germany finally joined NATO and Moscow did not receive any formal guarantees that this would be the last expansion of the organization (Savranskaya&Blanton, 2017; Savranskaya&Blanton, 2018; Kramer, 2009; Kramer, 2004; Sarotte, 2010; Sarotte, 2014; Itzkovitz Shifrinson, 2016). This was key for Poland's security, but it opened the narrative of Russian state propaganda, using the argument of "betrayal of the West". It resonates in its foreign policy to this day as a justification for Russian aggression in Crimea (Kupiecki, 2019b; Kupiecki & Menkiszak 2020). A united Germany has become the most powerful country in Europe and Poland's main foreign partner there.

5. The adoption of the CFE Treaty, signed in November 1990. It improved Poland's security. In the 1990s, over 59,000 pieces of treaty-limited equipment were either destroyed, or transferred for peace purposes. This resulted in limiting the possibility of unexpected military aggression in Europe. These effects were reinforced by the agreements on confidence-building measures and the Open Skies Treaty. Poland benefited from these processes by: lowering tensions and raising transparency in the vicinity of its borders, the mutual involvement of Russia and the West in the negotiations, subjecting the military situation in Europe to the rigors of international law, new opportunities for a military dialogue with NATO countries and a joint approach to the future of arms control and disarmament (Kobieracki, 2001).

After 1989, following the demise of the Warsaw Pact, Poland had to take-up autonomous preparations for meeting such challenges as possible military destabilization in Europe, resulting in war, the violation of territorial integrity, disruption of energy supplies, waves of refugees from the unstable East and South, as well as evolving global threats, including WMD proliferation, human trafficking, drugs or organized crime. To do so, Poland continuously sought external support, broadening the scope of its cooperation with NATO and EU countries and reforming itself to be prepared for the burden of the membership in those organizations, It also invested in subregional cooperation and continued its support for collective security structures.

Poland's Road to and its Priorities in NATO

Poland joined NATO ten years after the 1989 revolution. One may conclude, that it happened relatively quickly. This remark seems necessary to bust one of the three *myths* of Polish political debate over NATO's enlargement.

The first of these claims, that Poland had sought NATO membership since 1989 and that this goal could have been achieved faster. In fact, Poland officially declared its intention to join the organization only at the beginning of 1992. Open declarations on this matter were avoided in previous years, as political realities were correctly interpreted by Polish authorities. These included the West's unwillingness to open its structures to new members in fear of the durability of changes in Central Europe and the related political differences among Allies, including their hopes of a lasting deal with Russia stabilizing security in Europe. Poland and other post-communist states were offered various forms of political and military partnership with NATO, with no security guarantees, or far-reaching obligations. The enlargement process started under Bill Clinton's presidency in the US, taking the form of a political commitment - with no deadline, though - in 1995, which in the following years received an institutional framework. In 1997, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were invited to accession talks. On March 12, 1999, they joined NATO. However, it wouldn't have happened without a successful political and economic transformation of Poland, comprising among other things, of its responsible foreign and security policy positioning the country as a *security producer,* and not merely its *consumer* (Kupiecki, 2019a).

The second of the accession myths states that all political forces in Poland after 1989 were in favor of joining NATO. However, this picture is untrue, both in regards to the beginning and the end of this process. The political compromise on this issue was shaped at the turn of 1992/1993, which, apart from the anxiety caused by the return of neo-imperial accents in Russia's policy, was undoubtedly helped by the growing popularity of NATO membership among Polish society. The post-communist Democratic Left Alliance underwent the most far-reaching change of position on this matter, initially reluctant to the trans-Atlantic option and preferring pan-European illusions of collective security. Paradoxically, Poland's NATO accession was finalized by President Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former leader of this party. The paradox is complemented by the fact that seven members of the conservative caucus representing political groups previously criticizing the government for its slowness in applying for NATO membership voted against it in the Parliament.

The third myth maintains that Poland's membership in NATO would have happened regardless of Polish activity. On the contrary, it was the success of the state's reforms, including the armed forces, and the continuation of pro-Atlantic policy by successive Polish governments that added credibility to the efforts to become a member of NATO. The outcome of this process was of course determined by the Allies' decisions and their own calculations, but without Poland's consistency this process could have failed. The example of Slovakia, which was excluded from the accession in 1999 (for a period of five years) due to the anti-democratic conduct of its government, offers a case in support of the above statement.

