

# Polish National Defence Strategy in the context of NATO membership

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*Intergovernmental task group headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs prepared the project of the security strategy. Ministry of National Defence prepared the project of the national defence strategy. Both projects were consulted with other governmental and presidential bodies and finally reviewed and recommended by Ministerial Council's Committee for Defence Affairs. The strategic goal of the Republic of Poland in the field of national defence is to ensure secure conditions for exercising national interests by defending them against external crisis or war threats. NATO membership is a very important factor for Poland, but not the most decisive one. It is one of the very effective instruments we can use to support our efforts. But nation is the first - national interests, strategic aims and national potential. NATO strategic concept, operational plans and defence programs are always created by national points of view of its members. Therefore the most important for the work of NATO is having clearly described national strategy.*

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## 1. Introduction

The first step in defence work at the state level is always preparation and establishment of the national security and defence strategy. Poland had to change its strategy in 1999, after joining NATO. At the beginning of 2000 the government adopted security strategy and next - national defence strategy.

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Let us now review main topics of our national defence strategy, especially identification of security risks and development of strategic concepts mainly in the context of strategic consequences of our joining NATO.

The strategic goal of the Republic of Poland in the field of national defence is to ensure secure condi-

tions for exercising national interests by defending them against external crisis or war threats. Moreover the Polish strategic objectives are:

- to defend the territory of Poland against armed aggressors as well as ensure inviolability of the Polish air and maritime areas and land boundaries;
- to defend and protect all citizens of the Republic of Poland;
- to participate in collective defence of the territories of NATO member states according to Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty;
- to support international institutions and organisations in responding to crisis situations and political and military stabilisation measures;
- to develop safe environment around Poland by military co-operation with other states, particularly with its neighbours.

Mutual relations between Poland and its international environment determine factors of our external security. These determinants have twofold character. The first are *challenges* - perceived as situations, which require adaptation to changing international conditions and the second are *risks* and *threats* - seen as the possibilities of destructive impact from international environment.

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## 2. The Relevance of Integration with NATO

Joining NATO is, without any doubts, the most significant factor, which at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, shapes the security circumstances of our state. NATO enlargement distinctly reduced a "grey zone of security" in Central Europe and contributed to security and safe development of Poland and other states in the region. Joining NATO gives us great chances of strengthening our security. At the same time, it creates many challenges, which should be met in order to make these chances real.

The necessity of integration with NATO structures, without any friction is the first challenge we have been facing in our membership. It should be viewed in the following three aspects:

*The First* - are the expectations of our allies, the so called "old" NATO members, that our membership will not disturb functioning effectiveness of the Alliance, i. e. that we will be effective link of the system.

*The second* - are the expectations of our other partners, who are waiting for the future NATO enlargement. These expectations express the hope that we are able to prove that the further enlargement of the Alliance is reasonable and that it will not cause any fears among NATO countries.

And lastly, *the third* aspect of the challenge our membership generates has an internal character. We must prove that joining NATO is not only effective from the defence point of view but also that it is more economical than the defensive self-dependence while the funds to be spent on integration will be considerably smaller than those we would have to spend if we had not been in the Alliance.

We are meeting many such challenges and we must deal with them successfully.

The strategic location of Poland within NATO area brings challenges of a different kind. We are situated in the main strategic NATO area that links NATO with the Alliance's most important partners such as Russia and Ukraine. Because of that, the security of Poland is mainly a function of relations between NATO and these two countries. The challenge for our strategy is to take part in the process of shaping these relations in such a way that reduces possible tensions, and promoting co-operation.

Now - let us say a few words about threats.

In building our security we consider two kinds of threats: crises threats or risks and war or aggression threats.

Let me begin with war threats. In the nineties Poland, being the self-dependent state, considered the possibility of war only in the context of defending its territory and to repulsing a direct aggression. NATO membership means that we have to be prepared to participate also in military operations out our territory to support assaulted ally. The last example is our support to the US attacked by terrorists. This creates a new quality comparing to our previous strategy.

Poland is a country located on the edge of NATO area of responsibility, along the borders of the Alliance, which of course has some consequences for our security. We may be objects of different kind of dangerous actions, pointed against Poland, but also against other NATO countries. From this point of view we face an important challenge - to act for further NATO enlargement, backing up other countries in their attempts to join NATO. Accession of the new members would minimise our disadvantages of being the bordering country.

Thinking about threat of direct aggression on Poland - both limited and full scale - it should be highlighted that our NATO membership makes this threat less feasible than it was in the nineties. Simply saying, such an aggression would mean aggression against NATO and in this case the deterrence potential of the Alliance would play a decisive role.

