

DILEMMAS OF POLISH MILITARY STRATEGY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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Throughout its long existence, the rules of regional geopolitics, historical experience and national strategic culture have had a deep impact on Polish security strategies. In the modern times, however, the national security environment is witnessing an appearance of new global trends and the birth of new paradigms of conflict. Security challenges require new approaches, but at the same time, they demand the preservation of equilibrium and harmony between objectives, concepts and resources. Motivated by the increasing complexity of emerging phenomena, Polish strategists are making efforts find the appropriate solutions to new demands. However, the evolving character of security alliances and the gradual shift of the global power balance will compel Poland to accept the consequences and risks of inevitable strategic choices. By analyzing foundations and the future challenges to national security concerns, this paper explores the wide range of factors that influence Polish contemporary strategic behavior and motivations in the broad context of current Euro-Atlantic relations.

DILEMMAS OF POLISH MILITARY STRATEGY

Introduction

Friction between the regional logic of geopolitics and the phenomenon of the globalization compels Polish strategists to confront the complex challenges to national defense.

During its turbulent and complicated history, Poland underwent a metamorphosis from regional power to failed state and to resurrection and sovereignty. As a result of dynamic changes in the security conditions, in order to survive, Poland has always had to frequently adjust its defense strategies. For several decades of the last century, these strategies were shaped by the world geopolitical order and the threats to its survival and national aspirations. These days, despite the fact that the very existence of the nation is not threatened, security concerns are no less serious. The contemporary strategic environment, usually described in terms of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA),¹ has seen an emergence of trends and global phenomena where the security conditions fluctuate, often producing confusion. Such complexity and unpredictability pose the strategic dilemmas of how to achieve balance between national objectives, existing concepts, available resources and acceptable risks.² Accordingly, facing the emergence of new paradigms of conflict, Polish military strategists should seek to flexibly adapt strategies to the demands of national security.

The aim of this paper is to identify emerging dilemmas that may be the concern of Polish strategists. Initially, I will achieve it by revisiting historical events, analyzing the hierarchy of national interests and strategic culture, and inspecting contemporary threats. After that, in order to understand country's strategic fundamentals, we will

examine past military affairs and theoretical base, and also, we will scrutinize codified principles of the current defense strategy. The last part of this research will review the dimension of Polish strategic security choices with regard to the changing nature of existing alliances, limited economic potential and the new military requirements coming from new paradigms of conflict. In addition, in the wider perspective the ambition of this research is to demonstrate close inter-relations between policy implementation and the consequences of the process for military affairs.

Security Policy Foundations

Understanding strategic dilemmas would be impossible without finding the real roots of national motivations, behaviors, values and factors that shape strategic minds. Poland entered the twenty first century with the *raison d'état* codified in the *Constitution*³ and *National Security Strategy*.⁴ Both documents, deeply anchored in the Polish ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural homogeneity, articulate grand strategic principles and a vision of security. This credo, which is based on the national "power of identity," draws its strength from historical experience, clearly defined and commonly agreed interests, distinctive national culture and perception of threats and challenges.

The Idea of Independence

Polish historians and elites still argue over the question of whether the struggle of independence is the record of corollary of wrong political and strategic choices and the country's inability to adapt to dynamic external challenges, or the inevitable fate of geopolitics and geography (Figure 1).



Figure 1.

Historically, as a result of three successive partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by Prussia, Russia and Austro-Hungary, the effort to regain its right to self-reliance and the idea of independence had great impact on the current security perception. After several centuries of successful existence, in effect of strategic decisions and changes in the power balance in Europe, the kingdom was gradually reduced in size (1772, 1793 and 1795) and erased from world maps in 1795. In the nineteenth century, the Polish state reappeared on European stage as under Napoleonic France protection; however, following Napoleon's defeat, as a Congress Kingdom of Poland ruled by the Tsar of Russia it was lost again, after Polish-Russian War, known as the November Uprising 1830-1831.