Poland has brought the greatest potential of all the countries that joined the organization after 1999, including a defense spending equal to the aggregated budgets of all the new Allies. The allied status influenced Polish strategic thinking, the armed forces development programs, and contributed in the early 2000's to the increase in the defense budget, with the statutory provision of allocating 2% of the annual GDP. The participation of the Polish

armed forces in NATO peacekeeping operations - in Bosnia and Herzegovina even before the accession - was an expression of allied solidarity, all the more that in Afghanistan, Iraq or the Balkans, no vital Polish interests were at stake.

From the outset of membership, Poland opted for the primacy of deterrence and collective defense among other tasks of the organization: cooperative security and conflict management, considering the latter as an extension, not a compromise of NATO's key mission. It was collective defense that built the Allied response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and its broader definition pushed Allies to conduct demanding military missions outside the North Atlantic area. Also today, energy security, threats in cyberspace, hybrid conflicts, or the implications of disruptive technologies pave the way to an extended formula of collective defense.

Polish support for collective defense also resulted from the continuous assessment of the developments in Russia, which often clashed with the official optimism of some other Allies. The essence of *Russia's NATO problem* was not so much the developing partner relations with Moscow as it is in Poland's interest, but doing so without any concessions at the expense of NATO defense. The Polish position on NATO-Russia relations emphasized reciprocity, avoiding actions weakening the organization, and the support for dual-track strategy combining deterrence and defense with readiness for dialogue. Although Russia's motivations in relations with NATO evolved in proportion to its own strength, which varied over time - *the more strength, the more assertiveness* - geopolitical imperatives were permanently present in them. These included: stopping NATO's enlargement and minimizing "losses" in the sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe, maintaining exclusivity in the former USSR and the lack of tolerance for Western criticism of Russia's actions in this area (like the Chechen wars).

The Polish efforts regarding the proper geographical distribution of Allied forces and military infrastructure also topped the Polish priority list in NATO. Unilateral restrictions in those areas were adopted by NATO before the first expansion of the organization in 1999. They concerned the non-stationing of troops and the failure to develop appropriate infrastructure in the new member states. Their effects resulted in the military exposure of NATO's eastern flank. The political threats resulting from this situation were even more serious, as they potentially signaled the existence of a "two-tier Alliance" offering different levels of military cover for their new and old Allies. The situation changed only as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea, followed by aggression in eastern Ukraine and a series of military provocations in the vicinity of NATO air and sea space. It brought back Allied attention to the issue, resulting in a package of decisions developed at four consecutive NATO summits: in Newport (2014), Warsaw (2016), Brussels (2017) and London (2019).

Having a clear priority in NATO, Poland also actively participated in Allied activities related to cooperative security, especially in partnership with Ukraine and Georgia, and crisis management. In the latter sphere, her most important contribution was Poland's participation in stabilization missions outside the North Atlantic area (see tables below).

Table 1
Poland's Participation in NATO Operations

Operation	Duration	Number of soldiers
Implementation Force (IFOR), *Stabilization Force* (SFOR) – Bosnia and Herzegowina	1996–2004	930
Kosovo Force (KFOR) – Kosovo	1999–	800
Albanian Force (AFOR) – Albania	1999	140
Amber Fox – Macedonia	2001	25
Allied Harmony – Macedonia	2002	25
Swift Relief – Pakistan	2005–2006	140
NATO Training Mission – Iraq	2005–2011	20
International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – Afghanistan	2007–2014	2600
Resolute Support – Afganistan	2014–	400
Active Endeavour – Mediterranean Sea	2005–	Navy vessel and 240 crew
Baltic Air Policing – Estonia, Lihuania, Latvia	2006–	Warplanes and 100 personnel

Source: own research.

Table 2
Case study: Polish Armed Forces in Afghanistan (Enduring Freedom and ISAF)

Duration: 2002–2014
Personnel: over 28000
Dead/wounded: 43 soldiers, 2 civilians; 361 wounded
Non-military assistance: 194 local assistance projects (20 million USD)
Local personnel trained by Polish instructors: 11000
Afghans trained in Poland: over 1000
Humanitarian assistance: over 267 tons
Overall cost: 2 bln USD

Source: The Operational Headquarters PLAF. https://wp.mil.pl/artykuły/aktualności/2015-01-05-podsumowanie-polskiego-udziału-w-misji-ISAF

Today, the credibility tests of collective defense come from various strategic directions. For the security of Poland, the most important are:

- Russia's aggressive policy that steers the conflicts in the South-East of Ukraine, as well as in Syria, and conducts a hybrid sabotage against the international order and its western institutional, axiological and normative international legal foundations;

- complex threats coming from the southern neighborhood, distracting the political attention and resources of the Alliance from collective defense efforts, and politically dividing Allies on the range of policy responses;

- the quality of trans-Atlantic relations and in-house policies of the organization struggling with the reconstruction of military capabilities, planning, mobility, management and command procedures, as well as creating a sustainable financial base for them.

