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DISCERNING POLAND'S CONTEMPORARY STRATEGIC CULTURE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2020 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the Polish government's recently published *National Security Strategy* in an attempt to discern the broad outlines of the strategic culture within Poland's strategic community. The article adopts a 'fourth generation' approach to the conception of strategic culture, which posits that there are often rival subcultures within strategic communities, which can often result in dramatic shifts in a state's security policies over time. There is a brief discussion of how conflicting subcultures can be identified in Poland's foreign policies in the past before the article discusses what Poland's current *Strategy* reveals about the strategic culture of today's decision-makers. It broadly argues that there are obvious continuities in Poland's security policies, notably in terms of how the Russian Federation is regarded as a hostile state and the degree to which NATO and the EU serve to strengthen Poland's security. It is also possible to see more minor shifts in Poland's security policies in recent years, such as a renewed emphasis on territorial defence and a willingness to align itself with several states which are relatively antagonistic towards the EU.

Keywords: strategic culture, Poland, national security strategy, security policy, NATO, European Union, Three Seas Initiative

INTRODUCTION

Strategic culture is a concept that was first presented by Jack Snyder in the 1970s, in a paper which sought to explain the contrasting 'national styles' of the Soviet Union and the United States in relation to nuclear strategy.¹ There has been since then an ongoing debate about the degree to which strategic culture influences policy outcomes and the ways in which it may influence policymakers' behaviour. Four distinct generations of theorists of strategic culture have been identified, each of whom have defined the concept in a slightly different way and presented contrasting ways in which culture influences the decision-making process. There has also been a methodological debate regarding the best techniques that can be employed in order to identify the main 'outlines' of a particular nation's strategic culture. This article will argue that the most recent writings on strategic culture seem to offer the most persuasive approach to understanding how strategic culture may well influence the particular security policies that governments adopt, and that the methodological approaches employed have allowed writers in this area to gain at least some purchase on what is often thought to be a relatively elusive concept.

These methods will be applied to examining Polish strategic culture in order to ascertain the main elements in contemporary Polish strategic thinking. The article will broadly adopt the approach of the 'fourth generation' writers on strategic culture. Unlike the work of previous generations of writers of strategic culture, which *focused on stability, the fourth generation scholars sought to explain change.*² Fourth generation writers argue that there is often competition between subcultures, which occasionally results in one hitherto dominant strategic doctrine being supplanted by a rival subculture. Fourth generation thinking therefore accounts more effectively for diplomatic revolutions or paradigm shifts when it comes to states' foreign and security policies. When examining the history of Poland's foreign relations, it is possible to identify several competing subcultures. In recent years, it is also possible to discern some obvious debates and changes in policies in several areas that are of particular significance when it comes to Poland's security policies. The article will be structured accordingly: the first part briefly summarises the debate about strategic culture and the methodology that the most recent writers have adopted. The second section begins to employ this methodology to several areas of Poland's strategic thinking. Poland's most recent published *National Security Strategy* is analysed for what it tells us about the current government's strategic outlook. Then the following section proceeds to examine some of the main subjects that the documents discusses in an effort to elucidate the continuities of Polish strategic thinking, and some significant shifts

¹ J.L. Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations: A Project Air Force Report Prepared for the United States Air Force", [Report] – Rand Corporation R-2154-AF, 1977, pp. 1-40.

² T. Libel, "Rethinking Strategic Culture: A Computational (Social Science) Discursive-Institutionalist Approach", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 43, no. 5 (2020), pp. 686-709.

that have taken place in recent years. It will also attempt to identify areas of debate that are being challenged by rival subcultures.

CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO STRATEGIC CULTURE

The term 'strategic culture' was first presented in the 1970s, when Snyder identified contrasting national styles when it came to the formulation of nuclear strategy in the Soviet Union and the United States.³ Snyder was the first of a group of writers who were subsequently labelled as first-generation thinkers of strategic culture. These writers explained differences in rival states' security policies – and during the Cold War their focus was unsurprisingly largely on the United States and the Soviet Union – in terms of the particular cultural milieu within which policymakers operated. First generation writers viewed policymakers as an elite, a small community composed of individuals who had attended a select group of universities or military academies, before embarking upon their careers in government. As such, they tended to share a similar worldview and set of values. This seemed to explain how it was possible to discern distinct national styles. Critics of the first-generation perspective on strategic thinking argued that it was overly deterministic – it seemed to exclude the possibility that some policymakers might embrace counter-cultural ideas – and that these writers seemed to connect every policy outcome to strategic culture.⁴

The debate over strategic culture continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Alistair Johnston, in a widely cited article, argued that a second generation of thinkers emerged who refined the first generation's thinking when it came to strategic culture. Second generation writers argued that strategic policies reflected the interests of elite decision-makers. From this perspective, strategic culture merely served to legitimise the preferences of the strategic community.⁵ Third generation writers, in contrast, viewed strategic culture as an independent variable that affected the behaviour of the policymaking community. From this perspective, culture was merely one factor among many that could influence strategic choices. The third generation's conception of strategic culture was less deterministic than that which had been proposed by first generation writers.⁶ In a spirited rejoinder, Colin Gray – a prominent first generation thinker – refined his earlier work about strategic culture. He sought to make strategic culture less deterministic by acknowledging that it was possible for policymakers to make counter-cultural decisions. He argued that strategic culture provided context; decision-makers, by being immersed in a particular constellation of values became, to use Gray's word, 'encultured'. Yet he also acknowledged that circumstances could conspire

³ J.L. Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture..."

