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# Defence policy of the Republic of Poland in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine

## Introduction

Contemporary Europe, after years of peace, is again on the fire of war. The authoritarian rule of Vladimir Putin and the lack of respect for international law have led to bloodshed in the territory of the independent Ukrainian state. The immediate threat that has appeared at the gates of the European Union and NATO is the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a situation that has caused not only shock among Western countries, but has also prompted them to revise their security and defence policies, including, in particular, the overall capacity and equipment of their armies. Given its geostrategic location, Poland has also been faced with this challenge.

The first days of the war in Ukraine resulted in the need, expressed by all political parties, to significantly increase Poland's defence potential, although several activities in this area began already in 2014, as a consequence of Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the outbreak of the conflict in the eastern parts of Ukraine. In light of the above circumstances, the goal of this article is to look at Poland's defence policy and assess its defensive potential, taking into account the assumptions of the Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, as well as selected investment plans and modernisation schemes for the defence sector in Poland.

Arguably, Poland's defence potential is highly inadequate to face up to the challenges posed by an open armed conflict, in particular a so-called hybrid conflict, a thesis that the author firmly believes in. The reasons for this are multiple and chiefly go down to the many years of neglect of Polish governments in the defence sector, and the lack of a long-term and consistent reform package of the Polish Armed Forces. The ambitious plans for the purchase of military equipment announced by the current government, although necessary, are not a remedy for all the defence problems that Poland is facing.

The research issue has been presented applying a variety of methods: content analysis to look at a variety of source documents and studies, factor analysis to identify variables affecting the state's defence potential, the descriptive method to outline and evaluate investment and modernisation plans in the Polish Armed Forces, and a few elements of the decision-making method, which has been applied to describe the various political phenomena related to the decision-making process. The research problem, given its topicality, has not received enough academic attention yet. For this reason, the article has been based on source documents and, to a large extent, on internet reports in the form of comments by the Ministry of National Defence and short analytical links of different institutions, such as e.g. The Kazimierz Pulaski Foundation, and the Center for Strategic Analyzes or Strategy & Future, which relate to the presented issues. In addition, the importance of the topic for the public means that the issue has become the subject of analyses published by specialist online portals, such as Defence24.pl or Polska Zbrojna, as well as press articles published on Internet portals.

## Key tenets of Poland's security and defence policy<sup>1</sup>

The currently binding National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, adopted on 12 May 2020, indicates the progressive decomposition of the international order, which results in uncertainty and unpredictability in the security environment. The Strategy states explicitly that "the most serious threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation"<sup>2</sup> – not only in relation

<sup>1</sup> The key documents that concern Poland's security are the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r., Dz.U. [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland], 1997, no. 78, item 483), the acts that set out the tasks and principles of the functioning of security institutions in Poland, The Homeland Defence Act of March 11, 2022, and the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland. Classified documents include the Development Program of the Polish Armed Forces, the Political and Strategic Defence Directive of the Republic of Poland, the Plans for the Use of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, or those relating to the Military Command System.

<sup>2</sup> *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2020* [National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland 2020], Warszawa 2020, [https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/Strategia\\_Bezpieczenstwa\\_Narodowego\\_RP\\_2020.pdf](https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/Strategia_Bezpieczenstwa_Narodowego_RP_2020.pdf) [accessed: 16 March 2022]

to Poland, but generally for the entire international order, which was already highlighted in the previous strategy of 2014. The goals set out in the 2020 Strategy have evolved as a result of a series of changes that have occurred in the security environment. They confirm and, at the same time, continue the shift that took place in thinking about security and defence policy after 2014. Thus, the need to strengthen the security of NATO and make the EU's eastern flank even stronger has come to the fore. In addition, the 2020 document refers to such security challenges as hybrid threats, including the risk of subliminal aggression, activities in cyberspace, new unmanned technologies, computerised combat and support systems, artificial intelligence, or the risk of using tactical nuclear weapons for the so-called de-escalation of conventional conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The Strategy can be divided into a diagnostic part, which takes into account the assessment of the international environment and identifies the interests and strategic goals of the state; and a task part, which is based on four pillars that correspond to national interests: 1) security of the state and its citizens; 2) Poland in the system of international security; 3) national identity and heritage; and 4) social and economic development and environmental protection.<sup>4</sup> Based on the provisions of the Strategy, in the first pillar,

Safeguarding independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty and ensuring the security of the state and citizens will be implemented through a variety of actions, such as: integrating national security management, including state defence management and building adaptation abilities; increasing the state's resistance to threats by creating a universal defence system based on the efforts of the entire nation and building understanding for the development of the resistance and defence capabilities of the Republic of Poland; strengthening the operational capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland to deter and defend against security threats, with particular emphasis on increasing the level of mobility and technical modernization; increasing the level of resilience to cyber threats and increasing the level of information protection in the public, military and private sectors, and promoting knowledge and good practices enabling citizens to better protect their information, and ensuring the safe functioning of the state and citizens in the information space.<sup>5</sup>

