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POLISH WAY TO NATO IN THE MILITARY DIMENSION

Sławomir Olearczyk*

ABSTRACT

The year 1989 was one of the greatest turning points in the history of Poland. After the decades of Soviet dominant influence on the shape of Polish reality, Poland finally gained the opportunity to decide about itself. As a result of political transformation and democratic changes, Poland achieves possibility to become one of the important elements of worldwide security. Reference to the history of formation of the Alliance allowed to show the opportunities and challenges which Poland had to face on its way to NATO. Participation in a programme "the Partnership for peace" (PfP) was crucial for Poland and simultaneously, this unique cooperation formula was treated by Poland as a mechanism leading to the future membership in the Alliance.

Key words: NATO, Partnership for Peace, Poland, security environment, Polish Armed Forces

Introduction

The year 1989 opens the new stage in the history of modern Poland. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest turning points in our history of the last 200-300 years. In some respects, the year 1989 is comparable with the year 1918 when we really regained independence after 123 years of inexistence of the Polish state in Europe, but due to subsequent, highly unfavourable international circumstances it was very fragile independence (Kupiecki - Szczepanik, 1995). The borders of the Second Polish Republic, and even its sovereign existence, were questioned by powerful neighbours from the East and West. In the face of these threats, Poland stood alone (lack of reliable allies), and the international institutions of that time (i.e. the system of the League of Nations) were too weak to protect us against aggressive plans of the neighbour countries (Kuźniar - Szczepanik, 2002). Consequences of that state of affairs soon became evident.

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The loss of such short independent existence of the state was connected with the invasion of the German Reich and the Soviet Union in September 1939. This aggression initiated at the same time the outbreak of one of the most tragic world wars.

The effects of World War II caused catastrophic losses in Poland in the form of: ruined economy, biological extermination of the nation, destroyed or carried off cultural and national heritage goods, but also the territorial changes¹. In this tragedy, Poland was affected by the most important thing, namely it became subject to foreign domination. The domination was foreign in the sense that the imposed internal system was alien to the national and historically shaped traditions from the civilisational, political, economic, and military point of view. Thus, Poland became a dependant and satellite country, and the real decisions were made at the Kremlin².

The Soviet Union protectorate in an obvious way influenced the possibility of carrying out one's own security policy, and defence came down to the participation in the Warsaw Pact³. This pact was in fact a political and military alliance with the dominant role of the Soviet Union. In accordance with the adopted arrangements, the Warsaw Pact Doctrine was of a defensive character, in opposition towards NATO. However, in reality it was based on an offensive strategy of mass rocket and nuclear attacks connected with a lightning offensive which in the strategic scale aimed at taking control over the Western countries' territories. Due to obvious reasons such assumptions were of particular importance for state security. Soviet troops stationed on our territory were to be the guarantee of "independence and sovereignty". This dependence, with few exceptions of activity on the international arena⁴, lasted until the Solidarity

¹ Poland as the result of territorial changes lost the Eastern Borderland in return for the land incorporated in the West and North – the so called Recovered Territories. In accordance with the arrangements of the Big Three from Potsdam (17 July-2 August 1945) the new borders were delineated. The territory of Poland decreased to 312,6 thousand square km, and nearly 1/2 of all its lands was exchanged. These changes led to the formation of a nearly uniform state from the point of view of nationality of its citizens. The pre-war national minorities which played a significant role in the country ceased to exist. Only few national populations were formed by Belarusians (approximately 100 thousand), Ukrainians (approximately 150 thousand), Lithuanians (approximately 10 thousands) and Germans (approximately 200 thousand). They did not exceed, however, 2% of the society (*Polska po II wojnie światowej*. 2002.).

² More: R. Kupiecki, K. Szczepanik, *Polityka zagraniczna Polski...*, op. cit.

³ The Pact was signed on 14 May 1955 in Warsaw (author's note).

⁴ For example, Rapacki's plan - the Polish proposal of establishing the non-nuclear zone in Central Europe, proposed initially by the minister of foreign affairs Adam Rapacki in the UN on 2 October

uprising.