As mentioned earlier the second group of threats are crises, seen as dangerous situations, which however are not a direct aggression on our state. It is for example an armed conflict in surrounding of Poland.

We consider two types of crises we should be ready to face. They are:

- crises in the near Poland's vicinity, of our borders, which could threat directly our security through the violation of our borders and the possibility of direct aggression against Poland;

- crises which do not threat Poland's security directly but which create dangerous situation from the view of international security (for example Afghanistan or Kosovo conflict).

NATO enlargement and our membership, on the one hand, widen the area of stabilisation in Europe and diminish the area where potential threats are generated. On the other, NATO enlargement intensifies our involvement into crisis management operations abroad. This concurrently extends the range of potential risks resulting from our membership. These threats may take, for example, a form of terrorist attacks on our territory or our people abroad.

Summing this up it should be stated that NATO membership brings the following:

- it enlarges the range of challenges, which we should react on;

- it decreases the possibilities of direct aggression both in the form of local as well as the total war - since aggression against Poland would be the aggression against NATO;

- some threats for Poland could be generated as a result of our country's involvement in the defence of one of NATO members;

- potential crisis threats are likely to be more possible due to our country's intensified engagement into crisis management operations abroad.

## 3. Strategic Concept

The next point arising from our NATO membership refers to the way the changes in the security envi-

ronment influence the **national defence strategic concepts**.

Polish strategy of national defence is focused on subjects like security of its citizens, nation, and the state. All actions, including membership in NATO, are only the means of achieving that goal. In order to defend its interests the Republic of Poland is determined to use all of its national potential. Our input to common strategic NATO potential serves as a means of strengthening Polish defence power.

The most significant change in the Polish strategic concepts caused by our membership in the Alliance is the change of the so-called philosophy of defence ranging from self-dependent defence to the collective one.

Talking about our allied strategy - it means NATO strategy - it should be underlined that from the point of view of our national interests we are especially interested in keeping in NATO strategy and practical implementation core elements such as:

- peaceful relations between NATO and Russia, because any tension here increases threat for our security;

- NATO openness for further enlargement - especially access of our neighbours Lithuania and Slovakia - a step, which would diminish the consequences of our strategic location as so-called "border state";

- the development of NATO multinational forces and deployment of the elements of multinational military system such as command, reconnaissance and communications structures on the territory of bordering states. This ensures that the international military structures will oppose any aggression against these states on the short notice;

- the implementation of a model of future military operations into allied doctrine, which permits achievement of the military goals with minimum collateral damages and life losses on the territory where operation is conducted. Hence, this corresponds with our strategic interests as the border-state;

- supporting the existing NATO priority for tasks based on the Article V and the present allied nuclear strategy as the effective means of deterrence, which minimises the threat of direct aggression.

In the framework of **national defence strategy** the Republic of Poland according to three security states (peace, crisis and war) - is prepared to conduct three strategic concepts or three types of strategic operations.

They are:

- *preventive and stabilising measures* - taken during peace time and covering ongoing prevention of outside political or military threats (crisis and war) by neutralising their possible sources as well as stabilising and strengthening Poland's international environment;

- *crisis management* - taken in the event of the country's or ally countries' security being exposed to risk and in the event of international security being at risk. These include national actions and participation in international actions taken to manage the crises and ensure protection against their outcomes;

- *war actions* - taken in the event that the aggression is being launched against Poland or any of our allies; these actions can engage all of the country's resources to fight the aggressors by planning and executing war operations and campaigns.

Being a NATO member, we consider only one possible kind of war we could be involved in. It is a coalition war, which can be a general (full scale) war or local (limited scale) war. From the point of view of Polish defence strategy, two main kinds of coalition war can be distinguished. First, the NATO defence on Polish territory. Second, the NATO defence outside the Polish territory.

Of course, in case of war on the Polish territory, Poland would have to carry out the biggest burden. At that moment, all our defence military and non-military potential would be engaged. Then the strategic keynote for defence activities of the state is to use both the national and the alliance defence potentials to defeat aggressor as soon as possible and destroy its offensive capabilities in order to make his future attempts of assault impossible. At the same time protection of society and national wealth against losses and war damages should be assured.

Military actions on the Polish territory would have a character of one or more coalition defensive and offensive campaigns consisting of parallel or subsequent operations and battles on the ground, sea, and in the air. This would be united with regular and irregular actions of the national territorial defence forces. It would all depend on the scale of conflict. These activities will comprise the following main tasks to be realised:

- conducting defensive operations during the first days of war in order to stop and weaken the enemy forces and enable friendly forces to take over strategic initiative;

- establishment of strategic superiority by strategic deployment of the main forces (mobilisation and deployment of national and coalition main forces as well as coalition strategic reserves);

- defeating the invading enemy forces and destroying their offensive capabilities by organising and conducting strategic counteroffensive.