The wheel of fortune once again was favorable for Poles who, on the heels of World War I, proclaimed independence on November 3, 1918. Since its inception was confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles, the Second Republic had to fight for the post-war

borders until the victory over the Soviet Union in the war 1919-1921. Only after 20 years of sovereignty, on September 1 1939, as a result of pre-war Russo-German pact, German troops, followed by the Red Army on September 17, invaded Poland. Despite the Nazi occupation, the government in exile never surrendered and managed to contribute significantly to the Allied war efforts. During World War II, 400,000 Poles fought under Soviet command, and 200,000 went into combat on Western fronts. During the war, about 6 million Polish citizens were killed by Germans, and 2.5 million were deported to Germany for forced labor or to extermination camps and more than 500,000 were forced out to the Soviet Union.⁵

In July 1944, the Soviet Army entered Poland again, and after defeating Germans established a Soviet-controlled "new" government (in opposition to London based "government in exile"). Accordingly, following the Yalta Conference, a Polish Provisional Government was formed and was soon internationally recognized. Since then, after rigged "democratic" elections, the Soviets established a satellite state, the People's Republic of Poland. Once again Russian forces were deployed and stationed on Polish soil. Ultimately, by the late 1980s, as a result of decades of struggle of political opposition, economic crisis, and favorable international situation, a reform movement Solidarity was able to enforce political reforms. The transition to independence and the creation of the modern sovereign state was crowned by official formulation of national security policy.⁶

National Interests

It is important to identify characteristics of Polish national interests in order to better understand factors that are behind the security strategy. National interests serve

as a base and direction for the formulation of the state security policy,⁷ which, in turn, has the purpose of facilitating the nation's interests.⁸ The term "national interest," in Poland, often addresses the concerns about the country's place in the international community during the era of deep global transformation.⁹

The division of national interests, although sometimes used by Polish strategists synonymously with security, suggesting that all interests are survival priorities, has three categories: vital, important and serious.¹⁰ Vital interests explicitly refer to the first and unconditional priority of the national policy: defense of national territory and its citizens. They embrace the need for safeguarding the country's independence and sovereignty, maintaining territorial integrity, protection of the citizens and human rights, and maintenance of democratic order. Unsurprisingly, defense of the state, and security of its borders is the responsibility of the Armed Forces.¹¹ Important interests are defined as the mission to guarantee permanent and proportional civilizational and economic development of the country. They are focused on the culture as the source of the nation's identity, continuity and development creating conditions for the population well-being. Serious interests pertain to efforts to build strong international position and the possibility to promote Polish interests on the world stage. The obligation of the country is to build its prestige and create favorable conditions in the international environment.

If the above mentioned taxonomy is relatively obvious, than more important is the unchangeable character and role of these interests in the very existence of the Polish sovereign state. The *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* as the supreme law of the Republic recognizes the state as the enabler for its national sovereignty and democratic self-determination. The charter refers strongly to the past and to obligations towards the

ancestors' lengthy struggle for independence. Achieved at ultimate sacrifice, it contributed to the Polish civilizational progress and economic well-being. Likewise, the state is also the indispensable guardian of one thousand years' of national heritage and culture.¹² These strong nation-state traditions and desire, ignores emerging new views that the state is not the "natural" subject of security policy because independence is the property of a nation rather than state.¹³ For Poles, it is the state that, within the framework of strategic culture, shapes required national aims, chooses concepts, and applies appropriate national means.¹⁴

Strategic Culture

Understanding Polish strategic culture is a key to explaining the core questions about the roots of, and influences upon, strategic behavior."¹⁵ As Samuel P. Huntington said "the use of military power is and has to be rooted in a nation's society and culture."¹⁶ Rooted in its geopolitical history, the culture possesses a strong sense of national identity aspirations and exceptionality. It also keeps in common memory strategic failures and letdowns. This culture may be characterized as being self-protective, autonomous, based on loyalty to allies and motivated by national aspirations.

Firstly, Poland's security policy remains concerned with territorial defense and, again, the memories of the past external aggressions. Its location between Prussia/Germany and Russia/the Soviet Union was, as mentioned before, a source of threat and a major reason for its collapses.¹⁷ Secondly, Polish security policies are shaped by its visible distinction from those of its European partners. Our role as the major advocate of efforts to anchor Ukraine and Lithuania to the Euro-Atlantic community is best illustrated by the Warsaw approach to newly independent Eastern

European countries.¹⁸ Yet another example of such will of autonomy is the Polish strategic partnership with the United States, in the event of strong European anti-Americanism. The next feature of this strategic culture is a predisposition to fulfill international agreements when confronted with the threat of regional instability. This attitude derives from an enduring recollection of being victim of the French and British appeasement towards Hitler and their inability to support the defense of the Republic in 1939 and in 1944-45. This disposition, in fact, directly influences current policy and public opinion which unambiguously supported NATO's engagement in Kosovo and the operation in Afghanistan.¹⁹