Poland has shown solidarity in times of trial, also bearing its costs measured by the lives of Polish soldiers carrying out allied missions abroad – 63 of them died in NATO missions. Although it lacks the potential and aspirations of a superpower, a certain paradox of Poland's situation is that it is too big to accept the status of a NATO policy executor and not to show interest in its active shaping. Against the background of its power, it requires the following from national security policy:

- a proper prioritization of NATO matters from the point of view of Polish interests and the overall effectiveness of the organization. It is not about any selectivity in the approach to NATO's agenda. It must remain integral, reflecting the breadth of Allied positions. The point is, however, to look after the key issues to be reflected in joint decision-making;

- national executive security policy apparatus for this policy - civil and military - properly formulating tasks and translating them into specific actions;

- an efficient and integrated state security system, for which NATO plays the role of a force multiplier and a source of good planning and executive practices.

Of significant importance to Polish security policy is a militarily effective and politically credible NATO (Rodkiewicz, 2017). This includes the need for prudence in the ways to cultivate allied relations, programming the development of one's own power as an effect of collective synergy, but not as a strategic incapacitation of the state. For if the loneliness of Poland is at one extreme of the security policy failure, then at the opposite end there are ill-considered obligations that do not strengthen national defense. In both cases, they lead to no-alternative situations, i.e. a return to what was the curse of Poland for the last century.

The US Factor in Polish Security Policy

A strong NATO, based on a healthy transatlantic bond tops Poland's security agenda. It boils-down to three priority issues:

1. Maintaining US involvement in Europe, providing a vital trans-Atlantic link for NATO.

2. Development of NATO-EU relations for a reasonable synergy, or if need be, a division of labor in taking-up international security tasks, based on crisis management toolkits developed by both organizations and avoiding the duplication of structures (Michta, 2015).

3. Strengthening American guarantees for Poland, as an old Polish security concept (Kupiecki, 2019c), revitalized since the US-led counterterrorism operations following the 9/11 attacks, and difficult to achieve given strategic asymmetry of both nations (Kupiecki, 2016). The strong support given by Poland to Washington at that time, including the participation in the Afghan operation from its beginning in 2001, in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the "secret CIA prisons" system, purchases of American military equipment, and last-but-not-least, hosting the installation of a missile defense system in Poland, resulted from decisions designed to strengthen the bilateral relations. For the second time, the calculations for strengthening strategic ties with the US resurfaced during Donald Trump's presidency.

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, the United States were the first NATO state to strengthen and then develop the "visible presence" of its troops in Poland in 2014. They also decided to invest in the development of Polish military infrastructure and to create a place for storing military equipment here. The missile defense base in Redzikowo is still waiting to become operational. An element of uncertainty was introduced into this cooperation by the statements of President Trump, sharply critical of the European allies,

mainly in relation to the insufficient level of their defense spending. This was already signaled by his campaign announcements concerning: the transactional US approach to its international commitments, the supposedly "outdated" formula of NATO and unconditional security guarantees from the US, a more liberal and sanctionless approach to relations with Russia, an open aversion to the crisis-ridden EU and a bluntly clear *America first* principle, raised to the rank of doctrine by the 2017 US National Security Strategy. Presidential decisions to reduce military presence in Germany were harmful for NATO and Poland's security, as they meant a significant draw-down in the number of US soldiers and the removal of combat units from Europe. They also reinforced questions about the future of transatlantic relations, while the web of military, economic and political challenges facing the Western world has become more complex. Since Joe Biden took the US presidency, major concerns about the US approach to trans-Atlantic relations visibly receded as a result of a shift in political language and the early political actions aimed at renewing American alliances worldwide.