These tasks would be unified with actions of national territorial defence forces, which link coalition operations with the functioning of the state non-military structures during the war. Non-military war activities embrace accomplishment of the following two fundamental strategic missions:

- indirect undermining of the enemy's power - by organising diplomatic and international public pressure, destructive informational and psychological impact on enemy and its state structures, imposition of economic sanctions, and special forces operations;

- making our own defensive potential "safe and sound" by protecting population, the national wealth, the state and coalition structures, and fending for basic material and spiritual necessities of the population during a war.

Summing up it should be underlined that our membership in NATO requires our strategic concepts to include solutions, which provide both the best use of allied forces operating on our territory, and the efficient Polish involvement in the defence of our allies and in the crisis management, including crisis response operations. There is no doubt, that the compatibility of the Polish defence strategy with NATO strategic concept is one of the basic determinants of the efficiency and credibility of our strategy.

#### 4. National Defence System

In order to accomplish strategic prevention, crisis reaction and counter aggression tasks, Poland maintains and prepares the **national defence system** for emergency situations. It consists of three basic components: the armed forces, non-military structures and the national command and control system. The national defence system in peacetime accomplishes the tasks of the preventive strategy and it is prepared and maintained in readiness for the appropriate deployment and effective operations in case of emergency (e.g. crisis or war). The national defence system is based on the whole state potential and it should be tightly linked with NATO security system.

For the **armed forces** the most important and pressing task related to integration with NATO is the Polish military attainment of interoperability, that is the ability to operate alongside the forces of other NATO states.

Another important consequence of joining the Alliance is the necessity of moving away from a quantitative approach to the armed forces towards a qualitative approach. We realise that in the NATO framework size of military forces is less important than standards of equipment and training that is organisational-technical and operational quality. This entails the necessity of a radical change in the internal structure of the military budget in favour of the quickest possible increase in the percentage share of expenditures on upgrading of equipment and training.

In the **non-military part of the national defence system**, which encompasses information, protection, and economic structures, the most crucial consequence of Poland's accession to NATO is the necessity of preparing these for performance of tasks involving support of Allied forces deployed in the territory of Poland in the event of crisis or war (so-called Host Nation Support). This refers in particular to preparation of the required infrastructure and the safeguarding and protection of (broadly defined) logistic support.

The **national defence command and control system** consists of the main bodies of executive power. At the highest state's level they are: the President and the Ministerial Council with the Prime Minister. They have advisory bodies: the President - National Security Council and the Government Committee for De-

fence Affairs. Implementation of President's and government's decisions is assured by ministers and *voivodes*. A special role is played by Minister of National Defence. He is not only a head of Polish Armed Forces but he is also responsible, on behalf of the Ministerial Council, for co-ordination of other ministers and *voivodes* in their work in defence field.

As we know one of the significant spheres of the command and control process is defence planning. Since we have joined NATO, the main problem we faced is the integration of the national planning with the allied one. Similarly as it is in the Alliance, we also distinguish two fields of defence planning, providing the implementation of strategy tasks: operational planning and force planning. We have started working in both of these areas, founding a set of national strategic documents, which should be prepared.

In the field of **operational planning** we prepared while the President and the Prime Minister approved the most important document called "*Political-Strategic Defence Directive*". It contains a description of concrete potential threats for the state security, the main idea of the State's defence, its main goals and ways of implementation, general tasks of the main elements of national defence system in time of external threat and war. In other words, it includes a set of political and strategic tasks for the armed forces and for all governmental departments and provinces. Based on this directive the chief of the General Staff, ministers and voivodes work out new plans for using the armed forces and functioning of departments and provinces in time of external threat and war.

This document, together with NATO contingency plan for Poland, will both give appropriate operational basis for planning, training and equipping the Polish Army as well as defence preparations of non-military structures during the peace time.

In the second field of defence planning - **the force planning** not only forces but the whole defence system is included in the planning. The main starting point in this process is "*The Ministerial Council's Guidance for Defence Planning and Programming*", issued after "NATO Ministerial Guidance". Six-year programs of Armed Forces Development and Non-military Defence Preparations are following this Guidance.

In the end it should be underlined that our defence strategy is shaped first of all by our national interests, described in our constitutional law. They determine Polish strategic aims in defence sphere. NATO membership is, of course, very important factor - but not the most decisive one. It is one of the very effective instruments we can use to support our efforts. But nation is the first - national interests, strategic aims and national potential. NATO strategic concept, operational plans and defence programs are always created by national points of view of its members. Therefore the most important for the work of NATO is having clearly described national strategy. ■