

CHANGES IN POLISH STRATEGIC CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHALLENGES AND THREATS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In the article the author presents the genesis and evolution of the research on strategic culture. He also conducts an analysis of the conditions and factors shaping the Polish strategic culture and the role of the Polish national security strategy in it. Attempts are also made to evaluate the Polish strategic culture, with an emphasis on the perception of the role of military forces in it. The main research problem is as follows: Is strategic culture really present in Poland and what were the conditions for its development? Specific questions to be answered are: What has characterized strategic culture in Poland? What factors have determined the shape of Polish strategic culture? What is its impact on foreign policy and Poland's security? How are armed forces perceived in Polish strategic culture? The main conclusion is that Poland has its own strategic culture, which has been shaped by historical experience.

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INTRODUCTION

The question whether Poland has a strategic culture, and if so, which one, is not asked very often. What is puzzling, it is usually asked by foreigners, especially those who conduct research on strategic culture, rather than by Poles. This is all the more surprising that as a nation with such great arms traditions and such a deeply rooted sense of the importance of security and independence, and at the same time with such experiences in the national memory (which may result in hatred of war), Poland should not only have such a culture, but also be aware of it in its national consciousness.

The result of the above situation are the opinions of foreign specialists who question the existence of strategic culture in Poland. It is expressed, for example, by Longhurst, who believes that because of the burdens of almost fifty years of communism in Poland, little experience in the conditions of a democratic state, and, especially, the limited experience gained only in the field of the recently introduced civil control over the army, it is difficult to speak of a developed strategic culture in Poland.¹

Contrary to the above opinion, the author's answer to the question whether Poland has a strategic culture is affirmative, although he admits that the Polish strategic culture is still being shaped and evolving. The author believes that Polish strategic culture should be discussed in particular for the following reasons:

- due to the history of the nation,
- due to the traditions of the Polish army and arms,
- due to the role of the above factors in building Polish statehood, and later in defending independence,

¹ K. Longhurst, *Niemiecka kultura strategiczna – geneza i rozwój*, [in:] *Kultura strategiczna w Polsce i w Niemczech*, K. Malinowski (ed.), Poznań 2003, pp. 193–218.

- due to the contribution made by these factors to the national and cultural identity of Poles.

In the article the author attempts not only to define the concept of *strategic culture* and to find its sources, but also, above all, to examine the road map of the development of the Polish strategic culture. The main research problem is an attempt to answer the question – Is strategic culture really present in Poland, and if so, what were the conditions for its development? Specific research problems consist in finding answers to the following questions: What has characterized strategic culture in Poland? What factors have determined the shape of the Polish strategic culture? What is its impact on foreign policy and Poland's security? How are armed forces perceived in the Polish strategic culture?

DEFINITION AND GENESIS OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

According to Czaja, strategic culture can be generally defined as a culture of national security.² It contains various aspects of security, ranging from perception of threats to the policy of preventing and combating these threats. Factors such as history and traditions, experience, memory, and historical oblivion are also of great importance here, and so are contemporary external and internal conditions.

Security policy is conceptualized on the basis of the aforementioned factors and also on the basis of international conditions, such as alliances and multilateral connections. It is reflected in the doctrines, strategies of national security, and in the role of the armed forces. Its shape is influenced by: the system of the state, its economy, security system, the history of the state, its culture, and the type of society.

Despite the fact that the concept of *strategic culture* has appeared in the dictionary of security sciences only recently, it has been functioning in science for hundreds of years under different names. An ancient historian Thucydides should be considered a peculiar precursor of the trend of taking into account cultural aspects as a supplement to purely military strategic studies. The assumption that culture influences warfare was reflected in Thucydides's work *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Another ancient work that contained this assumption was *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.

An important step in the process of crystallizing the concept of strategic culture was the work by Carl von Clausewitz titled *On war*, in which he

² J. Czaja, *Kulturowe czynniki bezpieczeństwa*, Krakow 2008, p. 227.

included a thesis which, along with the concept of the national character by Thucydides, paved the way for contemporary researchers dealing with strategic culture. Clausewitz claimed that victory is not only achieved by capturing the enemy's territory. In his opinion it is equally important to break their morale when the goal is "to compel the enemy to do our will".³ In this way, he emphasized the importance of cultural domination in order to achieve the objectives of state policy. Also, an English strategist Liddell Hart focused on the practical side of the state's culture of actions, and saw the reasons for England's defeat in World War II in moving away from the British way of waging war, which involved actions focused on naval blockades aimed against the enemy and the financial support of allied countries.⁴

A more contemporary event that largely impacted the science of strategic culture was the Cold War. The possession of similar military potentials by the US and the USSR made scientists aware of the failure of classical trends in analyzing international relations, because the security policy goals of the two powers differed significantly despite apparent analogies between them.⁵

In the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of research on the national character was carried out in the areas of anthropology and sociology. Within the framework of these disciplines, attempts were made to find links between culture and the behavior of states, based on anthropological models.⁶ One of the most famous works within this trend was the book *Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Patterns of Japanese culture* by an American anthropologist Ruth Benedict. As part of a research project, she explored and tried to comprehend enemy culture, specifically Japanese, stating that war conventions that Western nations accepted as facts of a human nature apparently did not exist for the Japanese.