Each of the strategic goals listed above has been assigned with a series of specific tasks and preparatory actions that are deemed necessary for their implementation. The same approach has been taken with regard to the remaining pillars of the Strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> S. Koziej, "Braki Strategii Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego 2020: bez koncepcji operacyjnej i priorytetów preparacyjnych", *Pułaski Policy Paper*, no. 4, 26 May 2020, <https://pulaski.pl/pulaski-policy-paper-s-koziej-braki-strategii-bezpieczenstwa-narodowego-2020-bez-koncepcji-operacyjnej-i-priorytetow-preparacyjnych/> [accessed: 16 March 2022].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego RP 2020, op. cit.*

With regard to the priorities of Poland's external guarantors of security – NATO and the EU in the first place – the Strategy points to the need to effectively influence the policy of the Alliance and the EU so that decisions made in these structures are in line with Poland's security interests. Secondly, the strategic partnership with the US is mentioned, especially in the areas of security and defence, and then regional cooperation, mainly within the Bucharest Nine, the Visegrad Group and the Weimar Triangle. The strengthening of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as supporting them through the implementation of European and transatlantic aspirations, are invariably a major part of regional cooperation. The next pillars relate to strengthening the identity and national heritage as carriers of patriotic attitudes, and to creating a positive socio-economic image of Poland.<sup>6</sup>

## Technical modernisation scheme of the Polish Army for 2021–2035

The Technical Modernisation Plan of the Polish Armed Forces is a classified document that takes into account the detailed scope of modernisation of the army and is updated every few years. The main subject to update is the timing of task implementation and its scope, by adding new projects and/or removing those that have been abandoned or already completed. As a rule, Technical Modernisation Plans are financed from the state budget under the annual budget acts and are implemented as part of the system of acquiring military equipment.<sup>7</sup> Due to the extensiveness of the issue, only the current 15-year Technical Modernisation Plan for 2021–2035, announced by the Minister of National Defence on 10 October 2019, has been referred to below.

According to the public announcements of the Ministry of National Defence, the document mentions an increase in the investment budget to the level of PLN 524 billion and repeats several provisions from the previous plan (Modernization expenditure plan for 2017–2026) as a continuation of the undertaken and planned activities; a few new schemes have also been introduced. The updated plan includes, among others:

- purchase of additional F-16 aircraft for the Polish Army,
- continuation of the Harpia program, i.e. replacement of the Mig-29 and Su-22 aircraft with new multi-role 5<sup>th</sup> generation F-35 aircraft, in the number of 32,
- the new program Harpi Szpon, which is closely related to military drones and means unmanned aerial vehicles that are to cooperate with the F-35,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> J. Ciślak, "Nowe plany, struktury i niewiele dostaw. Modernizacja Sił Zbrojnych RP w 2021 roku", Defence24.pl, 29 December 2021, <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/podsumowanie-realizacji-plan-modernizacji-technicznej-w-2021-roku> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

- continuation of the Kruk program, i.e. the purchase of attack helicopters,
- a new Observer program on the basis of which the army is to acquire satellites, microsatellites, reconnaissance planes and drones,
- development of the Wisła program, i.e. delivery of medium-range anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems (based on Patriot systems),
- development of the Narew short-range air defence system,
- development of the Miecznik and Orka programs, under which it is planned to acquire respectively three universal missile frigates for coastal defence and two submarines. In addition, as part of the Murena program, it is planned to purchase six light missile ships from Polish shipyards,
- continuation of the purchase of the Krab cannon-howitzers, Rak self-propelled mortars, Homar rocket launchers capable of hitting targets 70–300 km away, and wheeled APC Rosomak,
- continuation of the purchase of light anti-tank guided missiles codenamed Pustelnik and Borsuk infantry fighting vehicles,
- new Balsa program, thanks to which the Polish Army will acquire new, modern engineering robots supporting the work of sappers,
- the Ottokar Brzoza program, which involves the procurement of several dozen tank destroyers for the anti-tank regiment.<sup>8</sup>

As a consequence of the announced schemes, on 31 January 2020 in Dęblin, the head of the Ministry of National Defence signed a contract for the purchase of 32 multi-role 5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft (F-35A), along with a training and logistics package. The value of the contract is USD 4.6 billion, and the first deliveries are to be made to Poland in 2024. In May 2020, Poland purchased from the US Javelin anti-tank launchers worth USD 54.5 million. In July 2021, the Ministry of National Defence announced a plan to purchase 250 American Abrams tanks in the latest version (M1A2 SEPv3), purchase of 24 Turkish Bayraktar combat drones and purchase of 100 FlyEye reconnaissance drones from WB Electronics. On April 5, 2022, these announcements were finalized and Minister of National Defence Mariusz Błaszczak signed a contract for the purchase of 250 Abrams tanks from the USA for over PLN 20 billion along with accompanying vehicles – technical support vehicles, armoured vehicle-launched bridges (AVLBs), and ammunition.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> “524 miliardy złotych na modernizację Wojska Polskiego do 2035 roku”, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 10 October 2019, <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/524-miliardy-zlotych-na-modernizacje-wojska-polskiego-do-2035-roku> [accessed: 19.03.2022]