Poland and Collective Security

In the past decades, the place of collective security institutions has evolved in the security policy of the Republic of Poland. After 1989, having abandoned its satellite status, Poland stopped taking instructions from the USSR in the United Nations, regaining freedom in voting and diplomacy. The other side of the coin, however, was the loss of Russian support in the election mechanisms. In the course of the 40 years of a communist Poland, the country served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council four times. After 1989 this happened only twice. There were obviously more reasons for this (the increase of countries in the Polish regional group and thus - competition between them, as well as the interest of Warsaw itself). The transformation of Polish security policy and its new European and Atlantic priorities shifted resources and the attention of the leadership (Popiuk-Rysińska, 2001).

Warsaw continued to treat the UN as a component of the international order, especially in the sphere of human rights, disarmament and conflict prevention. Perhaps, the most ambitious contribution of Poland to the work of the United Nations was the so-called *New Political Act*, suggesting the scope and modalities for the consolidation of the organization's work in various fields of security, broadening the political perspective of its activities and starting a reflection on their normative and axiological foundations (Rotfeld, 2004a; Rotfeld, 2004b). For the two post-Cold War decades, Poland continued to participate in peacekeeping operations under the "blue flag". In 1997, it was the largest force donor to the United Nations mission. The withdrawal from them started in 2009, when Poland's military priorities moved towards participation in NATO and EU operations. The background of this decision should be considered more broadly in the context of changes in the doctrine and UN peacekeeping practice, lowering its quality, prestige and increasing costs as well as local sources of risk. Poland's moderate return to UN military operations was announced in 2019.

The CSCE/OSCE was expected to transform into a pan-European system of collective security immediately after the end of the Cold War, equipped with effective institutions, universally recognized standards, military instruments and the support of

both superpowers. Poland also had its stability-related calculations connected with such a prospect, especially in the aftermath of the demise of the Warsaw Pact and having no clear timetable for joining NATO. The recognition of CSCE norms and obligations and efforts to make them a part of daily international relations "from Vancouver to Vladivostok", which was at that time a part of Western political rhetorics, communicated Poland's aspirations to join a community of democratic states. On the other hand, it was to weaken possible Russian revisionism, the brutalization of relations in the former USSR, and attempts to regain influence by force in the former external empire. It was also a kind of code stabilizing Euro-Atlantic political relations and the institutional chaos of the first post-Cold War years.

The end of the 20th century was the most productive period in the OSCE's history. Its institutional growth, anti-crisis mechanisms, as well as norm-building in the field of human rights, civil liberties, protection of minorities, freedom of the press and political and military aspects of security have built up considerable achievements and credibility. The conventional arms control process, developed under its auspices, and a set of CSBM's in the military sphere, have also become a measure of the "golden decade of the OSCE". Poland has clearly marked its presence in all these aspects of the organization's work. The key OSCE institution – the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) - was located in Warsaw as the easternmost capital of a Western state. Annually, it organizes global review conferences as part of the so-called human dimension and conducts dozens of impartial election observation missions in the Member States to monitor their compliance with democratic standards. This commitment was underlined by the OSCE chairmanship held by Poland in 1998. She will assume this function again in 2022. However, the ongoing atrophy of the OSCE's collective security capabilities (Road, 2017) raises-up the challenges for Warsaw (Hałaciński, 2019).

The EU in Poland's Security Policy

Poland's efforts to join the EU proceeded in parallel with the accession process to NATO, although they were accompanied by a different strategic logic (Czachór, 2017). While the Alliance was to bring military guarantees, the Western European Union and the EU were seen by Warsaw a choice aimed at the participation in the common European market, as well as the free flow of goods, ideas, and people, based on common rules, values and policies. Against that background, issues of foreign, security and defense policy originally had the value of strengthening the dialogue with the EU members. In this way, Poland wanted to demonstrate the convergence of positions, a community of values and the ability to make its own contribution to strengthening European security. Poland's activity was also connected to the intense discussions, held in the last decade of the 20th century, on European security and defense identity. The dispute was whether it should be built within NATO (by increasing the contribution of European allies) or outside of it, using autonomously the Western European Union and the EU.

Poland could not ignore the essence of this discussion, although by remaining outside its institutional centers, it did not have a major influence on the directions of the debate. Its protracted course may have made the issue of expanding Western organizations a hostage of future decisions. The case also antagonized the United States and Turkey,

strongly advocating the development of a capability-based European defense identity within NATO. Therefore, Poland had to do its utmost not to lose credibility in the entire process as a supporter of a strong trans-Atlantic option and to avoid antagonizing the supporters of the European option (especially France).