⁴ A.I. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture", *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1995), pp. 32-64, esp. 37-38.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

to force decision-makers out of their comfort zone and lead them to make counter-cultural choices. Gray cited the example of Britain effectively abandoning its traditional maritime strategy by fielding a large continental army during the First World War as just such an example.⁷

Yet, while Gray's approach made his thinking less deterministic than the early first-generation writers, it still could not really satisfactorily account for radical changes in strategic thinking. In fact, as has been noted, one of the biggest weaknesses of all the different models of strategic culture outlined above is that they *do not allow for changes in strategic policy over the medium to long term – they suggest too much strategic-cultural continuity*.⁸ The most recent writers on strategic culture – who can be viewed as the fourth generation – have argued that it is possible for a community of decision-makers to be influenced by more than one culture. These writers have posited that there are subcultures that challenge a dominant strategic outlook. One writer, for example, has cited the example of Germany's two main political parties (the SPD and CDU) dropping their opposition to the use of military force beyond Germany's frontiers after the Cold War ended if it was for humanitarian purposes, and Germany was part of a wider international coalition.⁹ Similarly, another study has demonstrated that New Zealand's security policy shifted dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, with the traditional – that is, Realist – approach to security issues being gradually supplanted by an anti-militarist subculture that *looks for ways to resolve disputes by negotiation and diplomacy*.¹⁰ Tamir Libel has presented a particularly sophisticated view on the nature of the competition between rival subcultures. He argues that each subculture is often associated with an epistemic community; that is, a network of like-minded intellectuals and policy-practitioners. The subcultures promoted by these communities often find themselves in competition with one 'hegemonic' strategic outlook. Occasionally, one subculture will prevail against, and ultimately supplant, the hitherto hegemonic culture. There then results in a sudden overturning of strategic policy, in a manner analogous to a paradigm shift in the natural sciences.¹¹

By accepting the possibility of a plurality of subcultures, fourth generation writers seem to have overturned the rather more monolithic view of strategic culture associated with the first generation and have found a way of accounting for sudden shifts in strategic policy. There remains, however, a debate about how to ascertain the nature

⁷ C.S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context : The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1999), pp. 49-69, esp. 59.

⁸ A. Bloomfield, "Time to Move On: Reconceptualizing the Strategic Culture Debate", *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2012), pp. 437-461, esp. 438.

⁹ A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, "The Test of Strategic Culture: Germany, Pacifism and Pre-Emptive Strikes", *Security Dialogue*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2005), pp. 339-359, esp. 344-349.

¹⁰ D. McCraw, "Change and Continuity in Strategic Culture: The Cases of Australia and New Zealand", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 2 (2011), pp. 167-184, esp. 176.

¹¹ T. Libel, "Explaining the Security Paradigm Shift: Strategic Culture, Epistemic Communities, and Israel's Changing National Security Policy", *Defence Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2016), pp. 137-156, esp. 141-143.

and shape of the dominant culture among a community of policymakers. Culture, after all, is an inherently elusive concept that is resistant to the tools of positivist social science methodologies. Most writers have relied heavily on qualitative materials to acquire a sense of the worldviews and values that a community of policymakers appear to possess. These materials could well include official documents that have become publicly available, policymakers' speeches and statements, parliamentary debates and evidence provided (written and oral) to parliamentary committees, reports produced by think-tanks associated with the policymaking community, and articles and op-eds that have been written by officials and opinion-formers in newspapers and journals. This methodology requires a close textual analysis of what is being said in an effort to gain some understanding of the way a particular policymaking community sees the world and the kinds of threats that seem to preoccupy them.

Getting a sense of these values and worldviews is important because, if we accept Gray's formulation, they provide an all-important context in which decisions are made. Constructivist writers further argue that identity plays a vital role in relation to defining national interests. It has been argued: *Actors often cannot decide what their interests are until they know what they are representing – "who they are" – which in turn depends on their social relationships.*¹² In this regard, collective memory (that is, the population's shared sense of history) plays a critical role, among many other factors, in moulding national identity. Strategic culture, of course, develops from these national values and will strongly influence, for instance, how policymakers perceive other states; that is, *the identity of a state and its perceptions of other states' identities affects how it chooses its allies and its enemies.*¹³ It should also be noted that strategic culture *delegitimizes certain strategic options by placing them beyond these outside the borders of acceptable debate, [hence] the range of strategic possibilities open to states varies across strategic cultures.*¹⁴ This is especially relevant when one considers the range of options available to Polish policymakers.

POLISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY TRADITIONS

The starting point for any discussion of Poland's foreign policy is its geopolitical situation. As Norman Davies has observed: *All debates about Poland's international relations were dominated by her unenviable location between Germany and Russia.*¹⁵ At various junctures the different incarnations of either Germany or Russia (and sometimes both) have represented a major threat to the existence of the Polish state. Hence Poland's less

¹² R.L. Jepperson, A. Wendt, P.J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security", in P.J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York 1996, pp. 33-75, esp. 65.

¹³ A. Bloomfield, "Time to Move On...", p. 444.

¹⁴ A.I. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture", p. 40.

¹⁵ N. Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, Oxford 2001 (2nd ed.), p. 125.

than desirable geopolitical situation has obviously had a major influence on the foreign and security policies various Polish governments have adopted. Yet it is also important to note that while Poland's geopolitical situation provides an important context for these foreign and security policies, it does not determine them. Policymakers always have options. To be sure, these options may well be limited by the objective circumstances that confront them; but, to a greater or lesser degree, there is always some room for manoeuvre. The prevailing strategic culture, however, will go a long way towards influencing which options can be considered acceptable, and which are not worthy of serious consideration. There is no objective reason, for instance, why Poland's foreign and security policies should not be similar to those of Belarus. In other words, Polish policymakers potentially could recognise that Poland is part of Russia's sphere of influence, and that their policies would therefore largely accommodate Russian interests. Of course, one would be hard pressed to find a major Polish politician or official who would seriously advocate this approach. Indeed, it is striking that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, even former communists – who swiftly reinvented themselves as social democrats after the Cold War ended – were committed to the idea that Poland should become a member of both NATO and the European Union.¹⁶ The reason for this is that a pro-Russian policy in a free and independent Poland is deemed by the vast majority of Poles to be unacceptable.¹⁷ In other words, Poland's prevailing strategic culture virtually eliminates the possibility of a Polish government pursuing foreign and security policies that are favourable to Russian interests.

The perception of Russia as being irredeemably hostile to Polish interests is one of the most obvious continuities in Poland's strategic culture. This is not to say that there have been no changes in Polish-Russian relations in, say, the last century. There have certainly been periods when relations have been less strained than others. Indeed, one writer on Polish-Russian relations wrote (almost certainly before Russia's annexation of Ukraine) that the current state of relations between the two countries could be viewed as a *golden age*¹⁸ when compared with earlier periods. Yet even when relations between the two countries have been at their warmest, there has always been an underlying tension. This obviously is born out of the two countries' histories. As one authority has noted: *Over the centuries mutual vindications, irredentist claims, cultural chasms, incompatible value systems, religious and philosophic conflicts, and other historical grievances have created reciprocal suspicion, distrust, dislike, and, at times, hatred.*¹⁹ From the Polish vantage point, the history of Russia's involvement in Polish affairs has been one

¹⁶ A. Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in Search of Security*, Basingstoke 1995, pp. 39–40.

¹⁷ T. Zarycki, "Uses of Russia: The Role of Russia in the Modern Polish National Identity", *East European Politics and Societies*, 2004, R. Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy*, Edinburgh 2015, pp. 116–119.

¹⁸ K. Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, "Political Relations between Poland and Russia since 1990", in A.D. Rotfeld, A. Torkunov (eds.), *White Spots, Black Spots. Difficult Matters in Polish-Russian Relations, 1918–2008*, Pittsburgh 2015, pp. 539–556, esp. 540.

¹⁹ R. Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy*, p. 114.

of outright oppression. Events such as the Katyn massacre – the mass-killing of 22,000 Polish officers at the hands of the Soviet NKVD in April and May 1940 – are deeply embedded in Polish consciousness.²⁰ The experience of being absorbed into the Soviet Union's Eastern European empire for over forty years has also, to say the least, left a bitter legacy. Given the prevailing cultural environment, the notion of Poland being a friend, still less an ally, of the Russian Federation is not something that any policy-maker would seriously entertain. Ainius Lašas has convincingly argued that the governments of Poland and the Baltic states' responses to the outbreak of hostilities between Georgia and Russia in 2008 was largely driven by their shared *identity politics driven by historical-psychological legacies*, which compelled them to adopt a strong position against what they viewed as Russian aggression. These *historical-psychological legacies vis-à-vis Russia are principally associated with traumatic and painful experiences immediately before, during and after World War II*.²¹ This offers a good illustration of the way in which collective memory can significantly influence strategic culture and how policymakers respond to real world events.