Another essential feature of Polish strategic culture, having in mind a very long record of statehood, reflects the nation's past role and its ambitions. Throughout the centuries, Poland's position in the regional security system has the shape of sinusoidal graph. Most of its time as a sovereign country, Poland played the role of a regional hegemon and security provider rather than vassal and security consumer.²⁰ In the course of history, however, Poland was mostly appreciated not as an independent entity, but as a "problem" in relations with the superpowers ruling Central and Eastern Europe.²¹ When the country regained independence in 1918, it started to play a leadership role once again by the principle of the geo-strategic philosophy.²² This legacy of "being either assertive or disappear" is hardly ever respected by partners and even now, on that basis, very often Poles are accused by some European Union partners and the United States as being too regionally pushy or confrontational toward Russia.²³ In reality, contemporary security policy tries to find a compromise between historically conditioned longings for its own state, for which millions of Poles died, and

the requirements of the modern world as well as civilizational and global development.

²⁴ State policy is influenced by national values, attitudes, preferences, geography and capability to handle complexities; yet, all of those factors grow from common historical experience.²⁵

Perception of Threats

The perceptions of external insecurity in Polish minds evolve from traditionally regional and geopolitically driven Russo-German fears to less direct and mostly non-military threats. Recognizing the process of “amorphisation” of the nature of threats,²⁶ Poland perceives them globally and regionally. Their multi-faceted nature is the first source of strategic dilemmas.

From the global perspective, the threat perceptions reflect modern trends which see the increase of security dependence on the outcomes of globalization. This comprises the polarization of wealth accumulation between the rich and poor, a change in demographic balance, the rise of ideologies and organizations not recognizing national borders, an increase in ethnic and religious self-identification, and the rising role of energy issues.²⁷ Additionally, the weakening of the regulatory capabilities of states and international organizations breeds social frustrations, and economic backwardness which erodes the stability of the world system. Economically, even the most efficient state — especially of the size and economic potential of Poland — may find itself helpless in the face of the impact of external capital, and consequently be powerless when facing transnational corporations (Figure 2).

ECONOMY AND DEMOGRAPHY		
GDP (total)	631.8 billion	\$
GDP (nominal)	413.3 billion ²⁸	\$
GDP real growth	6.5 ²⁹	%
Consumer price inflation (av.)	2,3	%
Population	38,518, 241 ³⁰	
Population growth	-0.046	%

Figure 2. Poland's statistics (2007)

Despite all of that, one of the most dangerous is the unpredictable policy of authoritarian regimes and the phenomenon of "failed states".

This focus does not overshadow Polish concerns with conventional threats and the classical risks (armed invasion). ³¹ Regardless of different perception of classic military threats it is apparent that, the state and its "traditional machinery" begin to demonstrate a complete failure to deal with aggression, or threats of non-state entities. This was spectacularly illustrated by the recent "hybrid war" in Lebanon. ³² Another key issue is an uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery coalesced with the mounting risk of the increasing likelihood of terrorist organizations seeking such weapons and capabilities. Potentially unstable and dangerous, this situation even amplifies worries of consequences for failing to respond to new threats. ³³

Regionally, Polish security attention faces more traditional and "familiar" challenge, Russia. However, in times when Polish - German borders disappeared ³⁴ the problem of the stability of the region, with an economically empowered and increasingly assertive Russia, seems now more one-sided. ³⁵ Within this context, additional U.S. – Russia competitive interests and Russia's desires to restore its super-power status has made

Europe the region of collision of Washington's and Moscow's agendas.³⁶ Prone to use "pipeline diplomacy," Russia's strategic philosophy is still focused on military power as a justifiable means to expand its own international influence.³⁷ Despite the perception that direct military threat is very unlikely,³⁸ Poland sees this attitude as destabilizing regional security, especially with regard to traditionally supportive policies towards Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia. Side effects and possible spillover of such conflicts may impact the regional and Polish security.

Development of Military Strategy

Military power, as a part of national power, continues to try to meet political and national security aims by purposefully applying its resources. The character of the evolution of those concepts and the Polish attitude on military affairs is related to the evolution of its strategies. As demonstrated in the past, readiness to face new security configurations remains crucial. We may observe this issue by analysis of strategic activities and theoretical narratives.