<sup>9</sup> The contract also covers the purchase of 250 sets for neutralising radio-fired explosives, 26 Hercules technical support vehicles, 17 AVLBs, turbine engines for tanks, rifles and ammunition, communication systems and GPS receivers, as well as spare parts and equipment for repair facilities. See: “Umowa na Abramsy podpisana. Pierwsze czolgi jeszcze w tym roku”, Business Insider, 5 April 2022, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/umowa-na-abrams-y-podpisana-pierwsze-czolgi-jeszcze-w-tym-roku/c603f0n> [accessed: 7 April 2022].

first 28 units for training purposes are to be delivered to Poland in 2022, and the rest of the order will be carried out successively until 2026. The situation remains unresolved regarding the purchase of Polish drones. As it results from the e-mails of the head of the Prime Minister's Chancellery that go back to 2019, intercepted and published on the web, these drones were to be only in the testing phase, which unfortunately turned out to be a failure.<sup>10</sup> In turn, the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones are to be delivered to the Polish army in autumn 2022, according to the promises of the Ministry of National Defence.<sup>11</sup> In December 2021, Poland signed a contract with the US for the supply of 300 used MRAP Cougar vehicles for a total of USD 27.5 million.<sup>12</sup>

In 2021, plans were also continued to strengthen the national defence and industrial base, a significant part of which is now consolidated in Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa (Polish Armaments Group), a major state-owned holding company. For this reason, on 15 December 2021, a contract was signed with PZL Mielec for the supply of another four Black Hawk commando helicopters (the first four were delivered in 2019). On 7 September 2021, the head of the Ministry of National Defence also signed an agreement with the PGZ-Narew Consortium for the purchase of 23 sets of the Narew short-range air defence system. In turn, in October 2021, Huta Stalowa Wola S.A., a part of the PGZ-Wisła consortium, delivered the first two complete M903 launchers, which are part of the Wisła air defence systems. According to the agreement concluded in 2018 between Poland and the US, a total of sixteen sets will be based on the Patriot system.<sup>13</sup>

During the session of the Sejm's National Defence Committee, which took place on 15 December 2021, Deputy Minister Wojciech Skurkiewicz reported on the status of implementation of modernisation contracts conducted by the Polish

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<sup>10</sup> M. Madejski, "Mają być czolgi i nowa ustawa. Rok 2022 zweryfikuje obietnice dla armii", *Business Insider*, 3 January 2022, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/rok-2022-w-wojsku-maja-byc-czolgi-i-nowa-ustawa-co-czeka-armie/9bjzjmy> [accessed: 7 January 2022].

<sup>11</sup> J. Sabak, "Skurkiewicz: Tureckie drony Bayraktar TB2 na wyposażeniu polskiego wojska już jesienią", *Bankier.pl*, 25 March 2022, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Skurkiewicz-Tureckie-drony-Bayraktar-TB2-na-wyposazeniu-polskiego-wojska-jesienia-tego-roku-8305735.html> [accessed: 28 March 2022].

<sup>12</sup> P. Bednarz, "Polska na zakupach wojskowych w USA. Abramsy to nie wszystko. Oto co już kupiliśmy za oceanem", *Business Insider*, 5 April 2022, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/technologie/abramsy-to-nie-wszystko-co-polska-armia-kupuje-od-usa/10n4qfn> [accessed: 7 April 2022].

<sup>13</sup> "MON przeznaczy na modernizację wojska 524 mld zł. Zyskają na tym polskie zakłady zbrojeniowe", *Polskie Radio24*, 31 December 2021, <https://www.polskieradio24.pl/42/259/Artykul/2867360,MON-przeznaczy-na-modernizacje-wojska-524-mld-zl-Zyskaja-na-tym-polskie-zaklady-zbrojeniowe> [accessed: 19 March 2022]; "System bezpieczeństwa wschodniej flanki NATO. Debata na konferencji Defence24Day", *Polskie Radio24*, 29 September 2021, <https://www.polskieradio24.pl/42/273/Artykul/2816283,System-bezpieczenstwa-wschodniej-flanki-NATO-Debata-na-konferencji-Defence24Day> [accessed: 19 March 2022].