Changes⁵ which took place after 1989, including the formation of the first non-communist government by Prime Minister **Tadeusz Mazowiecki**, created a new domestic situation, allowing for a deep political transformation and the beginning of the construction of the democratic institutions and market economy. Sovereignty regained by Poland meant that also the possibility to carry out international policy in accordance with the Polish *raison d'état* which could also serve the worldwide security.

1 The North Atlantic Alliance

The notion of "alliance" is interpreted differently by different schools of international relations. Due to that reason, in reference literature, there can be found its multiple interpretations, which points to the lack of its unambiguous definition, concerning both theory as well as practice. Looking into this issue from the general perspective, what needs to be emphasised are significant differences between alliances and other forms of cooperation in the area of security, which are of instrumental character and may constitute the result of policy carried out by the former. The demarcation line is clearly connected with the point in which an alliance assumes the obligation of mutual defence, while such an assumption does not exist with reference to the category of, for example, agreements in the area of arms control or building of trust measures (Kupiecki, 1998). This thesis is confirmed by the literature research indicating that an alliance differs from a union, federation or other integration forms by the fact that it is motivated by the state location in the international forum⁶. Understanding the phenomenon of forming alliances requires broad knowledge

1957, expressed in the full form in the Polish government's memorandum of 14 February 1958. The proposed zone was to encompass the territory of Poland, Czechoslovakia, GDR and FRG. After its rejection by the West as too radical and possibly destabilising the balance of powers, the Rapacki's plan was modified in the memorandum of 28 March 1962, which stipulated two-stage introduction of the non-nuclear zone. Also this proposal was rejected by the West which suspected the essence of the plan was to force the recognition of GDR and the consolidation of the partition of Germany. The Rapacki's Plan was the most famous Polish disarmament proposal (*Słownik pojęć i organizacji...*, 2003)

⁵ It should be understood as a system transformation which includes in its scope the vast objective range and concerns the system foundations of the state. Cf. E. Zieliński, *Nauka o państwie i polityce*, Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, Warszawa 2006, pp. 77-82.

⁶ More: B. Balcerowicz, *Sojusz a obrona narodowa*, Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, Warszawa 1999, pp.71-79.

in the scope of political, historical, social and economic conditions of their formation, existence and break-up, the relation between their formation and the probability of an outbreak of a military conflict and a range of other aspects (Kupiecki, 1998).

The end of World War II found Europe in a catastrophic economic situation, caused by huge military debts of most countries, the necessity of rebuilding war damage, fast resetting of the industry to peace production mode and finding jobs for millions of demobilised soldiers. The actual division of post-war Europe into two camps: the democratic and communist one was exacerbated by the unsolved issue of the future of defeated Germany, as well as political and military rivalry between the two blocs. Subsequent political events dispelled the illusions of the first months after the end of World War II, when Western governments believed that thanks to harmonious cooperation of all participants of the anti-Nazi coalition building of sustainable peace was possible. Cold War, i.e. the state of hostility between two large political and economic blocs fast included not only the military and political issues but also the social, cultural and economic ones.

The crystallisation of two political blocs influenced the change of the stand of the democratic governments which assumed as the priority of their activity: decisive counteracting spreading Communist ideology, rebuilding of the economy and preventing possible conflicts. These goals required close cooperation of the Western-European states and the USA. For Western politicians it became evident that strengthening the free market mechanisms would bring a considerable improvement of the level of life of their citizens, and at the same time would weaken the sources of radical social moods. The implementation of the initial plans led from the Marshall's Plan announced in the USA in 1947 to the establishment of the North Atlantic Alliance in April 1949.

The creation of NATO was not a one-time act, but a gradual process, supporting the European governments' undertakings carried out in order to institutionally establish security on the continent and facilitate rapprochement between these activities and the proposals of the US government. The formation of NATO was preceded by a few significant political events which prepared the place for this initiative:

- signing by France and the United Kingdom a treaty of alliance (Dunkirk, March 1947). Its underlying reasons were connected with the concerns about the rebirth of German militarism as well as the will to protect themselves against the expansion of communism.