³ C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton 1984, [qtd. in:] P. Layton, *Using a Clausewitzian Dictum to Rethink Achieving Victory*, "RealClear Defense", 15 May 2018, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2018/05/15/using_a_clausewitzian_dictum_to_rethink_achieving_victory_113450.html (accessed: 14.03.2020).

⁴ R. Wiśniewski, *Kultura strategiczna, czyli o kulturowych uwarunkowaniach polityki zagranicznej i bezpieczeństwa*, "Przegląd Strategiczny", 2012, no. 1, pp. 163–176, <http://studiastrategiczne.amu.edu.pl/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/13.WISNIEWSKI.pdf> (accessed: 16.12.2019).

⁵ C. Dryzd, *Kultura strategiczna, geneza, definicja i praktyczne zastosowanie*, "Roczniki Studenckie Akademii Wojsk Lądowych", 2007, no. 1, p. 177.

⁶ J.S. Lantis, *Strategic Culture and National Security Policy*, "International Studies Review", 2002, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 91–92.

An American diplomat George Frost Kennan⁷ was the first to speak in public about the national character. At a meeting with foreign diplomats in 1950, he claimed that Washington's attitude towards international affairs had its deep roots in American culture and tradition. According to Kennan, it made the US a crusader fighting evil in the name of high moral values.⁸ He also believed that the actions of both the United States and the Soviet Union were culturally motivated and the countries' respective cultures were an important determinant influencing their security policies.

It is regrettable to say that currently there is no single definition of strategic culture. An American analyst Jack L. Snyder is considered to be a pioneer in identifying and studying strategic culture. According to him, strategic culture is a set of ideas, emotionally conditioned responses and patterns of customary behavior that members of a national security community have acquired through instructions or imitations and share in relation to nuclear strategy.⁹

As for Polish academics trying to define strategic culture, first of all, Jan Czaja should be mentioned. In his view "strategic culture is a culture of national security, which refers to the perception of security threats, their prevention and combating, also by using force".¹⁰

Osica believes that strategic culture is a conglomerate consisting of three elements: ideas; values; and thoughts and doctrines resulting from the sum of historical experiences, the so-called "political signposts" understood as political values and ways of formulating thoughts, legitimizing decisions regarding broadly understood security.¹¹

After the fall of communism, the concept of strategic culture has acquired a much broader meaning than it did during the Cold War; since then it

⁷ George Frost Kennan – American diplomat, sovietologist, considered an architect of the Cold War policy in the 1940s and 1950s. He was grandnephew of traveler George Kennan. He was educated at military school, then at Princeton University. After graduation, he took a job in the US diplomatic service.

⁸ Ł. Smalec, *Kultura strategiczna a paradygmat realistyczny. Krytyka, rywalizacja i perspektywy współpracy*, "Kwartalnik Naukowy OAP UW »e-Politikon«", 2012, no. 2012, pp. 29–48.

⁹ J.L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, Santa Monica 1977.

¹⁰ J. Czaja, *Kulturowe...*, *op. cit.*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 223, 227.

¹¹ O. Osica, *Polska wobec operacji NATO i polityki bezpieczeństwa i obronnej UE*, [in:] *Kultura bezpieczeństwa narodowego w Polsce i Niemczech*, K. Malinowski (ed.), Poznań 2003, p. 103.

has been understood as not only security issues but also problems that arise from the functioning of civil society and from political culture. The 1990s faced a great return of cultural matters to international relations; it manifested itself in the renaissance of research on the impact of culture on foreign and security policy, as well as on armed conflicts. This cultural turn resulted from the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalization. The euphoria of that time, evoked by apparent unity, was first cooled by the Balkan conflict, then by the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001, and then by armed intervention in Afghanistan (October 2001) and in Iraq (March 2003).