Armed Forces at the end of 2021 with the participation of Polish defence industry plants.<sup>14</sup> According to the data provided, the Armed Forces Support Inspectorate carried out 46 tasks with a total value of PLN 1.201 billion in the field of repairs, while in the field of purchases and modifications of equipment, it carried out 135 tasks worth PLN 601 million. The total value is PLN 1.802 billion, of which PLN 1.370 billion were allocated to entities of the Polish Defence Industry. As for the Armament Inspectorate of the Polish Armed Forces,<sup>15</sup> at the end of 2021 it was implementing 357 long-term contracts with a total value of PLN 94.12 billion, of which 174 contracts worth PLN 38 billion were conducted by the Polish Defence Industry.<sup>16</sup>

## Poland's defence potential

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked a debate on the defence capabilities of the Polish army and has prompted a need to review the country's current defence potential. It is worth noting that the process of acquiring military equipment from the moment of contracting to delivery is usually long, hence the assessment of the effects of technical modernization will only be possible in the long term. Nevertheless, in the face of a threat, what really matters is the current potential of the army and its combat capabilities.<sup>17</sup>

According to the data of the Ministry of National Defence announced at the beginning of 2022, the Polish Army employs about 111.5 thousand professional soldiers and can rely on the backup of 32 thousand soldiers of the Territorial Defence Forces.<sup>18</sup> Comparing it to a few other countries, especially European ones, it is

<sup>14</sup> Rozpatrzenie informacji Ministra Obrony Narodowej na temat stanu realizacji kontraktów modernizacyjnych realizowanych przez Siły Zbrojne RP z udziałem polskich zakładów przemysłu zbrojeniowego, Posiedzenie sejmowej Komisji Obrony Narodowej nr 49 dnia 2021.12.15, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/PosKomZrealizowane.xsp?komisja=OBN#49> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

<sup>15</sup> On 1 January 2022, under Decision 310/DPZ of the Minister of National Defence of 1 September 2021, the Armaments Agency was established to replace the Armaments Inspectorate of the Polish Armed Forces. The new institution also took over the tasks of the dissolved Inspectorate of Innovative Defence Technologies and the Offset Agreements Office. At the beginning of 2022, new rules for the procurement of military equipment, development and implementation of central material plans also began to apply. See: J. Ciślak, "Nowe plany, struktury i niewiele dostaw...", *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See more: J. Sabak, "Skurkiewicz: W 2021 roku z PPO zwarto umowy warte 9,9 mld zł. 95% z nich trafi do spółek PGZ", *Defence24.pl*, 16 December 2021, <https://defence24.pl/przemysl/skurkiewicz-w-2021-roku-z-ppo-zwarto-umowy-o-wartosci-99-mld-zl-z-czego-95-trafi-dopgz> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

<sup>17</sup> J. Ciślak, "Nowe plany, struktury i niewiele dostaw...", *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> "Liczniejsze wojsko i więcej pieniędzy na obronność – Rada Ministrów przyjęła projekt ustawy o obronie Ojczyzny", 22 February 2022, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/liczniesze>

not a comfortable situation for the front country. Marek Budzisz, an expert of the Strategy & Future think tank, notes in one of his articles that “in the current situation, Poland is able to deploy 10 to 12 tactical battalion groups in the emergency hour, which is far too little for the policy of deterrence on NATO’s eastern flank to be effective.”<sup>19</sup>

However, it should be added that, although at a low pace, the number of soldiers is gradually increasing every year. This is primarily the result of the “Become a soldier of the Republic of Poland” social campaign held by the Ministry of National Defence, and the simplification of the rules of recruitment to the army. Moreover, the conditions for the service of professional soldiers in terms of received salaries have improved.<sup>20</sup> The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has increased the interest in serving in the army even further. As Minister Błaszczak once said, “in just one week (from February 24), over 2,200 volunteers submitted declarations of joining the Polish Armed Forces. Previously, it was about 400 people a week.”<sup>21</sup> However, a major area of concern is the gradual termination of the National Reserve Forces scheme, which has been observed for several years. Its core purpose is to provide staff to supplement jobs in each of the five types of the Polish Armed Forces. Unfortunately, this is an effect of the decision made in 2010 to suspend conscription. Thus, the most numerous group of reservists are currently people aged 51–60 and 41–50.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of the Polish army, however, is not so much the quantity of the army as its quality, and, therefore, the completeness of the equipment and the combat readiness of soldiers. Experts Maciej Kucharczyk and Witold Jurasz from the Center for Strategic Analyzes (OAS) scrutinised the condition of the Polish army in 2019 labelling them as “catastrophically bad.” Generally speaking, the modernisation of the army is façade, in their opinion, and the average age of the equipment used has not changed compared to the state of 20 years ago. In their opinion, “the Polish army is the islands of modernity in the sea of backwardness.” The experts have pointed out a number of deficiencies, including the lack of a long-term

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wojsko-i-wiecej-pieniedzy-na-obronosc--rada-ministrow-przyjela-projekt-ustawy-o-obronie-ojczyzny2 [accessed: 21 March 2022].

<sup>19</sup> As cited in: M. Budzisz, “Armia 250 tysięcy – marzenie, które nie zostanie zrealizowane”, *Strategy & Future*, 3 November 2021, <https://strategyandfuture.org/armia-250-tysiecy-marzenie-ktore-nie-zostanie-zrealizowane> [accessed: 25 March 2022].