Evolution of Strategy

The historical perspective of the evolution Polish military strategy in the modern era starts from the resurrection of Poland in 1918 and ends with the publication of the first entirely independent security strategy in 1992. The Polish way of looking on military affairs is closely tied with the disastrous collapse of the state in the September Campaign of 1939. Despite various opinions³⁹ that the Republic had no ideas about how to prepare and use its forces before World War II, we may identify several elements of its strategy. At first, the conceptual military assumptions were alliance oriented. National defense security rested on a strategic alliance with France, which

was to support Poland's independence and territorial integrity. WW II, from its inception was to be defensive with the aim of winning time for international, in this case French and later British, support. Secondly, in terms of military resources, the only guarantee of the national defense was the army. Built on a foundation and experience of the previous conflict, and historical tradition, the armed force was seen as the guarantor of country's independence.⁴⁰ Despite a long tradition of insurgencies, Poland had no common national system of resistance aimed at defeating an enemy. Next, having historical records of coordinated hostile behavior of its neighbors; military decision-makers took too high a risk by putting efforts on dealing with only one adversary. Focused initially on the Eastern border, the Polish military did not predict the Soviet - German alliance and cooperation in defeating Poland. Finally, fighting recent wars against the Soviet Union on the open spaces of Belarus and Ukraine, Poles were fighting different battles than with technologically and organizationally advanced enemy, Germany. Some may argue that no military strategy could help Poland, especially with hindsight of the later disaster of France. Nonetheless, for many generations this interwar time remains the case example of unforgivable strategic military mistakes.⁴¹

After World War II, the development of Polish strategies was twofold. Initially, they were distorted by political developments leaving Poland in the political and military sphere of Soviet Union. By the very nature of "alliance," independent military strategic concepts were unthinkable.⁴² Accordingly, throughout the Cold War, the country armed forces were designed and prepared to take part in conventional conflict in Western Europe,⁴³ conducted throughout blitzkrieg-style and large scale operations. Later, at the dusk of the Cold War, Poland again began formulating independent strategic concepts.

At the outset, based on political neutrality, new strategic models were unconditionally abandoning military action against another state or even participation in a war unless Poland was attacked. Therefore, the basic mission of the Polish defense system was to protect vital national interests: sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. The policy refused membership in any military alliance directed against any neighbor and it did not foresee the deployment of any troops beyond national borders, except for United Nations missions. In 1992, Poland was a “grey security zone” without allies.⁴⁴ The first written strategic paper was published, called *Security Policy and Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland*.⁴⁵ The strategy recommended that the Armed Forces had to be prepared to meet potential aggressors in any region of the country, in any direction and against any form of military threat.⁴⁶ Despite assumptions of neutrality, the publication foresaw that the source of potential threats stemmed from the instability arising from the former Soviet Union countries.⁴⁷ Obviously, that evolution could not be possible without extensive intellectual work of military strategists.

Theoretical Background

The emergence of the new generation of Polish military thinkers shaped significantly the minds and ideas of decision-makers. The most noticeable was the evolution in such areas as defense concepts, definition of war and conflict. The first idea that had significant influence on the development of current strategic resolutions was the view that Poland cannot afford to conduct devastating battles on national soil. Within this view, the country should seek the swift war of maneuver conducted by technologically advanced regular forces.⁴⁸ If swift victory was not possible, the military mission would be to engage the enemy long enough to raise the political cost to the

aggressor or by making the conflict a threat to general European security. Reflecting Western concepts,⁴⁹ it advocated the pattern of so called “low intensity armed operation” which envisages a larger number of small, short - term encounters resulting in rapid withdrawal from battle to prepare advantageous conditions for the next encounter.⁵⁰ Strong emphasis was put on the rapidity of eliminating an armed clash in order to maximize operational effects against a directly superior enemy.