THE GENERATIONS OF STRATEGIC CULTURE RESEARCH AND THE COMPONENTS OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

As mentioned above, a more recent event that particularly strongly influenced the science of strategic culture was the Cold War and the bipolar world balance. The fact that the US and the USSR had similar military potentials turned out to be a factor that made scientists and commanders aware of the failure of classical trends in the analysis of international relations. The main disadvantage of the classical analysis was the fact that it focused only on measurable factors, such as: territory, population or military potential. This perception of geopolitical situation could not explain why the security policy goals of the two powers differed significantly, despite the apparent analogies between them.¹²

Strategic culture was defined as late as in 1977 by the aforementioned American researcher Jack L. Snyder; his definition has already been presented above. A broader definition was proposed by Thomas Mahnken, according to whom strategic culture is a set of beliefs and ways of behaving resulting from shared experiences, a sense of identification, and separateness from other groups that determine the directions of activities and ways of achieving goals.¹³

An American political scientist and strategist Colin S. Gray defined strategic culture as “a way of thinking about strength and dealing with it resulting from a national feeling, historical experience, aspirations to main-

¹² C. Dryzd, *Kultura strategiczna, geneza, definicja i praktyczne zastosowanie*, “Rocznik Studencki Akademii Wojsk Lądowych” nr 1/2007, p. 177.

¹³ Ł. Smalec, *Kultura strategiczna...*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

tain, and a responsible lifestyle”.¹⁴ In his opinion, strategic culture defined in such a way creates “a specific space for discussion about strategy”, constituting an independent factor in shaping strategic concepts and patterns.¹⁵

Although many studies on the influence of culture on strategic studies have been conducted, they were highly dispersed. It only changed in 1995 thanks to Allastair Ian Johnston, who systematized them, creating three generations of research on strategic culture. The first generation covers the period of the bipolar division of the world, when the cultural factor was deemed very important for future research as well as for those that described the international situation at that time. The assumptions of this generation were then criticized by some scientists due to the fact that they presented the strategic culture of the state as a monolith that is not influenced by internal currents.¹⁶

The second generation dates back to mid-1980s. This period did not have a significant impact on the development of research on strategic culture since issues related to it were treated as mere effective tools for influencing citizens by decision-makers. The third generation falls on the 1990s, i.e. the period after the Cold War. The emergence of many new states forced researchers to look for a tool that would allow, in a comprehensive way, to characterize individual actors in international relations, taking into account their distinctiveness both in purely geopolitical terms and through the prism of cultural differences.¹⁷

It should be noted that strategic culture is a complex phenomenon consisting of a large number of components. Longhurst lists three basic groups of components that can be defined as **primary (basic)**, **indirect**, and those constituting **external expression**.¹⁸ **Primary components** are basic ideas, principles or assumptions about the use of force that give strategic culture a specific character (they are generally constant and permanent, they influence the shape of national identity and create a national paradigm in strategic issues). The group of **indirect components** includes positions and points of view in matters of security policy. The third group, related to **external expression**, consists of forms and manifestations in which strategic culture

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹⁶ A.I. Johnston, *Thinking about Strategic Culture*, “International Security”, 1995, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 36–43.

¹⁷ C. Dryzd, *Kultura strategiczna...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179.

¹⁸ S. Jarmoszko, *Ścieżki konceptualizacji strategii bezpieczeństwa*, Siedlce 2015, p. 85.

manifests itself (constant policy as well as concrete actions), through which a strategic culture is applied to the external environment.¹⁹

It should be emphasized that the groups listed above include, among others, the following components:

- perception of security threats,
- responses to them,
- ideas and concepts of national (international) security,
- the role and place of the armed forces in national (international) security,
- specificity of the decision-making process regarding the use of force,
- technology of using force to counteract threats or to achieve goals in international politics,
- collective beliefs regarding the role of one's own state in a specific geopolitical context,
- traditions of statehood (independence, sovereignty, superpower),
- attitude of the political class and society to the state,
- place of foreign policy in state policy.²⁰

Strategic culture is the result of many factors, both traditional and stable ones, and situational or changeable ones. The contents of strategic culture listed above indicate its dualistic character: *stricte* military and non-military. In this context, Sabak distinguishes three levels of strategic culture²¹:

- the national level – norms and values regarding the place of a given state in international relations and possible circumstances of the use of military force,
- the military level – it refers to the general method of conducting war and defines the method preferred by the armed forces to achieve the political goals of the war,
- the level of particular types of armed forces – it defines the identity of the basic types of armed forces, the manner of internal organization, and the approach to military doctrine.

¹⁹ Cf. K. Longhurst, *Strategic Culture...*, *op. cit.*; K. Longhurst, *Od roli konsumenta do roli producenta*, [in:] *Nowy członek „starego Sojuszu”*, O. Osica, M. Zaborowski (eds), Warszawa 2002, pp. 61–81.

²⁰ R. Kuźniar, *Polityka i siła. Studia strategiczne – zarys problematyki*, Warszawa 2005, p. 186 – 187 – 188).

