Poland's Threat Assessment
Deepened, Not Changed

By Mariusz Antoni Kamiński and Zdzisław Śliwa

Polish-Russian relations are traditionally difficult, shaped by geostrategic locations in Europe and shared history. Russians have stereotypes about Poland that color their perception of Polish issues. This, combined with ongoing political and economic disputes, creates a situation where hopes for improvement are slim.

Poland and Russia's common history includes a number of painful historical memories that make it challenging to build mutual trust and reconciliation, which outside observers must understand. Although the two nations have been neighbors for more than a thousand years, the critical historical events came between the 16th and 17th centuries, when both countries competed for primacy in Eastern Europe. Poland lost this rivalry, resulting in Austria, Prussia, and Russia partitioning Poland three times between 1772 and 1795, when Russia made Poland a principality within the Russian empire until Poland's independence in 1918. The result was the compulsory Russification of Polish lands, widespread attempts to convert Catholic Poles to Orthodox Christianity, and the brutal suppression of national uprisings. Together, these meet the modern criteria for ethnic cleansing and form the basis of Poles' historical consciousness.

When Soviet forces sought to invade Europe in the name of communism at the end of the Russian Civil War, they were decisively defeated at the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, which stopped the Soviet advance and frustrated their desire to ignite a global revolution. Stalin, then an officer in the Red Army, was one of the contributors to this disaster and took his revenge in 1940, ordering the execution of some 22,000 Polish officers and intelligentsia at Katyń, after partitioning Poland again with Germany. The Soviets occupied Poland at the end of World War II and imposed a communist regime until 1989, depriving Poland of full political and economic sovereignty, creating elite dependence on the Soviet Union, and enabling Soviet interference in Poland's internal affairs.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ascent of the Law and Justice Party in Poland in 2015 led to a more decisive and negative policy toward Russia. According to Witold Waszczykowski, a former member of Poland's Parliament and a current member of the European Parliament, NATO's Founding Act

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on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, enacted at a time when "Yeltsin's Russia was relatively weak and cooperative with the West," was repudiated in acknowledgment that "Today's Russia is aggressive and imperialistic, [and so] there's no reason we should respect that agreement."[1]

Perception of Russia as the Main Threat in the Baltic Sea Region

The current "Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland," published in May 2017,[2] provides an example of Polish leaders' perception of Russia as the main source of instability on NATO's eastern flank as well as playing a destabilizing role in the Middle East and North Africa. It states that the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation poses a direct threat to the security of Poland and other countries of NATO's eastern flank.[3] It anticipates Russia maintaining an aggressive stance in foreign and security policy and considers the Russian use of armed forces to pursue political goals, destabilizing neighboring countries, and undermining their territorial integrity to be particularly dangerous. The Defence Concept also recognizes hybrid activities and proxy conflicts as threats.[4] It acknowledges that Russia might cause a regional conflict involving one or more NATO allies and that the buildup of Russian armed forces in the Western Military District and aggressive scenarios of the Russian military exercises such as *Zapad* 2009—which ended with a simulated nuclear attack on Warsaw—validate their assessment of threats from the Russian Federation.[5]

Poland's May 2020 National Security Strategy (NSS)[6] confirmed the assessment that Russian neo-imperialist policies are the most severe threat to Poland's security, citing Russia's 2008 aggression against Georgia, the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, and ongoing actions in eastern Ukraine as violating international law and undermining the European security system. The NSS views Russia through the prism of its offensive military potential, hybrid operations, and activities in the "gray zone" below the threshold of conventional war. Poland is also concerned by Russian anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) systems in the Baltic Sea Region and Crimea, as Russia proved in Syria that it could attack targets up to 2,000 kilometers away using *Kalibr* cruise missiles.

The February 2022 unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has consolidated Polish feelings and vindicated Poland's approach to Russia. Poland is now in the forefront of states providing support to Ukraine.

Strengthening Military Potential and Cooperation within NATO

Fear of Russia contributed to a consensus on strengthening Poland's defense potential within NATO and in bilateral cooperation with the United States. This consensus facilitated the development of both territorial defense forces and A2AD capabilities. Poland is shaping NATO adaptation and activities to strengthen the eastern flank. Poland also seeks to increase the U.S. military presence in the area to safeguard against Russian aggression. Poland has already used the NATO consultation framework and "in concert with Lithuania, called a meeting of NATO ambassadors, citing Article 4 of the NATO treaty on emergency 'consultations' if a NATO member feels threatened."[7]

The critical element of Baltic Sea Region security is solidarity and a coherent regional policy including NATO members as well as Sweden and Finland. Part of this effort is to continuously develop the NATO Contingency Plans for Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland (which was launched during the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit) as well as improve the Readiness Action Plan (initiated during the 2014 Wales NATO Summit).[8] Poland and the Baltic States strongly favor more NATO forces in their territories. They also seek to make the NATO presence in northeastern Europe permanent instead

Patriot Missile training in Poland. Image by: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. January 16, 2016

of rotational, seeing this as a clear signal of NATO's determination to defend the Baltic Sea Region.