In 1994, the policy of linking-up with Western organizations received a new institutional foundation with Poland obtaining the status of an associate partner of the WEU. It was the first Western security structure, which in mid-1992 opened to cooperation with Central European countries. For Warsaw, it was all the more important as the WEU was considered at the time "the defense component of the European Union and the European pillar of NATO". In the mid-1990s, the WEU also became a part of a popular political concept known as the "royal road", indicating the sequence of expansion of Western institutions. The enlargement of the Alliance as controversial - according to the supporters of this concept - should have been preceded by the membership of Central European states in the EU. Only then was the WEU to be opened for new members, and consequently NATO enlargement would be relegated to the background as unnecessary. This idea also involved its anti-American edge - the solution was based on European structures, eliminating US military guarantees and weakening transatlantic cooperation. It is not surprising that this concept was fought against by Poland.

The EU appeared relatively late as an instrument in Poland's security policy. A breakthrough in this respect was the Saint Malo Declaration of December 1998, which accelerated the development of military capabilities and pushed for a more robust EU defense. In the pre-accession period, Poland tried to balance between conservative support for NATO's defense monopoly and participation in discussions on the development of appropriate EU potential. However, this did not prevent Warsaw from actively participating in the US military intervention in Iraq (2003) – a step heavily criticized by major EU states. In addition to accepting American arguments on the need to strengthen NATO militarily and increasing the contribution of Europeans, Warsaw actually feared that EU plans might lead to the development of its autonomous military structures and shift a large part of its expenditure in this direction at the expense of investment in the Atlantic Alliance. As a result, the situation of a real weakening of NATO could arise, not compensated by any European solution with a potential similar to the transatlantic one.

By joining the EU, Poland declared its active participation in CSDP and did not oppose the general development of the crisis management capabilities of the organization. The greatest military effort by Poland, apart from participation in foreign missions, was related to the flagship project of the Union, so-called EU Battlegroups - rapid response units rotating by a state or a group of member states with a force of 1,500 soldiers, capable of independently conducting field operations for four months. Poland has been involved in them from the very beginning, as the framework state, issuing the largest military contingent and commanding the entire unit. Subsequent editions of the Battlegroups were carried out jointly with other countries: Germany, Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia in 2010, Germany and France - the so-called Weimar Battlegroup in 2013, and then every three-year period regularly together with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine - the so-called Visegrad Battlegroup Plus (MFA Brief, 2020).

It was an important effort both financially and militarily, although it raised questions of rationality when there were no clear all-EU solutions and no political consensus on

how to use them, or their operational priorities, mission sustainability and burden sharing scheme. The latter issue also stimulated Poland, which was in favor of extending – beyond current *Athena* mechanism, built on the principle that *costs lie where they fall* - the scope of financing the common EU military operations from the common budget. Poland was also involved in the work of the European Defense Agency - EDA, whose task, since 2004, has been to coordinate the development of joint defense projects of the Member States, supporting the operational capabilities of the Union and the competitiveness of its defense industry on internal and external markets. The issues mentioned above caught Poland's attention during its 2011 presidency of the EU Council (Sus, 2014).

Poland pursued such a policy until the end of 2015, when the conservative Polish government began to systematically reduce its participation in the EU defense policy (Zwolski, 2017). Its political attention has been shifted towards military cooperation with the US and the security of NATO's eastern flank. However, this outflow of engagement took place at a time when - under the pressure of threats from Russia and the South (terrorism, regional conflicts and migration waves), open aversion to transatlantic cooperation demonstrated by President Trump and Brexit - the EU has decided to double its efforts in this field, including the first-ever activation of Permanent Structural Cooperation envisioned by the Lisbon Treaty. Not without hesitation, along with most EU countries, Poland joined this mechanism in 2017. The country was also late in entering common defense projects implemented as part of the EDA and is not participating in the France-led European Intervention Initiative - announced in 2018 as a kind of elite military program with an undefined purpose, formally implemented outside EU and NATO structures.