²¹ Z. Sabak, *Prognoza rozwoju kultury strategicznej w Polsce*, [in:] *System bezpieczeństwa narodowego RP. Zadanie badawcze nr 3: Analiza środowiska i uwarunkowań bezpieczeństwa narodowego RP. Podzadanie badawcze nr 3.3.3: Prognoza kształtowania się środowiska bezpieczeństwa w wymiarze wewnętrznym*, Warszawa 2013, p. 306.

In conclusion, the strategic culture is a kind of response to the need to take into account long-term factors that shape foreign policy and state security. It is sometimes considered as an independent variable that explains specific actions of the state in international relations.²²

THE CONCEPT OF POLISH STRATEGIC CULTURE

Decisive roles in creating Polish strategic culture are played by history, geopolitics and external conditions. Dominant preferences are rooted primarily in the early experiences of the formation of the Polish state, yet the 19th and the 20th centuries seem to be much more important. During 200 years a lot happened: the partitions, World War I along with the regaining of independence, and then the loss of independence as a result of World War II, followed by the nearly fifty-year dominance of the USSR, which ended in 1989. These traumatic events for the Polish nation led to the shaping of symbols, myths and syndromes that are still affecting the Poles as a nation and as a state as well as Poland's strategic culture. A similar thesis is put forward by Chappell, according to whom the loss of statehood in the 18th century and then regaining it in 1918 was a critical moment for Polish strategic culture. The colonial rule of the First Republic of Poland and the Second Republic of Poland over Eastern Europe also had an impact on shaping of Polish strategic culture. Up till now, these lands are known in Polish as *Kresy* [Eastern Borderlands].²³

Historical sensitivity is also associated with Polish sensitivity to threats related to war and aggression from the closest neighbors, i.e. Germans and Russians. This creates the emotionality associated with the use of military force, and at the same time a positive attitude towards it. Military strength is most often, but not always, used to defend against external threats. In comparison, a negative and very cautious approach to the use of force is a feature of modern strategic culture in Germany that evolved as a result of Germany recognizing its own responsibility for the tragedy of World War II and the massive use of military force against others.

The second factor is geopolitics, which defines the existence of Poland between two strong states, Germany and Russia, which is a factor strongly influencing Polish strategic culture. Poland's perception of threats and

²² S. Jarmoszko, *Ścieżki konceptualizacji...*, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

²³ L. Chappell, *Germany, Poland and the Common Security Policy and Defense Policy. Converging Security and Defense Perspective in an Enlarged EU*, New York 2012, pp. 36–38.

the attitude to the use of force are conditioned by history combined with geopolitics. Historical memory recorded in national symbols and myths, which were then passed down to future generations, affects the relative continuity of perception, above all, of the Russians and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Germans. Although Poland was divided by three invaders, the experience of the Russian partition seems to be basic for the formation of the Polish strategic culture. This is conditioned by the fact that it was the Russians that dissolved the Polish colonial, state and national project; as well as by cultural and civilizational superiority felt by Poles towards the Russians who controlled them. As for the attitude of Poles to Germans and Poland to Germany, evolution can be observed, which is probably conditioned by Germany's recognition of its responsibility for World War II, reconciliation efforts, Germany's support for Poland's membership in NATO and the EU, and, currently, the participation of both countries in these structures. This does not mean, however, that anti-German attitudes do not occur in Polish society.

External conditions, including the evolution of the international environment related to the end of the Cold War, the fall of the USSR, and the change in international order are the third determinant that shapes the Polish strategic culture. In 1999, Poland became part of NATO, and five years later – part of the European Union. In this way, it was anchored in Western Europe and became an active actor on the European stage. In addition, according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, it received security guarantees, and so all this had an impact on the gradual evolution of the Polish strategic culture.

It should be noted that the change of the system of government in Poland as a result of the appearance of Solidarity movement in 1989 initiated the process of loosening the bonds of dependence on the USSR and, at the same time, the pro-Western reorientation of Polish foreign policy under the slogan of returning to Europe. The above process was focused on activities aimed at finding a place for Poland in the emerging post-Cold War European order. Unfortunately, this was not an easy task due to the fears as to whether a model of partnership between countries throughout Europe could be developed.

Reflecting on the reasons for the pro-Western reorientation of Polish foreign policy after the Cold War, the ideological foundations for this turn should be considered. So, it is about determining how collective historical experience shaped the creators of the new Polish foreign policy, how it was

defined in the changing environment of international and internal security, and how it affected the new approach to national interests.²⁴

One cannot fail to notice the fact that Polish strategic culture has a strong foundation on which the dominant thinking system about Poland's own place in the international security environment and about the relations with other participants is founded. This foundation is the historical experience of the Polish nation, which acts as a prism through which changes in the international environment of Poland are noticed, thus giving the strategies of the Polish state legitimacy. The bond connecting these historical experiences with a specific behavior can be described as *dispositions*, defined as a deep, long-lasting interpretative structure, modeling the formulation of basic national interests and determining the distinctiveness of strategic culture.²⁵

Although sources of dispositions could be traced in the history of Poland for over the last two hundred years, the basic stages of their formation should be seen in the dramatic events of World War II. The negative experiences of Poles in relations with their neighbors deepened, and their traumatic dimension found its expression in the characteristic symbols that permeate discussions about the latest history of Poland. This, of course, intensifies the questions and doubts, e.g.: Can Poles trust anyone today? Will they not be betrayed, sold or abandoned by their allies again?