The second vision promotes the concept of defense based on the combined effort of regular and territorial forces. This reflected certain extant theories of protracted and irregular war.⁵¹ By exhausting and tiring the enemy, Polish defense would force the adversary to abandon occupation and retreat.⁵² This view sees the national defense based on balanced regular and territorial forces as the deterrence factor.⁵³ Whereas regular force could be used in the initial phase of potential conflict against Poland, territorial defense force could effectively engage the would be intruder in irregular warfare (urban guerilla warfare, sabotage, terrorism etc.)⁵⁴

Finally, the impact on “Polish strategic culture” was influenced by the work of General Boleslaw Balcerowicz. Purely Clausewitzian in his views that war is the continuation of policy by violent means,⁵⁵ he defined that the term war should be reserved only for the national (involving all national resources) level of military engagement. In war, armed violence becomes the main method of policy and armed forces are decisive or co-decisive factor (instrument, tool) of its solution. In his perception sharp differences between war and the state of “not –war” do not exist.⁵⁶ Contemporary application of national military force does not mean ultimately war and,

despite the presence of violence, the armed forces should have only assistance rather than decisive role in the policy.

Current Concepts

The fact that recent Polish military strategy concepts are shaped by NATO and European Union membership does not mean that there are no strategic dilemmas. In fact, they are deepened by the attempt to determine what kind and how much attention should be given to challenges or threats, as well as opportunities.⁵⁷

Responding to the new requirements, the most up to date strategy concepts are contained in *The National Security Strategy of 2007*.⁵⁸ Holistic in approach to security issues, the strategy predicts coordination of military and non-military elements of national power and recognizes that with the exception of war, which means an attack on Polish territory,⁵⁹ the military plays a supportive role. It confirms that military power is the principal element of national defense and its main mission is to defend the country within the framework of allied collective defense. However, allied commitments oblige the Armed Forces to develop expeditionary capabilities to operate beyond the borders of Poland, and, at the same time, maintain current capabilities. The expeditionary missions are to be conducted chiefly, reflecting European Union “Petersberg tasks,” in support of stability, peace-keeping and humanitarian operations.⁶⁰ Having known that, the military should be able to take part in combined and joint operations conducted according to international law within the confines of NATO, EU, UN or as ad hoc coalition. Nonetheless, ad hoc coalition is specifically understood here as under auspices of the United States — the only strategic state partner.

By going into the realm of theater strategy or, as some people want, operational art,⁶¹ the strategy stresses strongly the significance of military technological progress.⁶² Reflecting, to some extent, the American Joint Vision 2020⁶³, the Polish military should seek full spectrum capabilities and, if required, supremacy over a potential enemy by achieving informational domination, task organized forces, possession of technical advantage over an adversary, sophisticated command and control systems, effective fire power, maneuver capabilities, complex force protection and full logistics support.⁶⁴ By this token, this vision gives eventually way to the concept of swift, maneuver operations conducted by smaller but technologically advanced regular, professional forces.

From a wider perspective, this overseas focus seems to fit to the national policy of active participation in preventive, offensive and global endeavors.⁶⁵ However, some authors argue that recent Polish strategies, echoing EU⁶⁶ security visions, put too much attention on less important national interests rather than those vital for the state existence. Militarily, it may channel military attention and resources away from the homeland which for a long time assumed inevitability of strategic defense. Therefore, still in Polish realities, we may positively assume applicability of the main tenets of *The Security and Military Strategy of Poland*.⁶⁷ The paper stressed the importance of conventional deterrence based on military size, combat readiness and ability to perform variously scaled, and different in intensity armed operations. In case of large scale operations, the defense of the territory of Poland will take the shape of strategic delay in order to regain initiative and defeat the enemy.

Actually, there is no question that keeping focus on homeland defense capabilities is essential, except that it is not enough in new international strategic landscape. But regardless of whether the strategy will be “maneuverist,”⁶⁸ attritional or any other, it should reflect consistency between hierarchy of national interests and the role of the military in reducing risks to Polish security.

Military Strategy Dilemma

Evolution of the security conditions exposes Poland to a new set of challenges and strategic dilemmas. For many years, the national security strategy was based on the balance between participation in NATO, membership in EU, and partnership with the United States. The balance seems to be changing. NATO is in the process of identity evolution, politically and economically motivated EU openly accentuates its military ambitions and geographically remote United States is a global player which appears less interested in European security. If policy is a course of action adopted in pursuit of national objectives⁶⁹, it may change over time to achieve specific ends by miscellaneous ways. This may result in using military force as a last resort to be employed when other methods of achieving a particular goal fail.⁷⁰ Poland, even though not directly threatened by force, faces difficult security choices.