Poland's Security Policy: The Challenges Ahead

Currently in addition to the sharpness of the ongoing political dispute in Poland over the directions of the state's development, including its foreign and security policy, there are signs of a fundamental deterioration of its international environment (Foreign Policy Strategy, 2017). This mainly applies to:

- the general weakening of the Western position in the world and the foundations of the liberal international order it shaped for decades,

- the diminishing role of norms and institutions in the politics of great powers (especially the USA, China and Russia) and the growing likelihood of their unilateral actions. To a different degree, they also openly challenge the spirit and letter of international law and instrumentalize its interpretations, question their own political commitments (for instance in the fields of arms control, disarmament and CSBM's) and drive wedges in international cooperation,

- the weakening of multilateralism as a source of predictability, satisfying needs and equalizing opportunities for various participants in international relations,

- a general decrease of the popular credibility of institutions guaranteeing a stable international order, and with it an increase in the wave of nationalist populism and authoritarianism (also cultural, economic or religious), limiting space for international cooperation, predictable national security policies and lasting peace. Also, in recent years,

NATO raised concerns about democratic deficits in its member states (Burns & Lute, 2019).

The main international institutions that guarantee Poland's development and security are currently not finding a sufficient response to the new situation. Their internal cohesion increases anxiety about the future. NATO, while doing a lot to strengthen collective defense on the eastern flank, focuses its attention on many regional and sectoral problems often referred to as a *360-degree approach* (NATO, 2020, November 25). The EU, pressured by Russia, China and the US, has been tormented by many internal problems and questions about the effectiveness and support for its policies. Therefore, it clearly faces the challenge of either stagnation, or making a decisive step forward - also in security and defense matters. However, the vague idea of a possible European strategic autonomy, not only invites unavoidable differences among member states, but may also lead to a "multi-speed Europe", defined according to the "readiness for integration" and thus acting against the initial objective of the project.

Russia, although incapable of effective modernization and internal systemic changes, is clearly moving towards revising the foundations of the world order. It reaches for aggressive actions - political, economic and military - using their own comparative advantages, such as gas and oil supplies and nuclear weapons as doctrinal tools of deterrence through the readiness of limited pre-emption called de-escalation. It also uses instrumental interpretations of international law regarding sovereignty, self-defense and self-determination. It does not shy away from tactical alliances with other opponents of the world order, territorial aggression in Ukraine or the land annexation of sovereign Ukraine and Georgia. It is also a guarantee of the survival of oppressive regimes and a support for radicals in strategic regions of the world (National, 2020).

China, which has benefited the most from the West's global openness in the last three decades, with its enormous economic growth and prestige, technological advances and the strengthening of its military capacity, works hard to establish new rules of the international order. Its vision of this order is not entirely clear, but it is to be based on a new arrangement of the principles of the coexistence of superpowers and the marginalization of smaller states, reduced to the roles serving local or sectoral interests of world leaders.

The US prioritizes its own superpower and during Trump's presidency shown its readiness to loosen all ties that bind it - global alliances and partnerships, multilateral institutions or treaties. The acceleration in this respect attributed to the Trump Administration, however, has its deeper roots in the public mood in the US. His radical announcements, signifying the withdrawal of America from leadership roles established in the post-Cold War world, could also be seen in the actions of its predecessors: George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Thus, we are dealing with a trend that is much more serious in terms of causes and long lasting consequences than the personality of the 45th president of the United States, his rhetoric and peculiar "twitter diplomacy". As such this trend will challenge his successor.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed multiple questions about priorities for democratic governments. Possible answers will probably imply significant shifts in defense budgets, renationalization and reprogramming national and multilateral policies (less resources,

operations, exercises and cooperation). Global health threats have also sharpened the issue of leadership in the Western world. They showed the limitations of the EU and the United States. The latter did not become a leader in the fight against the pandemic, or a force calling for international solidarity. The post-pandemic financial crisis is likely to hit international co-operation, increasing the temptation of economic nationalism and limiting civil liberties, destabilizing countries and regions and opening them to greater penetration by superpowers (breeding their even sharper competition).

Poland will be strongly affected by these processes, which should invite a prudent security policy, based on sober assessments of the situation and immediate recognition of the state's strategic interests. Under the new conditions, it will also require rethinking its future directions, taking into account technological changes and other factors causing constant shifts in the chains of production and goods distribution, which have benefited Poland since 1989. In addition to the persistence of the classical ones, new threats are also emerging. These include implications of climate change, and a whole range of new problems derived from disruptive technologies, such as future cross-sectoral applications of artificial intelligence or the protection of privacy and biometric data.

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