Bilateral cooperation with the United States is also crucial. Poland hosts a U.S. anti-missile defense base in Redzikowo, rotational U.S. Armored Brigade Combat Teams in Żagań, a Combat Aviation Brigade at Powidz Airbase, an MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial system detachment at Miroslawiec Airbase, and a division-level Mission Command Element in Poznan.[9] Poland hopes to host a U.S. Corps-level HQ in the future. Additionally, the United States is the framework (lead) nation for the Poland-based NATO battlegroup.

The Defense Budget

It is impossible to maintain security at an appropriate level without a stable defense budget. For Poland, appropriate statutory solutions are one of the keys to success in the process of modernization of the armed forces. Following Poland's 1999 accession to NATO, the Polish Parliament passed a law on the reconstruction and technical modernization and financing of the armed forces as part of the political consensus in 2001, stipulating that defense expenditure would be no less than 1.95 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[10] Not only has this principle proven durable, but Poland strengthened it in 2017 when a provision that defense expenditure will gradually increase to 2.5 percent in 2030 was passed.[11] This law provides stability and has tripled the defense budget over the years from $3.1 billion in 2000 to $10.8 billion in 2018, making Poland a European leader in defense spending.[12] In February 2019, the Ministry of National Defense accepted the 2026 Technical Modernization Plan (TMP), with proposed funding of approximately $48.9 billion. The TMP includes plans to prioritize and procure combat aircraft, attack helicopters, short-range air-defense systems, submarines, and cybersecurity. The *Harpia* fifth-generation aircraft program is the most important part, and in 2020 Poland signed a contract to purchase 32 F-35A Lightning II fighters. Modernization priorities include the *Narew* program (acquisition of anti-aircraft short-range rocket sets for combating unmanned aerial vehicles), *Kruk* (assault helicopters), and *Orka* (submarines). The TMP also includes $791 million towards the purchase of modern cryptographic and information technology (IT) equipment for cyberspace defense forces.[13]

The allocation of military spending has significantly changed since February 2022. Already in 2023, the defense budget will reach 97.4 billion Polish

Zloty (PLN) or 3.0 percent of GDP, with the apportionment of 27.3 billion PLN, or 28 percent for the TMP . Underscoring the importance of procuring modern weapon systems, additional modernization expenditures will be supported by nearly 46 billion PLN from the Armed Forces Support Fund (in Polish, Fundusz Wsparcia Sił Zbrojnych, or FWSZ) and an additional 39.5 billion PLN will be obtained from the issue of bonds by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego.[14] The newest modernization projects include the acquisition of as many as 250 M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks (MBTs) from the United States and some 200 pieces of M142 HIMARS [High Mobility Artillery Rocket System]. Another source of weapons is South Korea, with planned acquisitions of 288 K239 Chunmoo MLRS [multiple launch rocket system], 180 K2 MBTs, 212 K9A1 155-mm, self-propelled howitzers, plus 48 FA-50 supersonic advanced jet trainers.[15] Such procurements are based on the recent threat assessment and support Poland's growing role as a regional power. Power is what Russia understands, so military capabilities will serve as a deterrence factor supplemented by enhanced resilience, especially when merged with NATO allied forces in the case of any conflict.

While Poland has made substantial investments in its conventional military, it has also sought to boost its societal resilience, crisis management, and unconventional warfare capabilities by investing in a new branch of its military, the Territorial Defense Force (in Polish, Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej—WOT), officially launched in 2017.[16] The WOT is modeled in part on the National Guard of the United States and is primarily a volunteer light infantry force constituted at the regional level and intended to supplement the professional armed forces.[17] The WOT is technically the fifth branch of the Polish armed forces and is subordinate to the Minister of Defense, but falls outside the regular command hierarchy.[18] WOT units are designed to bolster resistance against hostile measures and are trained in providing a response during the early stages of a hybrid conflict, protecting infrastructure or supplementing security for military facilities and critical infrastructure, assisting in countering disinformation campaigns and cyber operations, and providing stability in a crisis.[19] The WOT is currently planned to consist of 30,000 members, and the number will grow until it reaches the desired 50,000 troops.[20] In this context, it is valid to highlight the current discussion around increasing the number of active-duty soldiers to 250,000, and of a return to the national draft. The latter, according to the Center for Public Opinion Research's survey in May 2022, is supported by some 45 percent of the population.[21]

Poland's traditional strategic focus has been on securing the northern border with the Kaliningrad Oblast and the eastern border with Belarus in anticipation of rapid support from allied forces. Another crucial strategic focus is securing the Suwalki Gap, a 100-kilometer corridor of land connecting Poland to Lithuania between Kaliningrad and Belarus. The geostrategic location of the Suwalki Gap is important in the regional security context, particularly vis-a-vis the complexity of the terrain for conducting military operations. Russia's geographical location threatens the Baltic States, while the invasion and destabilization of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea are causing Suwalki to be a topic of discussion by civilian and military authorities.[22] Russian control of the Suwalki Gap would cut off the Baltic states from NATO reinforcements. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia see this as an existential threat. Conflict there would likely expand throughout Eastern Europe from Kaliningrad to Belarus and even occupied territory of Ukraine.