<sup>20</sup> The indicator on which the remuneration was calculated increased from 2.95 in 2015 to 3.81 in 2019, *Biuro Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego 2015–2020*, <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/BBN2015-2020.pdf> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

<sup>21</sup> As cited in: “Więcej chętnych do armii”, *Polska Zbrojna*, 7 March 2022, <http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/36676?t=Wiecej-chetnych-do-armii#> [accessed: 20 March 2022].

<sup>22</sup> M. Kozubal, “Rezerwistów jest coraz mniej i są coraz starsi”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 February 2021, <https://www.rp.pl/wojsko/art253691-rezerwistow-jest-coraz-mniej-i-sa-coraz-starsi> [accessed: 21 March 2022].



and consistently implemented reform, and blaming individual governing teams for it. “This means that we are buying too little and too slowly to realistically modernize the army as a whole. The novelties are barely sufficient to replenish the losses resulting from the necessity to withdraw completely obsolete or used equipment,” claim the analysts.<sup>23</sup> Professor Brigadier General Stanisław Koziej, who talks about *ad hoc* “injection purchases”, which, in his opinion, do not contribute to the expected increase in the state’s defence, but serve more for propaganda purposes.<sup>24</sup> An example is the purchase of the Abrams tanks. While their choice is not questioned, because they are highly advanced on the battlefield, looking at the mosaic of what Poland currently has at its disposal – i.e. Leopard 2 tanks (Leopard 2PL and Leopard 2A5 variants), PT-91 and the most numerous and heavily worn tanks T-72 in the T-72M/M1/M1R versions – considerable efforts should be made to integrate and combine all these tanks into one system, and taking into account completely different technologies and components, it also requires a significant additional investment to purchase the entire accompanying logistic kits.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at the equipment of the Polish army, it turns out that many military units do not have the appropriate equipment they need. The navy is the most underinvested, the capabilities of which were assessed by Deputy Minister Wojciech Skurkiewicz himself, who said that “the operational capabilities of the Navy in the area of counteracting surface and underwater targets, as well as anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence are significantly limited.”<sup>26</sup> The minister’s words should come as no surprise, given the technical condition of the fleet. These are mainly outdated and worn-out ships that are often subject to prolonged repairs. Due to many years of neglect, the Polish Navy has only one submarine, ORP (Okręt Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, lit. Polish Navy Ship) Orzeł, built in the 1980s. It is necessary to replace all the vessels, but this is a very costly undertaking and, above all, a long-lasting task. New ships rarely enter service. In recent years, only the ORP Ślężak patrol corvette, ORP Kormoran minehunter and a series of six tugs have been incorporated. Two more mine destroyers ORP Albatros and Mewa are currently under construction, and they will probably enter service in 2022. According to the announcements of the head of the Ministry of National Defence, the technological leap will be the

<sup>23</sup> As cited in: M. Kucharczyk, W. Jurasz, “Siły Zbrojne RP czyli ani silni, ani zwarci, ani gotowi”, Ośrodek Analiz Strategicznych, 14 June 2019, <https://oaspl.org/2019/06/14/sily-zbrojne-rp-czyli-ani-silni-ani-zwarc-ani-gotowi> [accessed: 21 March 2022].

<sup>24</sup> M. Madejski, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> B. Kucharski, “Czołgi Abrams dla Wojska Polskiego – komentarz”, Zespół Badań i Analiz Militarnych, 15 July 2021, <https://zbiam.pl/czolgi-abrams-dla-wojska-polskiego-%E2%80%92-komentarz> [accessed: 7 April 2022].

<sup>26</sup> M. Dura, “MON: Marynarka Wojenna RP ze znacząco ograniczonymi zdolnościami [Komentarz]”, Defence24.pl, 18 March 2021, <https://defence24.pl/polityka-obronna/mon-marynarka-wojenna-rp-ze-znacząco-ograniczonymi-zdolnościami-komentarz> [accessed: 7 April 2022].

Miecznik program, i.e. the construction of frigates with high combat capabilities, the Orka program (submarines) and the Murena program (missile ships). There is still a long and bumpy road to the implementation of these investments. More than once, ambitious announcements have turned out to be a hostage of time, funds or the decision-making process. In addition, the delays we observe in the navy will not be compensated by the purchase of a few ships, but must be offset by in-depth structural and technological reforms.<sup>27</sup>

Another underinvested area is anti-aircraft defence, the systems of which, during massive air attacks, have no chance to effectively fight the enemy. The military is very modestly equipped with anti-missile systems and unmanned aerial vehicles, so important on the battlefield, as demonstrated by military operations in Ukraine. The lack of an effective air defence could even undermine all other modernisation efforts. Although air defence was identified as a priority area for modernization a few years ago, it was clearly underinvested during that time.<sup>28</sup>