It was part of the above experiences that on 1 September 1939 or 17 September 1939 strengthened the Polish nation's belief that the foundation of German and USSR policy was greater or lesser subordination of Poland. Other phenomena such as France and Great Britain's procrastination, especially so-called "fourth partition of Poland" in Yalta, built a new quality in the political awareness of Poles. These dramatic experiences on the one hand were a symbol of German – Soviet collusion against Poland; on the other, they became synonymous with betrayal and abandonment of Poland by the West, who did not want to die for Gdańsk. It was Yalta which developed the belief of Poles not only about the division of Europe, but above all about the enslavement of Poland by the Soviet Union.

The foreign policy of the Polish Peoples Republic's authorities, though not sovereign, seemed to be rooted in the political philosophy of national democracy of the interwar period. The ruling Polish United Workers' Party

²⁴ K. Malinowski, *Kultura bezpieczeństwa narodowego: koncepcja i możliwości zastosowania*, [in:] *Kultura bezpieczeństwa narodowego w Polsce i Niemczech*, Poznań 2003, p. 35.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

(PZPR) was able to legitimize the alliance with the USSR, limited sovereignty, as well as the system of power by referring to the war experiences of Poles.²⁶ On the other hand, the lack of recognition of the Oder and Nysa border by the Federal Republic of Germany and the western powers deepened Poland's dependence on the Soviet Union and was an important factor cementing the "Yalta order". This is why anti-Germanism became the most important element of the patriotic legitimization of the communist system.

Moreover, the communists claimed that, as in the interwar period the assumptions of the National-Democratic doctrine could not be implemented because Poland was a multi-ethnic state, they built the Polish People's Republic – more nationally homogeneous than the Second Polish Republic – as a better reconstruction of the Polish state. However, the impact of this political philosophy was limited due to the actual subordination to the Soviet Union and the inability to implement autonomous foreign policy. It should be noted that the strategic culture of Polish People's Republic missed out one of the most important geopolitical dilemmas of Poles since the partitions: how to stand out for independence and how to define the existence of Poland suspended between Germany and Russia.²⁷

Polish strategic culture also developed in the environment of Polish emigrants in the West. The publishing house "Kultura" played an inspiring role, by publishing activities which contributed to a gradual change in thinking about Poland's place in Europe. This was confirmed by the ongoing discussion about Poland, primarily about the need to re-evaluate relations with neighbors: Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Russians, and Germans. The need to re-evaluate these relations was also pointed out by the Catholic Church in Poland. But the key issues were to find a way to extract Poland from the Soviet influence, to secure it against the possible rebirth of Germany's expansion, and to connect it with the West. It should be emphasized that it was the resignation from the former eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic and the reconciliation with Germany that became revolutionary elements for the pro-Western reorientation of Polish foreign policy. The democratization of West Germany and its integration with Western structures were key determinants of the transformation of Polish strategic culture. *Ostpolitik* and the progressing European integration

²⁶ K. Malinowski, *Polska kultura bezpieczeństwa: historyczne reminiscencje i polityczne realia*, [in:] *Kluczowe determinanty bezpieczeństwa Polski na początku XXI wieku*, S. Wojciechowski, A. Wejksznier (eds), Warszawa 2013, p. 30.

²⁷ K. Malinowski, *Polska kultura bezpieczeństwa...*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

opened new opportunities enabling a reevaluation of existing elements of Polish strategic culture.²⁸

Dramatic events that the Polish nation faced during the World War II not only strengthened the previous experience from 200 years ago, but also had a great impact on the development of Polish strategic culture after 1989. Its basic assumptions adjusted to the adaptation process Poland underwent in the new international security environment, and some historical experiences lost their perceived gravity. Examples include the new perception of Germany by Poles, greater acceptance for Germany's unification, or a progressive breakthrough in mutual neighborly relations. On the other hand, however, Russia's neo-imperialist tendencies, or the West's initial inclination to treat Central Europe as a buffer zone separating Western European countries from Russia, matched the traditional pattern.