- signing of the Treaty of Brussels expanding the alliance from Dunkirk by three states - Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg (March 1948). The essence of this document was mutual commitment to provide assistance in case of an armed attack on one of the signatories.
- adoption by the US Congress of legal solutions enabling the United States to participate in regional military blocs and provide military help to their member states (so called Vandenberg's Resolution, June 1948).
- entering into negotiations concerning the formation of a military alliance by the USA, Canada and five signatories of the Treaty of Brussels (Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and the UK). At the end of 1948 and at the beginning of 1949, Denmark, Island, Norway, Portugal and Italy were invited to join the negotiations.

Ultimately, the North Atlantic Treaty (due to the place of its signature called also the Washington Treaty) - the document laying foundations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation - was signed on 4 April 1949 by twelve countries in order to *"strengthen security, common heritage and civilisational gains of their countries, based on the rules of democracy, individual freedom and the rule of law"* (*Polska w NATO. Pakiet edukacyjny*, 2002, p. 10).

This document, being the legal and treaty foundation of the Alliance, was based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter⁷. It confirms the inalienable right of every sovereign state to collective defence. As the preamble of the Treaty emphasises, the aim of the allies is to "seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area". At the moment of signature of the Treaty the most pressing task of NATO was the protection of its members against the potential threat coming from the political activity and growing military power of the Soviet Union. Hence, the NATO's main aim was and still is to guarantee,

⁷ The United Nations Charter was signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, at the end of the United Nations Conference on the International Organisation and took effect on 24 October 1945. Article 51 stipulates that: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security".

with political and military means, freedom and security for all its members, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter (Pawłowski, 2009). Realising it and fulfilling the obligations of the North Atlantic Treaty, its members decided to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law" and that they "are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security".

The development of the above principles was reflected in the regulations of subsequent articles. However, among them there are those that are of key importance for the implementation of the obligations of mutual defence:

- considering an armed attack against one or more member states an attack against them all, in which case the signatories are obliged to assist the attacked in a way they deem necessary (Article 5);
- enabling the member states to exchange information and consult each other in the scope of security and defence (Article 4);
- considering all of the territories of the member states the NATO area of responsibility and application of the security guarantee in accordance with Article 5 (Article 6);
- determining the open character of NATO for all states which are able and ready to assume obligations resulting from the treaty (Article 10).

The content of the Treaty has remained unchanged from the time of its signature in 1949. It shows the exceptional sustainability and coherence of the Alliance in the key issues concerning mutual defence. Although, it needs to be pointed out that the changing geostrategic and geopolitical circumstances were reflected in the strategic documents in the form of *NATO Strategic Concepts*.

The first Concept, adopted in December 1949, expressed the will to implement the basic principles constituting the basis of the NATO formation. The document listed, above all, such issues as: defence character of the Alliance, importance of activities preventing military conflicts, cooperation of the allies, deterring role of nuclear weapons and the solidarity principle, often presented as "unity in the condition of geographical diversity". However, the progressing arms race led to the adoption of the so called *concept of massive retaliation* in 1957, which provided for the possibility of a one-sided use of nuclear weapon in case of a serious attack on the ally territory. The growing nuclear arsenal of USSR, threatening to draw the states which did not possess this kind of weapon into an unlimited nuclear conflict, caused disputes in the political and military circles of the NATO states. Therefore, after a few years of stormy debates, in

December 1967, new strategic principles were adopted; the so-called *flexible response strategy*. This concept stipulated three phases of the escalation of a conflict – direct defence (with the use of conventional weapons), deliberate escalation (with the use of tactical nuclear weapons) and massive nuclear response (but only if the Soviet Union decided to use strategic nuclear weapons first). Aiming to ensure at the same time the real possibility of responding to a nuclear attack on USSR, the *nuclear triad concept* was created. It stipulated the existence of three ways of delivering strategic nuclear weapons – intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines equipped with nuclear warheads and strategic bombers. All these three means were to be capable of launching a massive attack independently, in case the other two were destroyed or paralysed during a Soviet nuclear attack. Since the Soviet Union would have to take into account effective retaliation if it decided to attack first, the NATO member states fully managed to ensure the nuclear deterrent character of the strategy (Dziubdziela, 2009).