NATO — In Search of Purpose

The NATO that Poland joined is different now. The Alliance has changed its original core responsibilities from deterring the Soviet threat to combating the dangers born beyond Europe's borders. Joining NATO in order to protect its national borders against traditional security needs, Poland faced NATO which was transforming into an offensive military alliance “exporting” stability.⁷¹ Imposing internal changes on countries

and risking overreach in strategic terms,⁷² NATO began to demonstrate its global relevance.⁷³ Moreover, the alliance has lost much of its military weight as a result of increasing US preference of the “NATO toolbox concept” and reliance on the “coalitions of the willing.”⁷⁴

With the growing pressure for NATO evolution, the Polish strategic problem is not defined by ‘if’ but to ‘how’ the treaty should be reshaped and “how strongly” Poland should support this process. From the perspective of the operations in Afghanistan, NATO consists of a two-track alliance in which certain members pay for the operations and suffer the casualties and others simply provide political support and offer criticisms from the sidelines.”⁷⁵ Should it be the world club of nations being able to marshal a coalition of the willing or a global security alliance? With worldwide NATO engagement, the Polish military faces principally the question of how to guarantee domestic security and effectively defend the population on our own soil, having a military strategy based on collective defense. Another problem with strategic reliance on NATO comes from a “wider” interpretation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and the tendency to “polarization and symbolization” of the alliance⁷⁶ that breeds enormous strategic risks. Zbigniew Brzezinski and some Polish strategists suggest that the most dangerous scenario is ‘politically obscure’ violent local conflict conducted against Poland with no clear, to our allies, distinction about who is the belligerent party.⁷⁷ In such a scenario, the country may not receive outside support because of political suitability or possible reluctance of allies to act. Accordingly, should Poland guarantee itself capabilities and the right to be ready to act unilaterally and maybe preemptively if required?

Militarily, the Alliance is the provider of capabilities and rules of operational employment⁷⁸ and a point of reference for training the forces, operational procedures, doctrine, modernization, equipment acquisition and fostering interoperability.⁷⁹ Better choice does not exist. Strategically, within visible tendency of duplication of capabilities, competition for resources with EU⁸⁰ and a disinterested USA,⁸¹ NATO transformation remains one of the biggest Polish military and security concerns and the source of strategic risks.

European Union or the United States — Between the Rock and Hard Place

Poland has more and more difficulty achieving a balance between the United States and the European Union. America and Europe not only conspicuously disagree how best to deal with security threats,⁸² but also both actors see differently the role of military power and the function of international institutions.⁸³ Therefore, the current promotion of greater cohesion within EU⁸⁴ remains in stark contradiction with Polish notions that the US link guarantee national security and raises its international position. From the military point of view this situation is difficult for two reasons.

First, is the United States, which has recently been seen as pursuing a narrow, self-serving agenda with the doctrine of preemption disregarding international norms, and acting unilaterally against other states as defensive measures.⁸⁵ By its nature, US military strategy is offensive and underlying swift victories⁸⁶ within the full spectrum of conflicts during expeditionary operations. With its world wide commitments, America wants a “full spectrum” of military capabilities “to deal with everything from an all-out war to small policing actions.”⁸⁷ With no visible signs of changes in this feature of The States security policy,⁸⁸ in case of possible closer partnership and wider involvement,

Polish military strategy should more energetically evolve to take part in expeditionary and offensive campaigns in far-flung areas of the globe. Alas, Poland in no way is prepared to accompany America that is facing protracted war, thereby weakening its own resources in counter-insurgency wars with no clear-cut outcomes.⁸⁹ Poland has neither the tradition of counter-insurgency in the modern era, nor is its contemporary society and culture able to accept the role of occupying nation. But there is something more. Additionally, the conflict in Iraq significantly changed the climate of the Polish partnership with the United States. The case of the installation of ten interceptors of Missile Defense Shield⁹⁰ revealed very different perspectives and perceptions of security⁹¹ and more assertive Polish behavior. The US position as a strategic partner is strong but needs initiative to refresh and revise bilateral relations in the light of post 9/11 realities.