Time to Change the Legal Framework

A state defense system needs a solid legal basis to function smoothly. Without defense laws, it is impossible to create a robust organization and achieve effective cooperation between various

military and non-military elements. Unfortunately, in Poland the current legal provisions are often archaic and completely inappropriate for the current situation. The defense law, passed by the Parliament of the Communist People's Republic of Poland on November 21, 1967, needs a decisive reform, especially the "Act on the universal duty to defend the Republic of Poland."[23] Since then, Poland transitioned from a totalitarian state to a democratic state under the rule of law and the function and character of the armed forces have changed significantly. The very perception of national defense now places great emphasis on the functioning of the non-military aspects of national defense.

Over the last five decades, the Act on universal defense has been amended 113 times and repeatedly supplemented with successive tasks and powers redefining the defense roles of various state bodies, the competencies of the commanders of the armed forces, and individual military formations. Some provisions were transferred to other new laws. As a result, the Act is an extensive and complex legal cluster that contains provisions such as regulations concerning civil defense that have been practically unchanged since 1979. Consequently, the Act is archaic and unsuitable for the current situation; it is currently a chaotic combination of various aspects of defense and military law that has resisted calls to draft a completely new national defense law.[24]

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Polish Parliament passed a new law on the defense of the homeland, which unified a large part of military law. The law allows for the establishment of the Armed Forces Support Fund—a new financial mechanism to accelerate the modernization process of the Polish armed forces. Defense Minister Mariusz Błaszczak confirmed that starting in 2023 at least 3 percent of GDP will be allocated to defense.[25]

Cybersecurity, Information Warfare, and Intelligence

Today, the link between external and internal security is increasingly apparent, requiring the extension of strategy from a narrow military defense framework to include other relevant areas. Rapid changes and dynamic processes in the security environment at local, regional, and global levels require national security systems to continually evolve. New technologies, the incredible growth of cyberspace, the intensification of the information struggle, and the increasing dependence on information infrastructure make a non-military defense as important as military defense. The massive Russian cyberattack on Estonia in 2007 shows that the cyberspace domain is now increasingly a political and military battlefield and should be defended on a par with the defense of the country's territory, airspace, and territorial waters.[26]

Poland has become more dependent on digital services; social and economic development increasingly depends on quick and unhindered access to information. The efficiency and stability of information and communications technology (ICT) systems are crucial not only for the state's internal security, but are also practical for every area of state and civil activity. Cyber threats that directly impact Poland's internal security evolved between 2015 and 2020. The Internal Security Agency's (ISA) governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT GOV) reacted to more than one hundred thousand computer incidents between 2015 and 2019; one-third of these were cyber threats. Advanced persistent threat groups constitute a growing portion of the threats to Poland's cyberspace. Most malicious traffic against governmental administration networks in 2019 originated from Russian cyberspace (28 percent); the organizations most affected were government institutions and critical infrastructure. As many as 226,914 notifications of potential ICT incidents (12,405 acknowledged as incidents) were recorded in 2019, compared to some 31,865 notifications in 2018

(6,236 acknowledged as incidents).[27] The number of cyber threats is growing every year; for example, in 2020, of the 246,107 notifications of potential ICT incidents, 23,306 proved to be real incidents against Polish institutions. They were reported by improved early warning systems.[28] The numbers from 2021 are even more alarming, consisting of 762,175 notifications and 26,899 incidents, including 115 warnings about specific and coordinated cyber campaigns.[29] This was in the year immediately preceding the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Poland recognized the need to secure cyberspace early when in 2015 the Supreme Audit Office identified critical deficiencies in defining the legal and conceptual framework for actions as well as insufficient coordination and financing of tele-information security by the Ministry of Administration and Digitization (from 2016 on, referred to as the Ministry of Digital Affairs).[30] The situation called for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the security of Poland's cyberspace. The Act on the National Cybersecurity System was passed in 2018 and the Strategy for the Protection of the Cyberspace of the Republic of Poland for 2019–2024 was passed in 2019.[31] Although it took a decade to codify governmental efforts related to cyberspace security and not all issues have been resolved, a solid basis for further work was established.[32]

In order to ensure a more efficient response to threats to Poland's cybersecurity, the CSIRT GOV has expanded its early warning systems and participation in international cybersecurity networks. It instituted the ARAKIS 3.0 GOV early warning system, which provides data on external threats and vulnerabilities of the state's administration information and computer networks. Important political events considered high-risk events in terms of cybersecurity receive heightened attention for monitoring and mitigation of cyber threats. Polish CSIRT teams also participate in multinational exercises such as NATO's Crisis Management Exercise, Cyber Coalition, and Locked Shields to prepare better for the protection of the state's cyberspace.

Understanding that securing Poland's cyberspace will remain crucial for the state's internal security, Poland is increasing efforts to improve the protection of critical infrastructure as well as pursuing private-public partnership solutions and developing indigenous cryptographic tools and national expert cyber centers.