Another, surely the most significant change on the international arena which took place after 1989 presented the Alliance with new challenges and the need to introduce much deeper reforms than so far. It was a consequence of the change in the balance of powers in the international relations. Therefore, what became the essence of adapting NATO to new geopolitical conditions was the real expansion of the Alliance defence function by undertaking, also in cooperation with the non-member states and other international organisations, tasks connected with conflict solving outside its own mandate territory. It was expressed in the next NATO strategic concept adopted during the Rome Summit in 1991. For the first time in the NATO's history, its strategy was announced in the form of a public document, which fulfilled a double function: presented guidelines for planning processes and public information about the goals of its activity. It consisted, apart from a preamble, from five parts presenting the NATO stand on the issues of: NATO strategy, security, goals and functions as well as guidelines for the armed forces structures. The new *Concept* maintained the basic NATO goals and functions of: deterring a potential attack against the allies, maintaining a strategic balance in Europe, consultation and coordination of activities of the member states in the spheres of their common interest, and other actions aiming at European security based on the values of the *United Nations Charter*. The document contains the

statement⁸ which clearly indicated the necessity to carry out internal reforms and adapt to the new conditions (*Polska w NATO*, 2002). In the new Strategic Concept the departure from the priority of nuclear arms which dominated the politics of the Alliance during the entire Cold War period can be observed. Moreover, the approach towards the conventional weapons potential altered significantly as well. The Strategic Concept of 1991 established as its goal quantitative reduction in conventional weapons, including mainly the reduction of the number of arms in combat readiness⁹. It was to be compensated with the constant increase in mobility, flexibility and adaptation abilities of the armed forces at the NATO disposal.

The Strategic Concept of 1991 was a document created as a matter of expediency in the time of great changes (immediately after the fall of the Eastern Bloc); hence it was obvious that the document would soon require further changes¹⁰. And so it happened, a few years later the Alliance adopted another strategic concept. It took place during the Washington Summit in 1999. The new international system, stabilised at that time, opened the expanded scope of activity for the Alliance. What was characteristic of this concept was its layout and open formula initiated in 1991. The document focused its attention on the main and unchanging goals of NATO connected with safeguarding freedom and security of all its members, by political as well as military means. At the same time, the necessity to maintain peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region was acknowledged. There was also a reference to the changing security environment which would require partnership, cooperation and dialogue. What was also significant were issues connected with the need of cooperation with other international security organisations (UN, OSCE, EU), as

⁸ At their meeting in London in July 1990, NATO's Heads of State and Government agreed on the need to transform the Atlantic Alliance to reflect the new, more promising, era in Europe (NATO, 1991).

⁹ In the period of 1991-1997 significant changes took place concerning the size of the allied armed forces. As a consequence of decreasing the defence budgets by 30 %, the size of the armed forces in most of the states decreased by - from 28 up to 40 %. The size of the US armed forces in Europe decreased from 300,000 to 100,000 of military personnel. The number of the air force wings was reduced from 4 to 2 and the number of brigades from 17 to 4 (since 1989). Chemical weapons were completely withdrawn as well as 80% of nuclear weapons (Pawłowski, 2009).

¹⁰ In July 1997, the heads of NATO states and governments decided that the strategic concept should be re-examined in order to make sure that it was fully compatible with the new security situation and challenges in Europe. The Council was called to start works in order to finish the concept during the presentation at the next summit in 1999.

well as the reference to the compliance with the arms control regime and the threats connected with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Apart from these aspects, one of the most important changes in the area of perceiving security by NATO was the reference to new political, economic, social and environmental issues. Thus, it may be assumed that the scope of NATO activity in the area of security started to change diametrically.