The pace of delivery of the remaining deliveries of new and modified military equipment also leaves much to be desired. Only last year, we managed to obtain only a few pieces of equipment from contracted deliveries.<sup>29</sup> One of the major problems, apart from cost-intensiveness, is the complicated system of acquiring military equipment in which a large group of entities is involved, which also translates into the pace of the work that is carried out.<sup>30</sup>

According to OAS and Strategy & Future experts, “Poland does not need a large army, but an appropriately structured, complete and combat-ready army [...]; the key in the modern battlefield is not the amount of equipment, but the manoeuvrability of units, firepower and the so-called C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, & Intelligence). Even relatively old hardware can be effective if it is supported by an efficient C4I.”<sup>31</sup> Jacek Bartosiak adds that “modern war is lightning fast, it is based on systems, decision loop, dronisation, technology saturation”, therefore it is necessary to expand special forces, radar system, intelligence

<sup>27</sup> “Gen. Skrzypczak: Kilka słów o polskiej Marynarce Wojennej”, Defence24.pl, 13 March 2022, <https://defence24.pl/kilka-slow-o-polskiej-marynarce-wojennej-opinia> [accessed: 2 April 2022]; J. Ciślak, “Miecznik i niewiele więcej? Modernizacja Marynarki Wojennej w 2022 roku”, Defence24.pl, 24 January 2022, <https://defence24.pl/miecznik-i-niewiele-wiecej-modernizacja-marynarki-wojennej-w-2022-roku> [accessed: 4 April 2022].

<sup>28</sup> P. Bednarz, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> See more: J. Ciślak, “Nowe plany, struktury i niewiele dostaw...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> See more: “Wybrane aspekty modernizacji technicznej Sił Zbrojnych RP”, Polska Zbrojna, 17.08.2021, <http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/35063?t=Wybrane-aspekty-modernizacji-technicznej-Sil-Zbrojnych-RP#> [accessed: 28 March 2022].

<sup>31</sup> As cited in: A. Patrzyła, “Polskie wojsko jest w alarmująco złym stanie. Co musimy zrobić, by wygrać potencjalną wojnę z Rosją?”, Forsal.pl, 13 December 2021, <https://forsal.pl/swiat/bezpieczenstwo/artykuly/8307842,polskie-i-rosyjskie-wojsko-stan-porownanie-potencjalna-wojna.html> [accessed: 2 March 2022].

and counterintelligence at the tactical, operational or strategic level<sup>32</sup>. An inseparable element is also readiness for active cyber defence, as stated in the cybersecurity doctrine issued in January 2015 by the National Security Bureau. In 2018, the Act on the National Cybersecurity System was adopted,<sup>33</sup> and it was the first such legal act in Poland. It shows where we are. It is also necessary to create a cyber defence force, which was noticed by Polish decision-makers and included in the Development Plan of the Polish Armed Forces for 2017–2026.<sup>34</sup> However, it was not until February 2019 that the Concept for the Organization and Functioning of the Cyberspace Defence Forces was approved, and on 8 February 2022, the Cyberspace Defence Forces Component Command was formally established, cooperating closely with the National Cyberspace Security Center<sup>35</sup>. The Cyberspace Defence Forces were formally formed on 1 January 2022, but, according to reports, they may not be fully operational until the turn of 2024/2025.<sup>36</sup>

## The Homeland Defence Act

As a consequence of the Russian armed invasion of Ukraine, the Polish government accelerated work on a new law on state defence. Its initial assumptions were made public in October 2021, and on 28 February 2022, the government urgently sent its bill to the parliament, advocating, *inter alia*, the need to increase the size of the army, restore the reserve system, increase the defence budget, as well as the general technical modernisation of the army. The Homeland Defence Act,<sup>37</sup> which is the official name of the document adopted in March 2022, is intended to modernise

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> Ustawa z dnia 5 lipca 2018 r. o krajowym systemie cyberbezpieczeństwa, Dz.U., 2018, item 1560, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20180001560> [accessed: 2 March 2022].

<sup>34</sup> *The Military Balance 2019*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2019, p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> See: *Wojska Obrony Cyberprzestrzeni rozpoczynają działalność*, MON, 8 February 2022, <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/wojska-obrony-cyberprzestrzeni-rozpoczynaja-dzialalnosc> [accessed: 5 April 2022].

<sup>36</sup> The Cyberspace Defence Forces currently do not constitute a separate type of armed forces. Ultimately, they are to constitute a specialised component of the Armed Forces. See more: P. Jaszczuk, *Wojska Obrony Cyberprzestrzeni – rodzaj sił zbrojnych, rodzaj wojsk czy specjalistyczny komponent?*, CyberDefence24, 9 February 2022, <https://cyberdefence24.pl/armia-i-sluzby/wojska-obrony-cyberprzestrzeni-rodzaj-sil-zbrojnych-rodzaj-wojsk-czy-specjalistyczny-komponent> [accessed: 5 April 2022]; *idem*, *Wojska Obrony Cyberprzestrzeni. Kto może trafić do polskiego cyberwojska?*, CyberDefence24, 11 February 2022, <https://cyberdefence24.pl/armia-i-sluzby/wojska-obrony-cyberprzestrzeni-kto-moze-trafic-do-polskiego-cyberwojska> [accessed: 5 April 2022].