Foreign Intelligence Operations in Poland

Poland's geostrategic location and its membership in NATO and the European Union (EU) attract foreign intelligence services (particularly from the Russian Federation), including espionage related to security and other state functions. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is responsible for counterintelligence activities. MIA published an overview of foreign services activities between 2015 and 2019, recognizing the disappearing boundary between foreign intelligence information-gathering activities and other activities inside Poland, including extensive use of cyberspace and social media, as evidenced by developments in the Baltic States and Ukraine.[33] The energy sector, investments, information sphere, and social networks are the main targets of foreign espionage, which range from the security and military industry to the civilian economy. China and Russia are particularly recognized for conducting propaganda, disinformation, and intelligence operations in Poland since 2015. New technologies and operating procedures necessitate a more focused and deliberate response.

Poland faces growing threats from foreign influence operations. Because these "hybrid" activities are difficult to identify and classify in legal terms, they usually do not end up in court. Most frequently, foreign citizens suspected of threatening hybrid activities in Poland face administrative actions while illegal activities of foreign diplomats are addressed

through diplomatic procedures. Poland expelled four Russian diplomats in 2018 as a part of the international reaction to the Skripal poisoning, and then in 2019 expelled the Vice-Consul of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Poznań based on information collected by the ISA showing that the diplomat had engaged in activities inconsistent with their diplomatic status and which could harm Polish-Russian relations.[34] The diplomat was declared *persona non grata* and was banned from entering Poland and the rest of the Schengen area.

Over the last five years, Poland has ramped up its efforts to address hybrid threats. The ISA counteracts hostile hybrid activity through administrative procedures such as entry bans, expulsions, denial of permission to stay, negative opinions on applications for citizenship, or withdrawal of permission to stay. The ISA has released information related to some of the cases. In October 2017, the Russian scholar Dimitrij Karnuakhov, tied to the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, a Foreign Intelligence Service-affiliated think-tank, was suspected of conducting hostile information activities and expelled. In late 2017, the ISA assisted in banning three Russian agents posing as researchers from entering the Schengen area who turned out to be the masterminds behind pro-Russian projects orchestrated in Poland.[35]

An example of a hybrid threat to Poland's security was an attempt to set fire to the office of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association in the small town of Uzhhorod in south-western Ukraine. The perpetrators were Polish citizens who were used to spoil Hungarian–Ukrainian relations. The ISA investigated the Uzhhorod arson attempt and tied it to the pro-Kremlin Polish party, "Change," whose then-leader was charged with espionage and cooperation with Russian intelligence services. The case serves as evidence of the complex relationships between the influence of hybrid threats on internal, national, and international security in the region. The extent of administrative procedures used to counter hybrid threats is perhaps better illustrated by statistics: between 2015 and 2019, Poland expelled a total of 28 foreigners for activities against the security and interests of the Republic of Poland.

Protecting classified information plays an essential role in preventing foreign espionage. The ISA grants Polish citizens NATO and EU security clearances, issuing approximately 43,000 individual and 1,000 industrial clearances between 2015 and 2019. Simultaneously, 123 persons were denied access to classified information, and the security clearances of almost one hundred persons were revoked.

To support counterintelligence efforts, the ISA has increased prevention and educational efforts. Between 2015 and 2019 as many as 58,000 participants took 2,600 counterintelligence courses. These efforts are reinforced by other governmental agencies, especially the security services, including the armed forces. This complex approach supports counterespionage efforts and contributes to the society's resilience against and awareness of the wide range of threats resulting from the activities of foreign intelligence services within Poland and beyond.

Because Poland is a frontline state, countries will continue carrying out intelligence operations there. Russian intelligence services will remain active in both espionage and influence operations. They may also initiate and support malicious hybrid activities against Poland's security interests at home and abroad. Experts also highlight the increasing scope and intensity of Chinese intelligence operations in Poland. This evolving threat will require a deliberate approach integrating legal, conceptual, and organizational efforts. The Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission for Secret Services has observed that the Polish legal definition of espionage is outdated and not entirely relevant to current security threats. The definition needs to be updated to address issues such as the role of agents of influence and to clarify the relevant parts of the criminal code.

Strategic communication is also viewed as crucial to Poland's counterintelligence efforts. Several specialists have called for more robust public communication to increase social awareness of foreign espionage threats and influence operations.[36] This is especially true in in Poland where "the concept of strategic communication does not have a general strategy of action at the political level, nor a commonly accepted definition that could be adapted to either the national context or the current situation in the information space."[37] The development of a clear strategy and priorities followed by internal and external coordination will help to enhance trust in Polish counterintelligence services and demystify some aspects of their operations.