2 The way to NATO - military dimension

Provisions of the Concept of 1991 were consistently implemented. In January 1994, NATO offered the member-states of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council – and other, engaged in the works of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) the new formula of cooperation – *the Partnership for Peace*– PfP¹¹. The aim of this proposal was to deepen the trust and undertake common efforts in order to strengthen security. It was a unique offer of cooperation with the armed forces of the NATO members for the armed forces of partner states. Poland formally acceded to the PfP programme on 2 February 1994 by signing a framework document of the Partnership. Two months later in the NATO Headquarters, the Presentation Document was submitted in which the Polish side committed to implement the political and military goals of PfP, i.e. to cooperate with NATO in order to:

- achieve transparency in defence planning and works on military budgets;
- ensure democratic control over the armed forces;

¹¹ In accordance with point 2 of the Framework Document "This Partnership is established as an expression of a joint conviction that stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area can be achieved only through cooperation and common action. Protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and safeguarding of freedom, justice, and peace through democracy are shared values fundamental to the Partnership. In joining the Partnership, the member States of the North Atlantic Alliance and the other States subscribing to this Document recall that they are committed to the preservation of democratic societies, their freedom from coercion and intimidation, and the maintenance of the principles of international law. They reaffirm their commitment to fulfil in good faith the obligations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; specifically, to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, to respect existing borders and to settle disputes by peaceful means. They also reaffirm their commitment to the Helsinki Final Act and all subsequent CSCE documents and to the fulfilment of the commitments and obligations they have undertaken in the field of disarmament and arms control." (NATO, 2009)

- maintain readiness to participate in peace operations under the aegis of UN and CSCE;
- plan common trainings and exercises increasing the ability to organise international peace, seek-and-rescue as well as humanitarian operations;
- enable long-term development of forces better prepared to cooperate with the armies of the NATO states.

Simultaneously, Poland emphasised in the Presentation Document that it treats PfP as a mechanism leading to the future membership in the Alliance. Poland presented also its own priorities¹² of cooperation within the Partnership of special significance in the process of preparation for the future integration with the NATO structures. They included:

- management and communications systems;
- defence planning;
- standardisation;
- defence infrastructure;
- military education and training.

The bases for the implementation of the PfP Programme were the developed and annually updated Partnership and Cooperation Programs (PCP) constituting an open offer of common undertakings proposed by NATO structures, member states and particular partner states. What was of particular importance for the integration processes in the military dimension was also the development of Individual Partnership Action Plans¹³ (IPP¹⁴) by Poland. It is worth emphasising that Poland as the first partner country started systematic military cooperation with the Alliance. The consequence of these activities was the increasing number of trainings of units and sub-units of the Polish Armed Forces with other Western states.

The first, historical¹⁵ event of this type was the exercise "Cooperative Bridge", which was conducted on 12-16 September 1994 on the training field in Biedrusko near Poznan. 600 soldiers from 13 NATO and partner states

¹² The document included our idea of the cooperation with NATO, on the basis of which experts negotiated its real forms.

¹³ IPP was signed on 5 July 1994.

¹⁴ IPP – Individual Partnership Programme.

¹⁵ It was the first exercise organised within the framework of PfP.

participated in the event¹⁶. This exercise was oriented at the sub-units performing tasks as part of a peace mission. Its aim was to exchange experience, develop common operation procedures in the scope of establishing checkpoints, their protection, escorting people and equipment, monitoring and patrolling. In this way practical NATO and PfP states' abilities to undertake international operations were checked. Only a few weeks later in the Netherlands, there was organised the exercise code-named "Cooperative Spirit" with the participation of about 1,000 soldiers from 12 NATO and PfP states¹⁷. The scenario and aims of the exercise were similar to the one conducted on the territory of Poland. These two exercises may be defined as a demonstration of real cooperation between NATO and the partner states, expressed by their organisation on the territory of a state from the former Eastern Bloc and a NATO state. These exercises were the origin of subsequent undertakings with the participation of the Armed Forces, Air Force and the Navy. The cooperation with the US Army is also worth mentioning here. On 10-14 July on the training field in Wędrzyn the first Polish-American exercise code-named "Double Eagle - 95" took place. In the same year, there was also the exercise "Cooperative Nugget - 95", which, in turn, was the first exercise organised as part of PfP on American soil. The Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), Fort Polk, LA hosted 4,000 soldiers from 17 states, including 30 - person platoon of the 6. Air Assault Brigade. The next year, the exercise "Baltops - 96" was conducted. It was a practical sea exercise whose scope included conducting search and rescue operations, convoys, imposing sanctions and enforcing embargoes. The exercise "Cooperative Venture - 96", similarly to the previous ones, served to improve cooperation between NATO forces and its partners. 20 warships of 13 ensigns and 2,000 sailors participated in the event.