Secondly, on the other side of a scale of the strategic choice, is the European Union with its growing ambitions and political assertiveness to have a cohesive and common security policy. However, *European Security Strategy*⁹² primarily envisages that military operations as law enforcement or “human security operations.”⁹³ Even though it advocates the strategy of preventive engagement it strongly underlines the need for multilateralism and legitimacy. The operations intended to focus on “human security” of individuals⁹⁴ in different parts of the world rather than defend the territory of a particular state.⁹⁵ By application of less combative means, which is not quite in concert with the American way of thinking, this approach envisions employment of European forces in peace-keeping, and combat forces in crisis management including peacemaking, humanitarian and rescue operations.⁹⁶ This tempting “soft” option of

conflict solving appeals quite rightly to Polish elites and decision makers, because Poland has a long peacekeeping tradition.⁹⁷ Moreover, this policy tries to achieve its security objectives effectively by applying other than military elements of national power to emerging non-military threats. On the other hand, the choice to tie our own safety only to EU, no matter how economically and politically demanded, offers very little value added to military strategy. Militarily speaking, the EU is “the sum of the weaknesses” of all its members⁹⁸ and, as shows the example of its impotence to mount a mission in Chad,⁹⁹ for some time it will be so.

The complexity of national security policy recognizes the EU capability gap pertaining to its potential military dispositions, and with the United States a credibility gap.¹⁰⁰ Within growing divergence between America and Europe on readiness to use military force,¹⁰¹ the new Polish strategic risks should be defined not with respect to the traditional friction within the Polish-Russian-German triangle, but rather with regard to more complicated affairs between the United States and Europe.¹⁰² Additionally, we must not forget the other two elements of the Clausewitzian “remarkable trinity,” the directing policy of the government and the attitude of public opinion.¹⁰³

Aspirations *Versus* Capabilities—The Need for Balance

Though deeply ingrained in national aspirations and strong political motivations, the Polish global involvement does not and for some time will not match decent assets and means (Figure 3). Comparing the country’s security areas within the reach of geography and interests, it is no more than regional. At present, the only global scale power is the USA. Trans-regional powers are such players China or the European Union.

POLISH ARMED FORCES		
Personnel ¹⁰⁴	149,937	
Generals	157	
Officers	26,727	
NCO	49,036	
Privates	74,013	60,111 conscripts
Major equipment ¹⁰⁵		
Main Battle Tanks	946	
Armored Fighting Vehicles	1985	
Artillery	1217	
Aircraft	235	
Helicopters	211	
Ships	89	

Figure 3. Polish Armed forces statistics (2007)

It might be true, as Jacques Chirac said, that “the first line of defense is now far beyond national borders,”¹⁰⁶ and it can be right that living in the “global village” Polish security interests are everywhere. But the problem lies in the ability to understand our own capabilities and resources. Global military involvement requires very different economic potential. In that regard operations in Afghanistan and Iraq may serve as the best example. Based on the policy of “active solidarity”, engagement in the operation Iraqi Freedom on the side of the United States placed Poland in the group of nations conducting a policy beyond their capabilities.¹⁰⁷ Deficiency in economic and financial means forced revision of Polish military engagements abroad. Moreover, Poland officially acknowledged that its ambitions were bigger than its material base and that “it could not participate in the Iraq mission without substantial US assistance.”¹⁰⁸

For Polish military strategists, engagement of forces beyond their capabilities cannot be accepted in the long run, because it definitively may lead to the risk of their bifurcation. Contrary to German concepts,¹⁰⁹ the creation of a two-fold military consisting of a small, light, motorized, and portable elite force in opposition to large

under-resourced formations,¹¹⁰ is too difficult to be militarily acceptable. On the other hand, international position and prestige of a country tends to depend on its capabilities to take part in any global allied security operation independently.¹¹¹ So that, current tendencies of involvement of military force in various areas around the world under various flags (US, EU, UN), seem more than the pursuit of peripheral national interests. The “military diplomacy” becomes more and more important.

Polish military involvement causes the problem of maintaining full capabilities to secure vital national interests, thereby reflecting the need for responsible balance between commitments and resources. Though, maybe it is the problem of forces management and the strategic decisions to re-allocate national resources. Concentration of involvements to one or two regions could be the alternative to current dispersed military efforts.

The Utility of Force — Something Old, Something New?

Discussing the future, including security environment and military strategy, it is hard not to agree with Colin S. Gray who said that warfare “will not be neatly predictable linear consequence of what is visible today.”¹¹² Yet, even today we may attempt to identify some trends that may shape Polish military strategy.