Even the most cursory of glances at the history of Poland's foreign relations reveals, however, that there has not always been a consensus among policymakers about the particular security policies that should be pursued. There was certainly a debate during the interwar period, for instance, as to which of Poland's larger neighbours – Nazi Germany or the Stalin's Soviet Union – represented the greater threat to Poland's security. Marshall Piłsudski and his followers were profoundly suspicious of Soviet intentions, and therefore advocated limited collaboration with Germany. In contrast, Piłsudski's arch-political rival, Roman Dmowski, viewed Germany as the greater threat, and hence believed that Poland should reach out towards the Soviet Union.²² This illustrates that Poland's strategic culture in this period was not, to borrow Bloomfield's term, 'monolithic'.²³ There was clearly a debate within Poland's strategic community in relation to the state's foreign and security policies. Another, more recent, example can be found in the debate that took place within Poland's strategic community in the 1990s over the way that Poland's armed forces should be structured. Zaborowski and Longhurst have characterised the debate as being between those who advocated what they describe as *old world thinking* which emphasised the *primacy of national territorial defence*, and those who vouched for new world thinking *based on an aspiration to become a key member of NATO and most*

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 122-123.

²¹ A. Lašas, "When History Matters: Baltic and Polish Reactions to the Russo-Georgian War", *Europe – Asia Studies*, vol. 64, no. 6 (2012), pp. 1061-1075, esp. 1062-1063.

²² I. Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 68-69; N. Davies, *Heart of Europe...*, pp. 125-127.

²³ A. Bloomfield, "Time to Move On...", p. 439. But scholars still cannot agree on fundamental matters like what a strategic culture is and what it does. This article examines the debates about strategic culture at the philosophical level – especially the debate between Alistair Iain Johnston, who prefers a positivist approach, and Colin Gray, who champions interpretivism – and finds that most conceptual models suffer from one of two general problems (and some models exhibit both).

*favoured partner for the US in the region.*²⁴ In the late 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century ‘new world thinking’ seemed to gain ascendancy, as Poland’s armed forces participated in a number of overseas missions, including peacekeeping duties in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and as part of the ‘coalition of the willing’ invaded Iraq in 2003. In recent years, there has been a process of retrenchment, with the more traditional approach seemingly reasserting itself. This has been reflected in the so-called Komorowski Doctrine – named after the former Polish president, Bronisław Komorowski – in which *the Polish Armed Forces have shifted their focus from international operations to improving territorial-defence capabilities against traditional military threats.*²⁵ This more traditional approach to Poland’s foreign and security policies was reflected in the fact policymakers chose not to contribute Poland’s military forces to the NATO-led military intervention against Libya (Operation Unified Protector) in the spring of 2011.²⁶

More recently, it has been argued that the experience of the Second World War has distorted Poland’s strategic thinking in the post-Cold War period. The chief lesson that the bulk of Polish decision-makers took from the experience of the war was that Poland was incapable of defending itself and that it would need to rely on the assistance of allies.²⁷ This was obviously why membership of NATO was considered to be so important, because the Alliance provided Poland the security guarantee that policymakers had craved for decades. At least one writer has attacked this assumption and argued that potentially Poland’s armed forces would be able to counter effectively, at least in the initial stages, an armed attack from a neighbouring state (presumably Russia).²⁸ The above example attests that it is possible to discern distinct subcultures that may be willing to challenge dominant strategic policies. The next part of this article will consider what appear to the main elements of Poland’s contemporary strategic culture. The current government’s *National Security Strategy* will be the basis of assessing the strategic outlook of the current Polish administration.

POLISH STRATEGIC CULTURE AND THE 2020 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The most recent publication of Poland’s *National Security Strategy* reveals significant elements of how contemporary policymakers perceive the current international environment and how they accordingly define national interests. The report came out at

²⁴ M. Zaborowski, K. Longhurst, “America’s Protégé in the East? The Emergence of Poland as a Regional Leader”, *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 3 (2003), pp. 1009-1029, esp. 1025.

²⁵ T. Paszewski, “Can Poland Defend Itself?”, *Survival*, vol. 58, no. 2 (2016), pp. 117-134, esp. 125.

²⁶ Ch. Reeves, “From Intervention to Retrenchment: Poland’s Strategic Culture and the 2011 Libyan Campaign”, *Europe – Asia Studies*, vol. 71, no. 7 (2019), pp. 1140-1161.

²⁷ K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist: Poland’s Foreign and Security Policy Priorities*, Oxford 2007, p. 12.

²⁸ T. Paszewski, “Can Poland Defend Itself?”, p. 121.

an important moment in the formulation of Poland's national security policies. It has been argued that since the 2015 *parliamentary and presidential elections, Poland has reversed its consistently pro-European foreign policy, marking a radical departure from its post-1989 course.*²⁹ Instead, the government, led by the party Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*), has aggressively defended its sovereignty and dismissed any attempts at EU interference in what it regards as its internal affairs. The government's growing conflict with Brussels can be most clearly seen in the area of its judicial reforms.³⁰ Overall, there appears to have been a significant shift in the way that the current government defines Poland's national interests, and how it manages relations with its European partners as well as those states that it perceives as adversaries.