Polish strategic culture comprises several dispositions. According to Malinowski, the dispositions within Poland's strategic culture are: *Russian disposition*, *German disposition*, *Rapallo disposition*, *September 1939 disposition*, *Yalta disposition*, and *Entente disposition*.²⁹ The features of Polish strategic culture as well as dispositions cause a specific perception of challenges and threats and motivate the state's activities on the international arena. According to Malinowski, the *Russian disposition* aims to prevent Russia's repeated hegemony over Poland by seeking security and defense against Russia in the West (keeping Russia outside the Euro-Atlantic security system). The *German disposition* directs Poland's actions, in turn, to maintain Germany in Euro-Atlantic multilateral structures (which coincides with the interests of Germany). This action facilitates cooperation and construction despite the difference in the potential of equal relations. Both activities are also intended to weaken the cooperation of both neighbors (*Rapallo disposition*)³⁰, which is the least articulated combination of the two previous variants. Malinowski believes that the *September 1939 disposition* directs Poland's activity to avoid abandonment by Western allies, and that *Yalta disposition* prevents the objectification of Poland by the West. Finally, the *Entente disposition* encourages to build close ties with the strongest Western

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

²⁹ K. Malinowski, *Kultura bezpieczeństwa narodowego: koncepcja i możliwości zastosowania*, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–37.

³⁰ A. Włodkowska-Bagan, *Kultura strategiczna Polski*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

countries, i.e. the USA, France, and Great Britain, as a safeguard against Russia, and in some sense also against Germany.

To sum up, the above-mentioned dispositions focus essentially on how to strengthen the geopolitical situation of Poland and other Central European countries. They show what kind of international constellation, from the Polish point of view, is optimal, and which is destructive. Therefore, the dispositions help identify the sources of threats and indicate ways to counteract them.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND AS A MIRROR OF THE COUNTRY'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

The concept of strategic culture is a response to the need to take into account long-term, and also mainly socially subjective, factors shaping foreign policy and national security. It is an important factor in shaping the behavior of states (mainly external, but to some extent also internal). It creates specific trends, exerts significant influence, but is not a factor that directly decides the behavior of the subject, as it is the result of a whole range of different factors that may prevail.³¹

As Gray asserts, international behavior of states is part of their strategic culture and it is not possible to separate attitude from behavior. Therefore, culture both shapes the process of strategy creation and influences its implementation.³² In addition, the dispositions are closely related and interpenetrate, and their relationships depend on current international constellations. It can be said that they are exemplary for the entire region of Central and Eastern or Central Europe³³, and references to historical experience and geopolitics, crucial for shaping Polish strategic culture, were reflected in all strategic documents regarding the security of the Polish state.

In the previous *2014 National Security Strategy of Poland* issued by the order of the President of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Komorowski, this type of reference was already included in the first chapter of the document. It stated that national interests and strategic goals resulted from historical experience, existing political conditions, and the potential of the

³¹ S. Jarmoszko, *Ścieżki konceptualizacji...*, *op. cit.*

³² C.S. Gray, *Strategic Culture as Context: the First Generation of Theory Strikes Back*, "Review of International Studies", 1999, vol. 25, p. 55.

³³ K. Malinowski, *Kultura bezpieczeństwa narodowego: koncepcja i możliwości zastosowania*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

state.³⁴ On the other hand, the features of Polish strategic culture (history, geopolitics, and external conditions) are manifested not only in the geopolitical aspect and in the role of the Eastern Neighborhood, but also in the identification of challenges and threats, as well as in methods how to respond to them and counteract them.

Already in *1992 Polish Defense Doctrine*, it was noted that Poland was outside the security structures, in the so-called gray area, with a number of internal problems, destabilized East and an uncertain future for the Eastern Neighborhood. The collapse of the USSR was then perceived not only in terms of challenges and threats; it was also seen as an opportunity for strengthening Poland's security – but also the country's own position in Eastern Europe, including through the use of historical associations – and for attracting, over time, Belarus and Ukraine to Western structures. The latter was also intended to weaken Russian influence, and, consequently, Russia itself, in the post-Soviet space. Since joining the EU (4 May 2004), Poland has been trying to enter its goals regarding the Eastern neighborhood in the external policy of the European Union (European Neighborhood Policy, Eastern Partnership). In this way, also with the support of the United States, Poland has become an advocate of democracy in the post-Soviet states, in particular those of key importance for it, i.e. in Ukraine and Belarus.

Despite the openness to Russia declared in strategic documents, challenges and threats are often defined in the context of relations with Russia or its policy. It is the fear of the Russian Federation that has become the main reason for the desire to become a member of Western structures. In the security dimension, a significant role has been played by NATO and relations with the United States. Already in the *Guidelines of the Polish security policy* of 1992, one can find a record that Poland particularly values the Euro-Atlantic character of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and advocates the presence of American troops on the European continent. However, the *2000 Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland* (after joining NATO) emphasized that “membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization reduced the threat of aggression against our country, primarily by multiplying the deterrence factor. A potential aggressor must always take into account the possibility of joint and several action of the entire

³⁴ *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2014*, Warszawa 2014, p. 9.