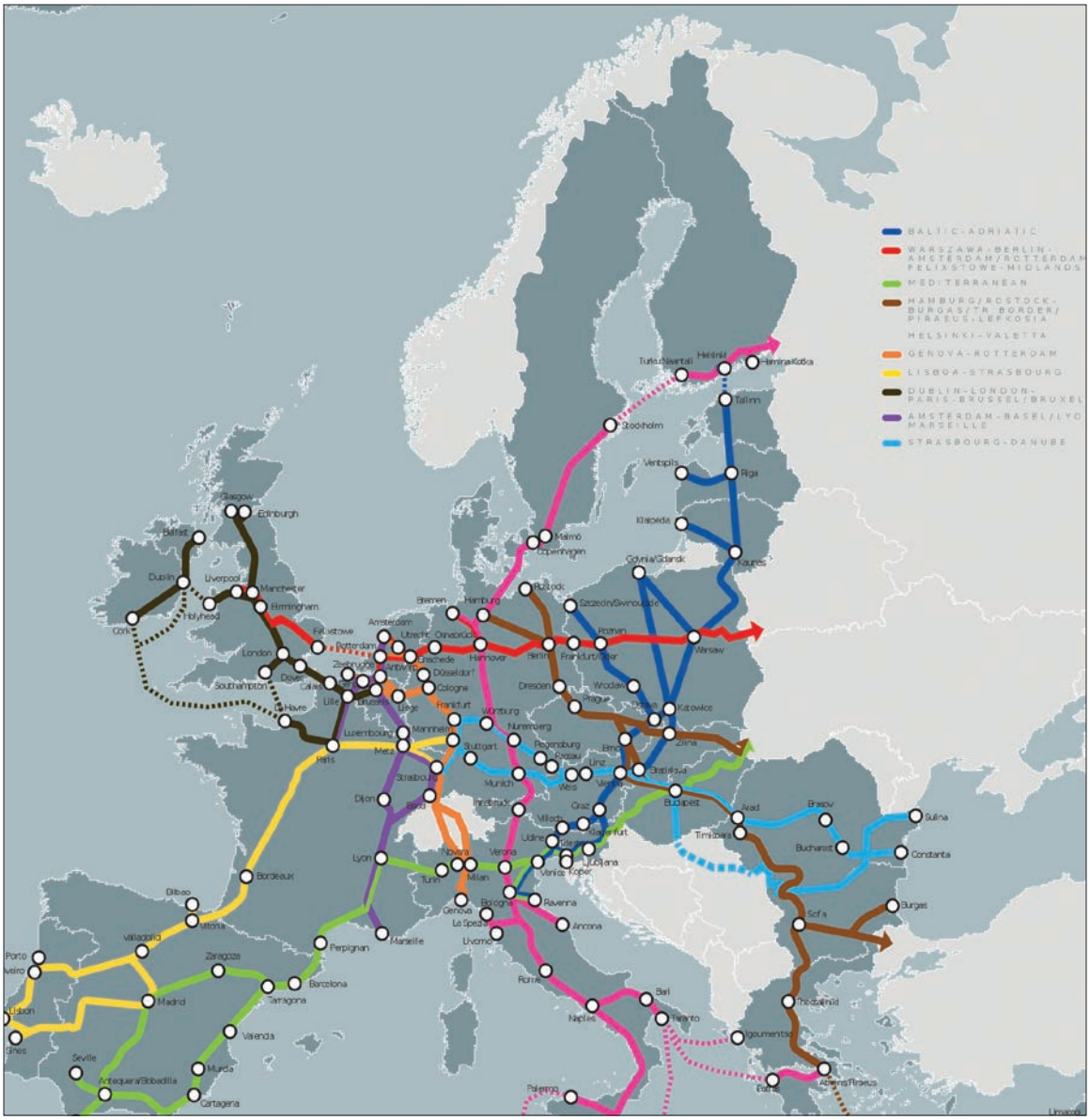
An issue currently receiving increased attention is the flow of refugees into Poland fleeing from the war in Ukraine. This refugee flow has created a window of opportunity for Russian intelligence services to send operators and deploy agents of influence to destabilize Poland and create an anti-Ukrainian attitude. This could conceivably be part of a long-term plan to activate those agents at some future point, determined by Russian intentions and Russia's desire to destabilize or weaken the cohesion of Poland's society or degrade the Polish position within international bodies.

The Key Role of Infrastructure in Defense

Poland's military infrastructure was developed to facilitate advancing to the west and preventing an advance to the east. Major military units were located in the western part of Poland and infrastructure was prepared to support the rapid movement of Russian second-echelon units from the East to the West. Next, Poland was protected from the West by Russian military units located in the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany). After 1991, Poland had to adjust its military infrastructure to face a threat from the East, a strategy that gained credibility after 2014 following Russian aggression in Ukraine. In this new scenario, Poland was transformed from its previous position as a Soviet rear area to a potential NATO frontline state, facing a threat on its direct border with Russia (the Kaliningrad Oblast) and Belarus (a member of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, or CSTO). The CSTO Article 7 is similar to NATO Article 5; therefore, the border with Belarus matters.[38]

Poland is the natural land link between West and East, so it is critical to ensure that lines of communication support the rapid flow of forces and sustainment from Western European bases and ports of debarkation to forward staging areas. Military mobility requires investing in military and civilian infrastructure to meet requirements that usually exceed the normal civilian routes and capacities. Building and maintaining infrastructure is a costly task. Since much of Polish infrastructure had to be rebuilt after Soviet occupation, Poland chose early to adopt military specifications for all future commercial infrastructure projects in order to facilitate the Allies' deployment during a crisis. This is an element of deterrence for Warsaw and has become more urgent since February 2022 when the Russian invasion of Ukraine brought attention to Polish infrastructure heading south and east, not just north and east.