It is worth noting that the security picture in East Central Europe has markedly deteriorated over the last decade. The Russian annexation of Crimea – the first time since 1945 that a European power has unilaterally seized territory from a neighbouring state – has had significant consequences for the overall European security situation, and especially those states within the Central and East European neighbourhood. It deepened the schism between NATO and the Russian Federation to the point at which analysts have begun to talk of a Second Cold War.³¹ Unsurprisingly, the immediate reaction of the then Polish government to the events of the spring of 2014 was uncompromising when it came to condemning Russia's actions and calling for a robust response from its NATO allies.³² For those on the more conservative end of the spectrum in Polish politics, the annexation appeared to vindicate their warnings about the hostile intentions of the Russian government. The breach between Russia and the West is obviously directly linked to Russian actions in Ukraine. Yet it is also true *that many of the current tensions are rooted in historical, cultural and other factors that go further back in time.*³³

It is therefore interesting to assess the degree to which the current government's values and attitudes are reflected in the current *National Security Strategy* (hereafter referred to as 'the *Strategy*'), which was published in 2020. The introduction makes it clear that the current *Strategy* renders its predecessor, published in 2013, *null and void.*³⁴ It should be noted, however, that the 2013 document was significantly more detailed, with the report running to 263 pages, including appendices.³⁵ The 2020 version,

²⁹ K. Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn", *Survival*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2017), pp. 167-182, esp. 167.

³⁰ J. Dempsey, "Poland's Constitution Under Siege – Carnegie Europe – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace", *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, 2021, at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/84461>, 2 September 2021.

³¹ T. Karásek, "Between Pastiche and Sampling: NATO's Strategic Adaptation to Russian Revisionism", *Europe – Asia Studies*, vol. 72, no. 6 (2020), pp. 996-1009, esp. 997.

³² J. Zajęc, *Poland's Security Policy: The West, Russia and the Changing International Order*, London 2016, pp. 137-138.

³³ K. Åtland, I. Kabanenko, "Russia and Its Western Neighbours: A Comparative Study of the Security Situation in the Black, Baltic and Barents Sea Regions", *Europe – Asia Studies*, vol. 72, no. 2 (2020), pp. 286-313, esp. 288.

³⁴ *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland* (hereafter NSSRP), Warsaw 2020, p. 3.

³⁵ *White Book on National Security of the Republic of Poland*, Warsaw 2013.

in contrast, amounts to only 38 pages. The beginning of the 2020 *Strategy* clearly states that it is focusing on both the *internal dimension of national security* and the international environment that encompasses *bilateral relations, regional cooperation on a global scale and cooperation within international organisations*.³⁶ From the outset, therefore, the *Strategy* recognises that international institutions and multilateral co-operation are important elements when it comes to strengthening Poland's overall security situation. This then raises the question as to the degree to which the current government's policies – especially in relation to the European Union – are in accord with the *Strategy's* assessment.

The 2020 *Strategy* also appears compatible with the constructivist view that national identity is a critical factor in relation to how national interests are defined. It explicitly states that: *The Republic of Poland creates favourable conditions to pursue its national interests and achieve strategic objectives in the domain of national security in conformity with the following values: independence and sovereignty of the state, security of its citizens, human and civil liberties and rights, human dignity, justice, national identity and heritage, democratic rule of law, solidarity, international order based on the principles of international law and environment protection*.³⁷

Almost any EU state would subscribe to this set of values; there is, however, a debate as to whether all these values are wholly compatible with one another, and the degree to which the policies of the current government – notably *democratic rule of law* – reflect these principles.

The threat that Russian activities constitute for Poland's national security are unsurprisingly given a considerable amount of attention in the *Strategy*. The introduction states that the most serious threat that the Polish state faces is *the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, pursued also by means of military force*. It then cites the examples of Russian aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, arguing that these activities *have violated the basic principles of international law and undermined the pillars of the European security system*.³⁸ It further notes that: *The Russian Federation is intensively developing its offensive military capabilities (including in the western strategic direction), extending Anti-Access/Area Denial systems inter alia in the Baltic Sea region, including the Kaliningrad Oblast, and conducting large-scale military exercises, based on scenarios assuming a conflict with the NATO member states, a rapid deployment of large military formations, and even the use of nuclear weapons*.³⁹

This emphasis on Russia representing the single biggest threat to Poland's security is little different from how previous governments have viewed Russia. In other words, there has been a clear continuity over time in how successive generations within Poland's strategic community have perceived Russia. For obvious historical reasons, an

³⁶ *NSSRP*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

inherent feature of Poland's strategic culture is a deep distrust of Russian intentions. Russia's actions since 2008, and especially since 2014, have, of course, only served to reinforce this predisposition. That Russia looms large in Poland's strategic thinking also indicates that Poland's strategic community possesses a traditional (that is, Realist) conception of security. The military dimension of security, in that policymakers believe that there is a real possibility of Russia undertaking some form of military action against Poland, is a salient feature of the document.