Alliance”.³⁵ A similar provision indicating the role of NATO in Polish security policy was found in the document *2003 National Strategy of the Republic of Poland*, according to which Poland secured and at the same time strengthened “a unique level of security in our history based e.g. on the guarantees of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”.³⁶ Since Poland’s accession to NATO, the Alliance remains the most important guarantee of the security of the Republic of Poland.

In subsequent strategies one can find statements that Poland’s goal is to strengthen NATO and not to “thin” its function in the European security system. These statements were an expression of Poland’s concerns about the concept of the European Security Policy and EU Defense (ESDP), to which Poland was initially reluctant. This resulted from the possibility of, firstly, doubling NATO functions and, secondly, weakening the US presence in Europe. In addition, negative experiences of an ineffective alliance of the Second Polish Republic with France and Great Britain strengthened Polish distrust of the emerging European security system. The basing of Poland’s security on the hard guarantees offered by NATO and the USA results from the features of strategic culture discussed above, including disappointment with multilateral mechanisms that did not provide Poland with security in the past (League of Nations). The low efficiency of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe means that Polish skepticism in this matter, historically conditioned, can be justified today.

These fears of Poland towards Russia are also caused by the Russian–Georgian war in 2008 and the destabilization of the situation in Ukraine since 2014, which is escalating. In addition, the 2014 Strategy indicated that Poland is not free from forms of political pressure using military argumentation. In its immediate vicinity there is a large concentration of military capabilities, also of offensive configuration. Threats to Poland may, in adverse circumstances, be non-military and military.

It is worth noticing that a permanent element of all Poland’s security strategies after 1989 is the priority of relations with the United States, which remains the country’s key non-European partner.

³⁵ *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, przyjęta na posiedzeniu Rady Ministrów w dniu 4 stycznia 2000 r.*, p. 243.

³⁶ *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, przyjęta przez Radę Ministrów w dniu 22 lipca 2003 r., a zatwierdzona przez Prezydenta RP w dniu 8 września 2003 r.*, p. 287.

In the 2014 document, the name of the United States is mentioned thirteen times. What is symptomatic, the second country listed by name is Russia (eight times). The name of Poland's western neighbor and the main political and economic partner, Germany, does not appear even once. The document only refers to this country in the context of cooperation within the Weimar Triangle and the development of close cooperation with all neighbors. It should be noted that the document emphasizes that Poland was concerned about the reorientation of American foreign policy towards Asia and the Pacific, and the evolution of US priorities in the field of international security. For this reason, Poland's goal indicated in the *2014 National Security Strategy of Poland* was to maintain a significant and lasting commitment of the United States in matters of European security, within NATO and bilateral relations. In addition to EU membership and close relations with France and Germany (also within the Weimar Triangle) and Great Britain, it was primarily relations with the US that, according to Poland, allowed to balance the influence of the Russian Federation in Europe.³⁷

AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE THE STRATEGIC CULTURE IN POLAND

The use of the armed forces to provide civilian authorities with support to ensure the security of state citizens has been one of the basic elements of the national security organization. This is especially true in situations where constitutionally established services and institutions are unable to independently carry out the tasks assigned to them, especially when certain threats occur suddenly and violently. Sometimes the army is used in a situation where other forces are unable to cope with the tasks awaiting them, and sometimes are even unable to perform them. The armed forces are one of the key and basic tools of national security, without which the state would not be able to carry out its basic mission, in particular to ensure the physical security of citizens and their property, and to protect the state's development opportunities.

In the world, the military was often used as an internal force, especially to suppress riots or other state security threats that could not be dealt with by the police, e.g. in the United States during the 1960s riots. In many countries, it has happened and happens that the military serves as a tool to gain or maintain power. In Poland in the interwar period, during riots,

³⁷ *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2014, op. cit.*

it happened that the army was used to replace or strengthen the police. It was similar in the communist period. Military interventions in Poznań in 1956, or Tri-city in 1970, were just undertaken in the face of insufficient forces in the Department of Internal Affairs. Calling up an army means an emergency and in most cases it is connected with the declaration of a state of emergency or martial law, which is in turn associated with suspending certain civil rights and liberties. The army, unlike the police (militia), has been perceived as a tool of lethal and sometimes discriminatory force, with shooting at the crowd at the forefront. All this has affected the strategic culture.