The presented exercises constitute only a representative group amongst many other training enterprises undertaken with the participation of the Polish Armed Forces in the period preceding its membership in NATO. The available data indicates that already in 1994, Poland participated in 40 events as part of the Partnership, and in 1995 as many as 130 events were organised. This

¹⁶ The following states participated in the exercise: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

¹⁷ The following states participated in the exercise: Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and the host-state – the Netherlands.

number included 9 exercises with the participation of troops - 8 in Europe and one exercise for the first time conducted under the aegis of SACLANT in the USA (Cooperative Nugget). In 1996, 242 events took place, and the number of military exercises with the participation of the representatives of the armed forces increased to 21. Finally, in 1997 Poland engaged in about 450 different events as part of Partnership for Peace, including 25 military exercises. Apart from exercises organised in particular years, also other undertakings deserve attention, such as: extended programme of seminars, briefings, mutual visits and meetings, as well as gradually increasing number of courses and trainings. All these ventures were dedicated to different aspects of the North Atlantic Alliance functioning and a broad range of problems connected with the transformation of the armed forces in the new European security situation (*NATO w polityce bezpieczeństwa Polski*, 2000).

An important place on our way to the membership in NATO belongs to the operations of the Polish Armed Forces contingents abroad. Their political and military importance cannot be underestimated. In that way, Poland not only convinced the allies of the appropriate level of training of its troops, but also their ability to act in the international environment. It can be stated that this participation was a sort of exam and verification of everything that was learned during common exercises organised as part of PfP Programmes. What was, however, the most important was the political overtone, confirmation of the will and readiness to cooperate and bear the costs in order to defend common values.

The first operation carried out together with the NATO forces was the military intervention in the Balkans. The Implementation Force (IFOR) was established by the decision of the North Atlantic Council of 16 December 1995. The legal basis for the establishment of this force was constituted by the Resolution of the Security Council¹⁸. In total, IFOR amounted to 60,000 soldiers, including the 16. Airborne Battalion of the 6. Air Assault Brigade. The choice of this unit was a consequence of the participation in the *Planning and Review Process of Partnership for Peace*, whose aim was to adapt a part of Polish units to common operations with the Western troops. In December 1995, the 16. Air Assault Brigade achieved the required level of readiness, and in February the

¹⁸ Resolution of the Security Council no 1031 of 15 December 1995 was a direct consequence of the Dayton Agreement signed in Paris on 14 December 1995.

next year became a part of the Multinational Division North¹⁹. Polish soldiers' tasks included, among other things: controlling traffic across the military demarcation lines, patrolling the military demarcation zones, collecting information about mine fields, controlling the withdrawal of fighting parties from particular regions. If necessary, soldiers were to support other battalions in their responsibility regions. The character of performed tasks imposed the change of the contingent structure in comparison with other peace operations, the battalion had 3 assault companies, equipped with the infantry fighting vehicles BWP-1 and armoured vehicles BRDM. The battalion had also its own mortars and anti-tank weapons. IFOR included also Polish Logistics Group and the personnel of the Brigade command. Polish troops in IFOR amounted to almost 700 people (Najorek, 2001).

On 20 December 1996 the mandate of IFOR expired. A few days before this date – on 12 December – NATO Stabilisation Force (SFOR) was established. The legal basis in this case was the Resolution 1088 of the Security Council. The SFOR mandate assumed the existence of a 32.000 strong international contingent, whose activity was expected to last for 18 months. This period was, however, not enough, and as a consequence of constant tensions in the region, SFOR acted until 2 December 2004. The Polish contingent at that time was subject to systematic reductions in the number of personnel and equipment. Ultimately, the mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was transferred under the responsibility of the European Union.