Given the Russian Federation is judged to be the biggest threat to Polish security, the question that then needs to be addressed is how Poland should respond to this situation. Strategic culture plays an important role in shaping how strategic communities respond to security problems. The *Strategy* makes a distinction between those policies that the Polish government could undertake unilaterally, and those that need to be taken in a wider international framework. In terms of policies undertaken by the state itself, the document (unsurprisingly) places a great deal of emphasis on territorial defence. One of the most striking elements in the document is a commitment to spend about 2.5% of Polish GDP on defence by 2024,⁴⁰ which would make Poland, in relative terms, one of Europe's largest spenders on defence. The idea that Poland should rely heavily on its own resources to deter a potential act of aggression from Russia (or another external power) clearly fits into a traditional (that is, Realist) view of international relations. It certainly argues that Poland's armed forces need to be structured in a way that the operational capabilities of the armed forces are strengthened. The *Strategy* recommends several ways that this could be achieved, including *increasing personnel and equipment* and *adapting training programmes to respond in particular to the challenges presented by the modern multi-domain operational environment*.⁴¹ This can be taken as evidence that a policy of territorial defence, as opposed to a security policy that emphasises the expeditionary capabilities of the armed forces, is now being prioritised.

Aside from the regular armed forces, the *Strategy* also recommends a strengthening of the *Territorial Defence Forces, creating conditions for the development of common civic defence readiness in the territory of the whole country*.⁴² This includes giving part of the wider Polish population some training to resist this kind of aggression. In this area, it is not difficult to see a connection between Poland's experience during the Second World War and how that may well affect contemporary strategic thinking. The Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*) proved to be an effective resistance force during Nazi Germany's occupation of Poland; the *Strategy* appears to suggest that current policymakers feel that a similar approach could be adopted were a part of national territory to be seized by an external power. This does, however, raise several issues regarding the relationship between these defence forces and Poland's regular armed forces. Concerns have, for instance, been expressed that these Territorial Defence Forces do not fall

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p. 19.

directly under the chain of command of the Polish military, but instead come under the authority of Poland's Minister of Defence.⁴³

While the *Strategy* does adopt a traditional conception of Russia as a potential security problem, it also recognises that the nature of the threat has significantly changed because of technological innovation. It notes that *the Russian Federation carries out activities below the threshold of war*, describing them as having a *hybrid nature*. It mentions some of the activities that the Russian government has either instigated or at the very least encouraged, such as cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns.⁴⁴ The concept of hybrid warfare is relatively nebulous and is usually taken to cover a range of activities that fall below the threshold of a clear act of war. *In the low to medium-intensity ... end of the spectrum, "covert" or "irregular" means of influence, such as propaganda, subversion, infiltration and the use of proxies, will undoubtedly play a major role. In the high-intensity ... end of the spectrum, we may see more of an "overt" or "regular" use of military force.*⁴⁵ In the case of Ukraine, the full range of the spectrum has been employed, including Russia's deployment in Crimea of the so-called 'Little Green Men'; that is, unmarked Russian military personnel.⁴⁶ The *Strategy* also notes that the digital revolution has created new potential threats, not least the possibility of cyberattacks. It also acknowledges that it has created *room for disinformation and manipulation of information, which requires effective strategic communication activities.*⁴⁷ Consequently, the *Strategy* recommends strengthening those capabilities that *protect the information space (including systemic fight against disinformation) understood as the merging layers of space: virtual (the layer of systems, software and applications), physical (infrastructure and equipment) and cognitive.*⁴⁸ The *Strategy* indicates that there is a recognition within Poland's policymaking community that today's state faces several unconventional threats to its security, though there is relatively little detail regarding the concrete measures that need to be undertaken to respond to them.

The second pillar in the *Strategy* then discusses the various international institutions that also play a significant role in strengthening Poland's security. The *Strategy* reveals that the strategic community firmly believe in the importance of maintaining a rules-based international order and that various international institutions have an important role to play when it comes to strengthening Poland's security. The *Strategy* notes that: *The basic factor shaping Poland's security is its strong embedding in the transatlantic and European structures and the development of bilateral and regional cooperation*

⁴³ P. Taylor, 'Fort Trump or Bust?' *Poland and the Future of European Defence*, 2018, pp. 17-18, at <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FORT-TRUMP-OR-BUST-Poland-and-the-future-of-European-defence.pdf>, 2 December 2021.

⁴⁴ *NSSRP*, p. 5.

⁴⁵ K. Åtland, I. Kabanenko, "Russia and Its Western Neighbours...", p. 295.

⁴⁶ K. Marten, "Putin's Choices: Explaining Russian Foreign Policy and Intervention in Ukraine", *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2 (2015), pp. 189-204, esp. 189.

⁴⁷ *NSSRP*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

with key partners.⁴⁹ Elsewhere the document recommends working *towards strengthening of the transatlantic bond, political cohesion, solidarity, credibility and effectiveness of NATO and consolidate Poland's position within its structures.*⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the importance of transatlantic connection with Europe. NATO is seen as a critical dimension of Poland's security. This can also be seen as another area of continuity in Poland's strategic thinking. From the early 1990s, when Poland aspired to become a NATO member, the Atlantic Alliance has been viewed as the most effective means of ensuring Polish security. For obvious reasons, successive Polish governments have insisted 'on the importance of NATO's Article 5 and the credibility of security guarantees'; as a result, 'Poland has long been perceived by its Western partners as a country whose focus on collective defence amounts to something of an obsession.'⁵¹ In this area, the current policymakers are little different from any of their predecessors, which again reflects a strong continuity in strategic thinking.