As defined above, strategic culture is not only a set of opinions and views formed in a nation or a specific community over a long historical period of time, the theme of which is the possibility of using military force in international relations, but it is also a way to contain threats to security. The factors shaping the strategic culture are: the perception of threats, methods of preventing and combating threats, changes in the national security environment, international alliances and agreements, membership in international organizations, as well as history, traditions, experiences, values, and national memory. It should be noted that the strategic culture has a direct impact on the creation of the state security strategy. Polish strategic culture, in its wide range, does not take into account terrorism and combating it, despite the fact that there are circles that show Polish traditions of partisan or irregular activities. The fight against terrorists is usually treated further in relation to standard tasks, and its specificity is ignored.

The decision to use or not use the army in the event of a terrorist attack may be criticized as a manifestation of the militarization of state policy. Such an accusation may appear even after the operation proves successful. The death toll, or worse, the failure of actions can lead to serious political consequences. Lack of decision may also lead to a tragic end if, for example, the police forces would not receive adequate support from the army on time. Theoretically, there is nothing wrong with referring to history and tradition. Only an excessively traditional approach to state security may become a problem.

At the beginning of its transformation in 1989, Poland, in terms of security, was a state that inherited specific solutions from the past. For forty years, the army had been prepared for an offensive jump across the Baltic Sea and the Kiel Canal. Therefore, equipment was collected and staff were trained in this regard. This also applied to special units. The police (Civic

Militia) and secret services were maintained in the People's Republic of Poland primarily as a tool to maintain the power of the ruling party. The changes to the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact had a minimal impact on Polish doctrines in the face of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, of which some countries – including Poland – decided to open up to the West. It was expected that like other sectors, especially the economy, also the army and the police would undergo rapid modernization. Unfortunately, it was different.

Therefore, the Polish Army, on the day of joining NATO, did not differ much from what it was on the last day of the Warsaw Pact. Despite the fact that policymakers promised enormous support for the modernization of the army, including the expansion of special forces, progress was very limited.

The main threat perceived by the doctrine writers and most strategists was the military and interstate threat. It was this threat that received the most attention, and other threats were usually treated marginally or even as slogans. This perception of the problem was just convenient. The armed forces produce their elites that define their interests. This state of affairs was in place when numerous ground forces ceased to play an important role on the battlefield, giving way to other types of troops, and threats such as organized crime, migration, and terrorism became more and more visible, requiring the construction of new, adequate structures and tools. The specific thing is that such a tool was successfully created outside the Ministry of National Defense, in the form of the GROM Military Unit, which was sent to Afghanistan and Iraq shortly after. Also in the dimension of the basic role of the army, which is the defense of its own territory, the changes were minimal, except for a few modernization programs for some components, such as the purchase of the F16 multi-role combat aircraft.

What is the problem is change. Each modernization means changes, it means that new units, new specialists and groups may appear, the position of which is growing in relation to the existing structures, and sometimes at their expense.

THE RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE AS A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN POLAND'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

Regardless of which threats one considers to be the most serious for state security and what tools are used as the most appropriate to combat these threats, lack of critical thinking and reluctance to ask oneself questions may be a threat greater than those present in the existing or future state security

environment. The basis of any change is questioning and skepticism. The appropriate direction of changes must be found in order to prevent new threats to state security.

CONCLUSION

It should be said that strategic culture must be taken into account because it is a set of behaviors resulting from shared experiences and symbols that set directions for action and ways to achieve goals. It is shaped under the influence of internal material conditions (the state's land area, natural resources, economic, military and social potential) as well as intangible conditions (history, experience of relations with other countries and historical memory). External factors are also important: geographical location, neighborhood, and regional balance of power. In case of Poland, the key determinants of strategic culture are history, geopolitics and external conditions.

Polish strategic culture today is characterized by the belief that the Western security system should be a homogeneous structure with a high degree of coherence, with the dominant position of the United States playing the role of a "European power" and thus becoming the best guarantee for maintaining NATO's collective defense function, and with possible tendencies for the renationalization of security policy in Europe. In view of the above, the primacy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Poland's security policy could not and cannot be called into question. This belief also results from the fact that at present the Russian and German syndrome, and the associated sense of constant suspicion towards Russia and Germany, can be found in the Polish position on the Nord Stream 1 project, which is currently being compared by some Poles to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.

It should be emphasized that the Polish security culture is still viable; despite the changes in NATO/US relations with Russia and in transatlantic relations themselves, dispositions shaped by historical experience remain valid. This timeliness results from the fact that Western orientation in the sphere of security is existential for Poland. The original option giving priority to NATO, guaranteeing and strengthening security through cooperation with the US, is complemented by a variant that assumes the need to strengthen European cooperation and deepen integration in the field of joint defense and the development of a European security and defense policy. It should be noted, however, that creating such a European capability to act is only possible within the transatlantic community and in a way that does not undermine solidarity with the US.

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