The participation of the Polish Armed Forces in the IFOR/SFOR constituted another confirmation of Poland's active engagement in the activity aiming at maintaining and restoring peace in the world. Moreover, the participation in the NATO operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina lent credence to the Polish declarations of readiness to fulfil future ally obligations, including the participation in peace supporting operations. Experience gained thanks to the participation in the international forces, such as IFOR/SFOR brought the Polish Armed Forces closer to the achievement of compatibility and interoperability with the NATO military structures. Cooperation with the military units of NATO member states allowed for deepening Polish Armed Forces' knowledge about the NATO planning and military activity procedures, which, in turn, facilitated the introduction of standards and procedures used in the NATO states into the

¹⁹ A part of this Division was the Nordic-Polish Brigade (NORDPOLBDE), and also 2 American Brigades, a Turkish and a Russian Brigade.

Polish Armed Forces.

Conclusion

The first period of Polish formal contacts with NATO was too a significant extent of an ice-breaking character. The Alliance did not signal any doubts: there was no chance for fast the expansion of cooperation or automatic guarantee of security. Looking from the perspective of a few decades of official hostility, the fast pace of changes in mutual relations needs to be emphasized. At the end of 1991, the anxiety of the Western politicians diminished in the face of the situation in the former Eastern Bloc states, since this region of the continent was undergoing significant changes. At that time, visits were organised which allowed to get to know each other and gradually eliminate the existing prejudices. In the geostrategic and geopolitical situation of that time in Europe, the success of the ally role connected with maintaining peace and preventing conflicts or war depended, more than in the past, on the effective diplomacy and gradual integration of military efforts with the new states.

The essence of common, collective defence which Poland sought consists in agreeing to the military activity in accordance with a uniform plan, based on the integrated military structure and cooperation of particular commands representing all components of the allied armed forces. What is of key importance is the collective planning (organising) of forces, common operation planning, bearing common costs of the integrated military structures and using common defence capabilities of multinational formations - stationing and deployment of forces, the integrated air defence system. The supplementary elements include crisis response and development of regulating agreements: reinforcement of troops, consultation procedures, common standards and procedures concerning equipment, training and logistics, and also cooperation in the scope of armaments, training and logistics. All these requirements had to be fulfilled by the Polish Armed Forces on their way to the full integration with the North Atlantic Alliance structures. In general, these tasks focused on:

1. Adaptation in order to cooperate at all levels, from the tactical to the strategic one, as part of the full integration with the contingents of the allied armed forces of the Alliance, which would be sent to Poland in case of an attack on our country to act in cooperation with the Polish

troops under NATO command on the basis of the Polish defence infrastructure²⁰.

2. Adaptation in order to cooperate as part of the NATO allied armed forces abroad in case of an attack on another NATO member.
3. Capability to achieve the fast and independent military solution of a local military conflict on the territory of Poland or around its borders with the use appropriately prepared concentrations of operation troops.
4. Readiness for the immediate participation of designated military units in NATO actions connected with enforcing and maintaining peace in the places of local conflicts outside the territory of Poland.

The essential factor which facilitated the accession to the NATO structures was Poland's great activity in the PfP programme. It can be stated that it was used not only to prepare to the membership, but also as a mechanism of cooperation with other countries; the cooperation which significantly contributed to the stability in the region. Together with the NATO states and other partners, Poland joined the NATO operations supervising the enforcement of peace agreements in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Poland contributed significantly to IFOR, and then to SFOR and developed dynamic cooperation with particular NATO states. Thanks to that, regular mechanisms of deepened political and military consultations were organised, as well as common exercises and increasingly better cooperation in the scope of equipment and arms.

At the same time, great internal effort was made to prepare Poland for the participation in the Alliance. The transformation of the whole defence system was carried out, including the armed forces which became subject to the democratic and civilian control. State defence was based on the strategy of national security, taking into consideration the changed situation in Europe. Also the deployment of military units was changed, as they were located proportionally on the territory of the whole country. And finally, there appeared also significant changes in the structure of the armed forces and the command system. Ultimately, all these reforms allowed for developing of moderately realistic, long-term development and modernisation programmes for the armed forces, corresponding also with the state financial possibilities.

²⁰ I.e. tasks resulting from the obligations of HNS – Host Nation Support).

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