<sup>37</sup> Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 2022 r. o obronie Ojczyzny, Dz.U., 2022, poz. 655, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20220000655> [accessed: 2 April 2022].

the Polish Armed Forces, but also to organise the provisions on defence and the army itself, so far contained in several different acts.

Although the act itself does not specify the target number of the armed forces, the Minister of National Defence, Mariusz Błaszczak, made it clear that it was about 300,000 soldiers, including 250,000 professional soldiers and 50,000 soldiers of the Territorial Defence Forces. The reserve staff will also be increased, which will now be divided into active and passive staff. In addition, an incentive and profit system, as well as clear and simplified rules for promotion, will be introduced for candidates for military service. On the other hand, experienced professional soldiers who decide to continue their service will receive incentive benefits, the amount of which will depend on the achieved service period. The act also introduces voluntary basic military service performed for a period of 12 months.<sup>38</sup>

Based on the new regulations, from next year, it is also assumed that the expenditure on the Polish Army will increase to a level of at least 3% of the country's GDP.<sup>39</sup> It is worth mentioning that after 2014 Poland increased the percentage of GDP allocated to defence, with most of these funds being spent on repairing the equipment in use and personnel costs, not the purchase of new equipment.<sup>40</sup> In the case of personnel costs, it is also important to mention that a level higher than 2% of GDP, also includes military pensions, which in 2021 accounted for almost 1/5 of the entire budget of the Ministry of National Defence.<sup>41</sup> Eurostat data, which does not treat this expenditure as expenditure on defence, indicate that Poland spends 1.6% of its GDP on the armed forces in 2019, and 1.7% in 2020.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst working on the final version of the Homeland Defence Act, a decision was taken to introduce a new, additional financing mechanism, which will be the Armed Forces Support Fund, guaranteed by the Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego [lit. National Economy Bank], a financial institution operating outside the central

<sup>38</sup> "Liczniejsze wojsko i więcej pieniędzy na obronność – Rada Ministrów przyjęła projekt ustawy o obronie Ojczyzny", MON, 22 August 2022, <https://www.gov.pl/web/premier/liczniesze-wojsko-i-wiecej-pieniedzy-na-obronnosc--rada-ministrow-przyjela-projekt-ustawy-o-obronie-ojczyzny2> [accessed: 29 March 2022].

<sup>39</sup> It states that annual expenditure from the state budget of at least 2.2% of the GDP in 2022 and at least 3% of the GDP in 2023 and subsequent years shall be allocated to financing defence needs. *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> M. Kucharczyk, W. Jurasz, "Siły Zbrojne RP czyli ani silni, ani zwarczi, ani gotowi", *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> *Omówienie sprawozdania z wykonania budżetu państwa za okres od 1 stycznia do 31 grudnia 2021 r.*, Ministerstwo Finansów, <https://www.gov.pl/web/finanse/sprawozdanie-roczne-za-2021> [accessed: 23 March 2022] oraz "Wydatki na obronność. Polska na tle UE", Money.pl, 27 August 2021, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/wydatki-na-obronnosc-polska-na-tle-ue-6676784102124384a.html> [accessed: 23 March 2022].

<sup>42</sup> *Government expenditure on defence*, Eurostat, data extracted in February 2022, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_defence#Expenditure\\_on\\_.27defence.27](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_defence#Expenditure_on_.27defence.27) [accessed: 5 April 2022].

budget, supported by contributions from the government, contributions from state defence companies, proceeds from bonds or securities, and from profits from sale of military equipment or the proceeds from the rental of military infrastructure. The military will also be able to purchase equipment through leasing.<sup>43</sup>

Most of these postulates had been pursued by military and expert circles for a long time; therefore, the assumptions of the act should be considered necessary if one wants to talk about a real strengthening of the Polish army, although it will only take place in the long run. However, doubts may arise from the assumed disproportionate increase in the number of soldiers in relation to the increase in military spending. It turns out that if we are to increase the budget from 2.0% of GDP to 3%, and at the same time we assume that the army will increase twice, i.e. to 300,000 soldiers. This means that a larger army will still not be sufficiently invested. If we assume 3% of GDP, we should proportionally increase the army to 200,000 soldiers. If it is important to build an army of 300,000 soldiers, the expenditure ought to be raised to the level of 4.5% of GDP in order to maintain the pace of modernization without lowering the quality.<sup>44</sup>