Rail movement remains a challenge. The Polish rail system uses the European rail gauge while the Baltics still use the Russian gauge, which requires a cargo transfer in Sestokai or Mockava, Lithuania (the Russian gauge is different due to a Russian decision in 1842 to prevent potential invaders from using Russian railroads).[39] The current EU/Baltic States projects, Rail Baltica and Via Baltica, will eventually change all Baltic state rail gauges to European standards, however, the railroads and highways are currently insufficient for transporting heavy equipment such as tanks, infantry fighting vehicles,



Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) map. Image by: European Commission, European Union. December 20, 2013

or self-propelled howitzers. The good news is that military experts are involved in ensuring both Rail Baltica and Via Baltica meet military specifications.

Cooperation between NATO ("Military Schengen Zone") and European Union (PESCO "Military Mobility") underpins both funding and accelerated execution. Additionally, Poland and other states will continue infrastructure improvements, for instance connecting those two projects with the Via Carpathia (a north-south road system physically linking Lithuania and Greece) and further integration into the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T, a network of 10 transportation projects linking Europe north/south and east/west).[40]

Unfortunately, some of these latter railway and road projects are delayed and do not meet specific military specifications, in contrast to air and seaports of debarkation, which are meeting expectations. A primary concern is the availability of adequate onward routes from the ports and seaports, which are critical to ensure a smooth and constant flow of troops and supplies. The situation should improve with the agreement between Poland and the United States on the location and development of military facilities to accommodate some 20,000 troops. It will include a military complex in Poznan comprising a command-and-control center, a tele-information hub, and a combat training area to support the division-level headquarters and the newly identified U.S. Army V Corps Headquarters (Forward). Poland is also developing facilities for an armored brigade combat team's facility in Świętoszów, Trzebień, and Pstrąże.

Poland is also enhancing the Powidz airbase to support some 50 aircraft and two attack helicopter battalions as well as facilities for a special operations battalion HQ and air defense assets. The airfields in Krakow-Balice and Katowice-Pyrzowice will accept C-5 Galaxy transport aircraft, an important requirement to speed up deployment of units from the United States. Finally, Poland is upgrading air bases in Mirosławiec, Łask, and Dęblin to accept unmanned aerial systems.

Warsaw must be an active partner and advocate for EU PESCO projects on "Military Mobility" and "Network of Logistics Hubs" as well as TEN-T "dual use" infrastructure improvements, with the allocation of funds to upgrade relevant, civilian projects to military requirements. The NATO Schengen Zone concept requires clarifying the legal aspects of entering a country and cross-boundary movement. This will require Warsaw to make legal arrangements with neighboring NATO nations.

While Poland has significantly streamlined documentation requirements for deploying forces since the Anakonda 16 exercise, infrastructure improvements are still needed. Defender Europe 2020 was designed to test the deployment of a division-size force from Allied facilities in Europe and air and seaports of debarkation in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Poland. Onward movement required extensive use of the road, rail, and inland waterway networks while also testing the capacity at commercially operated airports, seaports, and transportation companies. NATO and the United States worked closely with the National Movement Coordination Centre of the Polish Movement and Transportation Division, which yielded lessons learned regarding rail and road infrastructure as well as procedures and terminology. It highlighted some shortfalls, such as the vulnerability of a limited number of bridges across major rivers, lack of engineering equipment for river crossing operations, and the need to control the flow of civilians. Poland learned that it must assure funding for military mobility and infrastructure, invest in cyber resilience, acquire strategic lift, contribute to prepositioning of U.S. and NATO equipment, enhance Host Nation Support capabilities, and improve procedures and terminology among military staff to enhance communication with allies.

The main challenge is infrastructure. First is the limited capacity of many minor roads and small bridges to withstand the weight of heavy armor. Next, there is a limited number of bridges across major rivers, which mainly run from south to north. Poland is building up engineering unit capacity to ensure required river crossings. There is also a need to provide specific infrastructure for logistics purposes, for example, fuel storage and ammunition depots to cover both Poland's requirements and specific classes of supplies for incoming units. Another aspect is the possession of proper capabilities to protect critical infrastructure against enemy attacks. Artillery and long-range missile launchers in Kaliningrad and Belarus create a significant

A2AD concern for Poland and NATO in general. The limited number of modern air defense assets and procurement of just two Patriot batteries does not solve this problem and results in dependence on other NATO nations.

Poland's geostrategic location pressures Warsaw to develop the required infrastructure in peacetime. The task is time-consuming and costly, and therefore, proper utilization of national funds and capabilities and financial guidance and expertise from NATO is required together with the proper development of dual-use civilian facilities, which requires close cooperation with and within the EU.