Nowadays, the Western world tries to tackle the burning problem of adaptability to the “war among people”¹¹³ conducted in urban areas external to the western conditions and often in a remote corners of the world. Insurgencies or “fourth-generation warfare” (4GW),¹¹⁴ are widely recognized to be a long-lasting feature of modern wars for the years ahead. This brings the “fourth- generation peace implementation operations” that embrace features of classic peacekeeping and counter-insurgency but differs

significantly from both.¹¹⁵ Contrary to “classic” warfare is heavy reliance on effective firepower, when the enemy purposefully mingles with the populace, is useless and often counter-productive.¹¹⁶

The Polish military, despite many worldwide contemporary experiences, is not yet deeply imbued with the demands of such concepts as “nation-building,” counter-insurgency, or interagency cooperation. Despite recognition of asymmetric character of adversarial threats, wars waged on enemy territory usually assumes use of force against the conventional forces, rather than urban guerillas. It is unlikely that we will witness very soon the refocus of national military strategy into preparations to conduct of ‘non-traditional’— counter-terrorist, counter-insurgency, stability and reconstruction — operations. However, in light of the current *Security Strategy* and the character of recent military involvements, this shift will take place sooner or later.

Despite being familiar with ideas of “low-intensity conflict,” and “operations other than war,” Polish Armed Forces are prepared to destroy targets and they disregard the need to be ready to rebuild states. Being more familiar with such problems as information dominance, swift maneuver supported by superior fire power or Network Centric Warfare etc., they prepare for war according to western prescriptions which is more comfortable with battle¹¹⁷ rather than strategy. Nowadays, being good at destroying is more often less important than being good at rebuilding. Though there is one reservation. The emergence of a new type of operations produces new demands but does not mean that current capabilities are not needed. Despite some optimistic notions, as suggests Colin S. Gray, the danger of interstate “classical” conflict has not passed away forever.¹¹⁸ The dilemma remains vivid in the view of the pressure, coming

from never predictable Russia. There is no doubt that Poland will still need to prepare itself for “continental military scenario,” no matter how probable in the foreseeable future. Defense of national soil against outside aggression will remain, for good reason, a vital national interest and main mission for the Polish military. This implies that the Armed Forces must be simultaneously ready to the fight more than one generation of warfare if they want to meet strategic demands.

To meet the security challenges of the future, Poland will have to establish sufficient capabilities to operate in expeditionary, multinational and interagency operations. The concept of “nation-building”, with all the elements of national power, has to be strongly linked to a campaign planning or theater strategies. And it must apply more than to national theater of operations, that is, Poland’s territory. To deal with adversaries unknown today, the military should be not only transformed, as it is predicted now, by slimming down, investing in technology and communications increasing speed, stealth, and accuracy, but they also should be used as “smart power”¹¹⁹ by smart strategies.

Conclusion

By analyzing foundations and future challenges to national security concerns, this paper demonstrated wide range of factors that influence Polish contemporary strategic behavior. More importantly, this research showed, in the context of current Euro-Atlantic relations, a very broad spectrum of strategic choices and dilemmas which face security and military strategists.

Motivated by the increasing complexity of emerging trends, strategists make efforts to adjust current thinking and capabilities to new demands. It is true that Polish

security concepts experienced a long evolutionary journey but, at present times, it is not enough to have effective defense strategy. The military has to reach a balance between vital homeland defense tasks and, so far peripheral but still growing, requirements for global involvement. Not possessing independent tools of military, economic or political influence on the surrounding international environment, Poland can realize its security interests only in coordination with other partners. However, it appears more and more obvious that alliances evolve and there will come the time to decide where the real strategic partnership is, and accordingly, accept consequences and risks, define new aims, select appropriate ways and reasonably allocate available means. The strategic security dilemma between full reliance on NATO, American partnership or EU is not as much the choice between investment in different capabilities or operational and doctrinal concepts. This is more about the purpose of “utility of force,” mutual trust, and readiness to meet obligations and homeland security.

Strategists, both military and civilian, should also take into account that changing paradigms of war, according to General Rupert Smith,¹²⁰ indicate that the utility of force should be continually modified. In the long run, even the best military force is not able to compensate for the lack of a coherent security concept. Military strategy must be flexible and adaptable, but, even more important; even more adjustable must be their brains. Security challenges require new approaches, but, at the same time demand from us preservation of equilibrium and harmony between objectives, concepts and resources. However, the ambiguities of the future challenges make this process, by no means, finished.

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