Russian activities in relation to Ukraine and Georgia have raised questions about how NATO would respond to a similar incursion against one of its members. The Baltic states, notably, can be viewed as being particularly vulnerable to an incursion of this kind. All three are NATO members, but are also neighbouring states of the Russian Federation, and all three contain large Russian-speaking minorities. Russia's 'interventions in Crimea and Donbas' have clearly demonstrated 'that Russia considers it legitimate to intervene militarily on behalf of 'compatriots' who live outside Russia's borders. It has also raised questions about how NATO would respond to an incursion of this kind. Given that the previous American president even questioned whether NATO would necessarily respond were Montenegro – one of the newest and smallest of the Alliance's members – to be attacked,⁵² there is a strong likelihood that there would be significant divisions within the Atlantic community over how they should respond to a less overt act of aggression. Some form of territorial incursion against Poland seems less likely, though not impossible. Like the Baltic states, Poland shares a frontier with Russia (the Kaliningrad enclave). The Suwałki Gap, a narrow strip of land that separates Belarus from Kaliningrad, and which is the frontier between Lithuania and Poland, is seen as a particularly weak link in NATO's eastern defences.⁵³ Yet Poland is a significantly larger and more powerful state than its Baltic neighbours and lacks a Russian minority that the Kremlin could potentially exploit for its own purposes. Russian activities in the Baltic region are, nonetheless, a major concern for Polish policymakers. Poland is also located on the frontier of the Atlantic security community. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that successive Polish governments have wanted NATO's 'forward presence' in East Central Europe to be strengthened. The 2020 *Strategy* has also emphasised this point.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵¹ T. Paszewski, "Can Poland Defend Itself?", p. 117.

⁵² E. Sullivan, "President Questions NATO's Mission of Mutual Defense", *New York Times*, 19 July 2018.

⁵³ K. Åtland, I. Kabanenko, K. Åtland, I. Kabanenko, "Russia and Its Western Neighbours...", p. 298.

⁵⁴ *NSSRP*, p. 23.

A consistent goal of successive Polish governments has been to persuade its NATO partners – and especially the United States – to agree to the deployment of NATO troops on Polish territory. Indeed, the ‘Holy Grail’ of Poland’s national security strategy has been to persuade the United States to construct a military base on Polish territory. In the 2000s the Polish government reluctantly agreed to allow part of an American missile shield to be constructed on Polish territory on the grounds that it would at least ensure that there would be American boots deployed on Polish territory.⁵⁵ In the event, the Obama administration, shortly after it came to office, scrapped the proposal, deciding instead to pursue a sea-based missile shield.⁵⁶ The Polish objective was partially achieved when, during the 2014 Ukraine crisis, it was agreed at NATO’s Newport summit that forces would be deployed in Eastern Europe on a rotating basis. In 2016 at the Warsaw NATO summit this was further strengthened when the Alliance committed itself to an Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic region. As the *Strategy* notes, NATO’s shift in posture *has led to the strengthening of the allied policy of deterrence and defence, including through the presence of allied forces in Polish territory*.⁵⁷ More recently, the Polish government has floated the idea of a new military base in Poland. In September 2018, during a visit to the White House, President Duda suggested that ‘Fort Trump’ – an obvious attempt to appeal to the US president’s love of promoting his own brand – should be constructed on Polish territory.⁵⁸ While the American president was non-committal in response to this suggestion, Polish diplomacy succeeded in persuading the Trump administration to commit itself to an Enhanced Defence and Co-operation Agreement with Poland. The American Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, signed the Agreement with the Polish Defence Minister, Mariusz Blaszczak, on 15 August 2020. The Agreement stipulated, among other things, that Poland’s military facilities would be upgraded which would potentially allow for a substantial increase in the US military presence on Polish territory. Furthermore, Trump unilaterally announced the following year his decision to withdraw 9500 troops from Germany, largely to punish its government for spending significantly less on defence than the two percent of GDP that had been agreed at NATO’s Newport summit in 2014. The president indicated that half the troops would remain in Europe, but would be redistributed among other NATO European members. There were suggestions that at least some of these troops would be redeployed to Poland.⁵⁹ The goal of directly strengthening the American presence in Poland can be seen as another area of continuity in Polish strategic thinking.

⁵⁵ R. Kuźniar, *Poland’s Foreign Policy after 1989*, Warsaw 2009, p. 334.

⁵⁶ M. Fitzpatrick, “A Prudent Decision on Missile Defence”, *Survival*, vol. 51, no. 6 (2009), pp. 5-12.