The Economy as a National Security Domain

Poland's 2020 NSS recognized the urgency of strengthening economic security in the face of globalization and growing competition in foreign markets. This is directly linked to internal security, national defense potential, and state and societal resilience in the face of modern threats. Poland has paid special attention to the financial sector, which is vulnerable to speculative attacks on the Polish currency as well as capital flight. As this sector is significantly affected by external trends, Poland must coordinate policies with international supervisory institutions and international law enforcement agencies.

Energy security is an important element in how Polish elites view Russia. They perceive Russia's historical position as a monopoly supplier of natural gas and crude oil as strategically unfavorable. As dependence on Russia for the supply of most energy resources exposes Poland and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to political blackmail and threatens energy security, Poland has diversified crude oil and natural gas supplies since 2015. Poland opposed the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, with a former Polish minister of foreign affairs comparing Nord Stream to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (in which Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia carved up Poland), causing angry reactions in Germany and Russia.

Russia exploits its oil and natural gas dominance to pressure targeted nations by categorizing them as hostile or friendly and charging them different prices. Gazprom's termination of gas supplies to Ukraine in the recent past demonstrates this effect. Poland is clearly aware of such threats; the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection's decision in October 2020 to impose penalties on Gazprom and the five companies participating in the project was a clear message.[41] After decades of Russia monopolizing the supply of oil and natural gas and Poland actively trying to stop the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, Poland has invested in a strategically important liquid natural gas terminal in Świnoujście to ensure the stability of supplies.

The recent sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines showed another Russian tool of hybrid war using other-than-military means against the West. The war and energy crisis have caused Poland to rely once again on coal as a source of energy and has resulted in price increases and market shortages compounded by the ban on Russian coal. Poland ended a ban on the use of lignite despite its being a more polluting fuel type. And though renewable energy sources are being energetically discussed, the planned transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy projects like wind farms, solar energy, and bioenergy has been postponed.

Currently, there is a nuclear power plant in the pipeline to enhance future energy security. It will be built by the Pittsburgh-based Westinghouse Company using AP1000 technology. With a capacity of 1 GW to 1.6 GW it is to be completed in 2033.[42] A total of three nuclear power plants are projected and linked with the construction of new power grids. The effects of coal-use, however, will last for years and will inevitably have a negative impact on the environment, necessitating the process of decarbonization, requiring substantial funds.

Poland Since the Ukraine Invasion

For many years Polish authorities warned partners within the EU and NATO that Russia poses a real threat and could cause a full military conflict in pursuit of its national interests. In 2008, President Lech Kaczyński, during a visit to Tbilisi, said: "We know very well that today it is Georgia, tomorrow it will be Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and perhaps the next one in line will be my country, Poland."[43] At the same time, Poland criticized the governments of some European countries for too reckless a policy towards the Russian Federation and for their dependence on Russian resources (including Nord Stream 2). Russia's attack on Ukraine did not come as a surprise in Poland but rather vindicated the Polish perspective.

From the beginning of the Russian invasion, the Polish government called for hard sanctions against the Russian Federation, including a ban on oil imports. Twenty days after the outbreak of the war, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, together with the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic and Slovenia, were the first European leaders to visit Kyiv to express their support and solidarity with Ukraine.[44] Politically, Poland has been very direct in condemning the Russian aggression and explicitly urged decisive action in international forums such as NATO, the EU, the UN, and other entities based on the existential threat Russia poses to Poland and to Europe. To encourage that support, Polish President Andrzej Duda, along with presidents of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, visited Kyiv in April to meet President Volodymyr Zelensky. During a follow-up visit in May 2022, President Duda addressed Ukraine's parliament (Verkhovna Rada), stating, "the free world today has the face of Ukraine!"[45]

These efforts resonated with Polish society and its perception of Russia. According to the Public Opinion Research Center survey in April 2022, 79 percent of Poles believe that "the war in Ukraine threatens the security of our country," along with 80 percent supporting the ban on Russian gas and oil imports.[46] Polish society's perception of Russia has significantly changed, as the negative perception of the nation in 2020 was only 42 percent.[47] The common threat assessment by political elites and the broader population has galvanized a stronger cohesion in Polish society, which has undertones related to Russian historical aggression and expansionism.

Polish support for Ukraine was immediate, offering solidarity with the invaded nation and recognizing the threat to Poland and the whole of Europe. Poland has been one of the main weapons suppliers to Ukraine, including an estimated 230 T-72M/M1 tanks,[48] as well as BWP-1 infantry fighting vehicles, BM-21 Grad 122-mm multiple rocket launchers, 2S1 Goździk self-propelled howitzers, and short-range portable "Piorun" air defense systems.[49] Polish authorities wanted to deliver MIG-29 aircraft, but this project did not materialize due to disputes within NATO. Poland donated 18 pieces of the NATO-compatible AHS 155-mm self-propelled tracked howitzer, "Krab," which proved its value in Ukrainian soldiers' hands. In June 2022, Ukraine decided to procure another 54 AHS Krab howitzers.[50] Similarly, the newest versions of the Grot rifle and Piorun man-portable air defense systems were praised as valuable and effective donations. Poland has also become a major hub for the transport of weapons to Ukraine, due to the long border with Ukraine and solid lines of communication through Poland from other EU and NATO countries.