Another controversial issue is the fact that the newly established Armed Forces Support Fund goes beyond the state budget, which has been the main source of financing for the army so far, so the debt of the fund will not be included in the state public debt, and thus will not be subjected to the control exercised by the Polish parliament. This is a procedure that has already been applied in the case of another special-purpose fund, i.e. the COVID-19 Counteracting Fund. This poses a major risk of abuse and a temptation to conceal the actual state of public finances, which in the longer term may lead to a critical level of state debt. Yet this is not a randomly taken action, as maintaining financing only within the state budget would inevitably lead to the government's need to increase budget revenues, e.g. by new or higher taxes, or to cuts in other expenses, or to an increase in the state deficit, which, in turn, gives rise to the threat of a number of serious consequences for its financial credibility. Therefore, in order to avoid this, the government decided to establish a new special purpose fund.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Liczniejsze wojsko i więcej pieniędzy na obronność...", *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> M. Oleksiejuk, "Najważniejsze założenia Ustawy o obronie Ojczyzny", Casimir Pulaski Foundation, <https://pulaski.pl/komentarz-pulaskiego-najwazniejsze-zalozenia-ustawy-o-obronie-ojczyzny-michal-oleksiejuk/> [accessed: 10 April 2022].

<sup>45</sup> M. Chądzyński, "Wzrost wydatków na wojsko. Wszystko co trzeba wiedzieć o finansowaniu armii", 300Gospodarka, 3 March 2022, <https://300gospodarka.pl/explainer/wzrost-wydatkow-na-wojsko-wszystko-co-trzeba-wiedziec-o-finansowaniu-armii> [accessed: 10 April 2022]; J. Cęglarz, "Rząd wyprowadza finansowanie armii poza budżet. 'Ekonomiczny analfabetyzm'", Business Insider, 22 February 2022, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/gospodarka/rzad-wyprowadza-finansowanie-armii-poza-budzet-ekonomiczny-analfabetyzm/k4m031x> [accessed: 10 April 2022].

## Conclusions

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has prompted Polish political decision-makers to undertake another, hopefully this time, effective revision of Poland's defence potential. The currently emerging image of the combat readiness of the Polish Armed Forces is not optimistic, especially in the area of air defence and the navy, and this may be of key importance, for example, due to the vicinity of the Kaliningrad Oblast. In addition, being a member of the North Atlantic Alliance and also a front-line state, Poland has a duty to build an army capable of cooperating within NATO and to create appropriate infrastructure for the allied forces. At the same time, strengthening Poland's defence potential is necessary from the point of view of the state to build an effective policy of deterrence, but also to sustain a possible first enemy attack.

All this requires rational and thoughtful decisions and their consistent implementation. In summary, the analysis presented above has led to the following conclusions.

First, Poland needs a long-term defence strategy, consistently implemented by successive Polish ruling teams.

Second, the combat capabilities of the Polish Armed Forces should be fully completed and increased as soon as possible. The technical modernisation program for 2021–2035 defines the overall demand; however, the key here will be financing and the consistency of implementing individual programs, the effects of which will de facto only be visible in a few years. Combat capabilities, in turn, must be developed on the basis of efficient reconnaissance, command, communication and modern technologies adapted to the so-called lightning wars, but above all, they must fit into the long-term defence strategy of the Republic of Poland. Purchasing military equipment alone is certainly not enough. Cyber defence also remains a key challenge. The establishment of cyber defence troops should be noted positively, however, until they are operational, the state must implement ad hoc measures if we want to avoid, for example, the cyberattack scenario that Estonia struggled with in 2007.

Third, the increase in defence spending should be noted positively, however, in order for it to bring the desired results, most of these funds should be dedicated to the purchase of new equipment, and not the cost of maintaining a military manpower. Hence the level of 300,000 soldiers announced by Minister Mariusz Błaszczak seem too high a target.

Fourth, any decision made on the purchase of new equipment for the army, compatible with the entire defence system, should be consulted with military experts and practitioners and not only be a political decision.

All the assumptions of the Homeland Defence Act should be considered necessary for the real strengthening of the Polish army, however, we will have to wait

several years for the effects, if we manage to flexibly implement all its provisions and guarantee adequate financing. Finally, the construction and implementation of an integrated security management system, including the management of state defence mechanisms to be operative during a war at both the central – i.e. governmental – and local/regional level, is yet another challenge that lies ahead.

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*Defence policy of the Republic of Poland  
in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine  
Abstract*

As a consequence of Russia’s aggressive actions – initially with regard to the annexation of Crimea, and the beginning of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014 – many European Union countries have revised their current security and defence policies. The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, initiated on 24 February 2022, only strengthened this tendency. For Poland, one of NATO’s major eastern flank states, the need to improve the management of national security that corresponds to the challenges and threats that lie ahead has become self-evident. The goal of this article is to look at the assumptions of the defence policy of the Republic of Poland, and to evaluate the country’s defence potential based on the implemented modernisation schemes.

Key words: defence policy, Poland, Russian aggression, Polish Armed Forces