Poland was among the first nations to deliver military support to Ukraine from the beginning of the war and is among the top three nations in terms of proportional contribution. According to the World Economy Institute in Kiel, Poland's contribution amounts to 0.49 percent of its GDP.[51] For comparison, that proportion for the United States is 0.25 percent. Poland's contribution was recognized when the Commander of Poland's 11th Armored Cavalry

Division, Major General Piotr Trytek, was appointed to lead the EU Military Assistance Mission Ukraine.[52]

Of critical importance, Poland welcomed the largest number of refugees from Ukraine; from February to May 10, 2022, 3,296,000 people—mainly women and children—came to Poland through the border crossings with Ukraine.[53] It is noteworthy that in Poland there was no need to establish refugee camps as most refugees found shelter in Polish families' homes, a sign of the generosity of Polish society. The commitment of local governments, volunteers, and the Polish government was also visible. In April 2022, the Polish Parliament passed regulations accelerating the registration of Ukrainian citizens in the PESEL system (Poland's personal identification code) and medical supplies were delivered by the Governmental Strategic Reserves Agency along with a help line to speed up the process of donations from citizens and organizations, including currency.[54] The Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego was allowed to grant guarantees for the repayment of loans or other liabilities incurred by businesspersons. The number of war refugees is increasing; as of November 2022, as many as 7,370,000 refugees have crossed the Poland-Ukraine border, according to The Polish Border Guard.[55]

Conclusion

Poland's security has been subject to increasing threats in recent years. Russia's aggressive actions have destabilized the Euro-Atlantic security situation and increased the scope and magnitude of threats to both Poland's external and internal security. Poland has faced growing threats of foreign espionage, intelligence, and influence operations. While most of these are attributed to the Russian Federation, the intensity of Chinese secret services actions in Poland also raises growing concern.

Hybrid threats—those below the threshold of armed combat—are among the major challenges, including to Poland's internal security, and are considered to be tied closely to adversary governments' actions using non-military tools. Recent years have blurred the boundaries between intelligence threats and hostile cyber, terrorist, and economic activities within and beyond Poland's borders. Propaganda and disinformation inspired by Russia have become the primary instruments of hybrid activity in cyberspace. They attempt to weaken Poland's security and its position in international relations. Simultaneously, hybrid activities exploit political divisions and extremism among Polish citizens, undermining the internal security of the state and its resilience to external threats.

Recent trends suggest that the scope and magnitude of cyber threats to Poland's security will grow significantly in the coming years. Actions of foreign states, along with criminals, will pose a threat to Poland's public administration, industry, and banking, as well as individual citizens. Furthermore, cyberspace may be used for hybrid activities and hostile information operations. Poland's cyberspace protection will remain crucial for the state's internal security in the coming years. A comprehensive approach combining public and private efforts will focus on the improvement of the protection of critical infrastructure assets. The common civic defense idea (or total defense) has already been conceptually announced within the *National Security Strategy of The Republic of Poland* in 2020.[56] It is to be based on "the efforts of the entire nation, and building an understanding for the development of the Republic of Poland's resilience and defence capabilities."[57] The concept is currently within the implementation phase, calling not only for building military capabilities, but also parallel preparatory laws, procedures, and capacities related to all aspects of governance across the whole Polish nation and to mobilize the full potential of the state to face any threats. It will extend to the educational system, the management of military and non-military entities, and the utilization of military and civilian industry and infrastructure.

Polish riot police in front of a giant football in Warsaw before a Poland vs Russia match during UEFA Euro 2012. Photo by Wistula, June 12, 2012

Poland's independence in the digital domain will be given priority. That, in turn, will translate into more robust efforts related to the development of cryptographic tools and building national cyber expertise. Protection of Polish economic interests against external hostile activities will remain one of the primary tasks for the ISA in the future. The economy has a direct impact on internal security both at the national level and for any individual citizen's security. With the globalization of the economy, the frequency of potential external state and commercial actors' interference with the Polish economy may increase, and their intentions may not always be clear. The protection of vital national investments against hostile takeovers, corruption, and hybrid activities will be given priority, as such investments affect Poland's security. The actions of the ISA will be coordinated with other state security agencies, as well as the Central Bureau for Anticorruption and the Police.

The Polish perspective on the Russian invasion of Ukraine supports the assessment that Russia is and will be an existential threat if it is not stopped by a decisive and united effort, especially by NATO and the EU. Therefore, Poland is ready to pay the price of such commitments. Despite Russian retaliation, such as cutting gas supplies, Poland has been one of the main supporters of Ukraine and will continue to be so as long as the illegal aggressive Russian occupation of Ukrainian territory continues. PRISM

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