⁵⁷ *NSSRP*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ P. Malinowski, „Baza USA w Polsce. Duda Proponuje Nazwę ‘Fort Trump’”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 2018, at <https://www.rp.pl/kraj/art1739981-baza-usa-w-polsce-duda-proponuje-nazwe-fort-trump>, 12 September 2021.

⁵⁹ T. Schultz, “What Poland Wants When It Comes to US Troops”, *Atlantic Council: New Atlanticist*, 2020, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-poland-wants-when-it-comes-to-us-troops/>, 14 September 2021.

The *Strategy* also refers to the role that European institutions play in contributing to Poland's security. It advocates seeking *greater involvement of the European Union in activities directed at improving security in the Eastern Neighbourhood* and striving to *maintain the enlargement policy within the European Union*.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the *Strategy* adds that the government should work to prevent divisions emerging among Member States and *engage constructively in the process of the European integration*.⁶¹ While these statements appear to reflect a clear continuity of thinking within Poland's policymaking community, the current government's actual policies appear at odds with these sentiments. In an address to Parliament in January 2016, the then Polish foreign minister, Witold Waszczykowski, seemed to present the EU as being *important mainly in terms of its cooperation with NATO, and as an instrument for influencing Poland's eastern neighbours*.⁶² Since 2015, moreover, it can be argued that the government's policies have, if anything, worked to undermine the cohesion of the European Union. The government, for example, has aligned itself closely with the United Kingdom, both before and after the 2016 British referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.⁶³ This can be taken as evidence that the Polish government was decidedly sympathetic to the idea of a Member State 'reclaiming' its sovereignty by withdrawing from the EU. This has inevitably provoked speculation about a possible 'Polexit'.⁶⁴ For the time being, this scenario seems relatively unlikely, not only because, unlike the UK, Poland is a large net recipient of EU funds, but also because public opinion in Poland remains relatively pro-European. Yet it is possible that this situation could change if the government continues to inveigh against EU interference in its internal affairs, especially in relation to its judicial reforms and immigration policies, and were the amount of funds that Poland receives from the EU drastically reduced, possibly as a result of Brexit.

The *Strategy* also stresses the value of subregional co-operation; that is, small groups of states within a larger region co-operating with one another. Several examples of subregional co-operation are cited, including 'the Bucharest Nine, the Visegrad Group, the Weimar Triangle, the Three Seas Initiative and collaboration with the countries of the Baltic Sea region'.⁶⁵ The Three Seas Initiative, mentioned in passing in the *Strategy*, is a relatively new instance of subregional co-operation. This involves a relatively disparate group of states located in Central and Eastern Europe, among whom there are significant divergences in attitudes towards both the European Union and the Russian Federation. The Initiative is designed to improve infrastructure within the region, and particularly North-South transport and communications links. Poland is the largest

⁶⁰ *NSSRP*, p. 24.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² K. Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn", p. 171.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

⁶⁴ A. Szczerbiak, "Should the EU Be Concerned about a Possible 'Polexit'?", *LSE European Politics and Policy Blog*, 2017, at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/84845/1/europpblog-2017-09-08-should-the-eu-be-concerned-about-a-possible.pdf>, 9 September 2021.

⁶⁵ *NSSRP*, p. 10.

and most influential state within the Initiative and in many ways it fits into a traditional element in Polish strategic thinking. In the interwar period, the Polish government adopted an approach that became known as the Intermarium initiative (or in Polish *Międzymorze*, literally 'Between the Seas'). This initiative envisioned Poland leading 'a unified block of countries spanning from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea that would serve to counterbalance Germany and Soviet Russia.'⁶⁶ The same motivation seems to largely underpin the Three Seas Initiative today, which could be taken as evidence of a particular subculture resurfacing in Polish strategic thinking. It has also been argued that the Initiative can be seen as being underpinned by an anti-EU motivation. It has been noted that several of the governments of the participating states – most obviously Poland and Hungary – have populist instincts that have resulted in conflict between them and the European Commission. Hence *this latest instance of subregional cooperation can be seen as being born out of impulses that have sought to challenge the Union's institutions and norms both from within and from outside.*⁶⁷ The fact that it also had the wholehearted support of the Trump administration, whose antipathy for the European Union – and especially Germany – was barely concealed, could also be taken as evidence that the Initiative was designed not so much to complement or strengthen the EU's security policies, but rather to provide an alternative to them.

Another area where Poland has played a strong leadership role has been the EU's Eastern Partnership. This was an initiative that arose out of collaboration between the Polish and Swedish governments. The Partnership was designed to strengthen the EU's institutional connections with six states in Eastern Europe, especially the expansion of the EU's Free Trade Area into the region. The Partnership deliberately adopted a position of 'constructive ambiguity' as to whether this should be seen as a first step in a process that might eventually lead to full membership of the European Union.⁶⁸ Not all the participating states – such as Belarus – were interested in full EU membership. Yet successive Polish governments have hardly concealed their desire for Ukraine to one day become a member of both the EU and NATO.⁶⁹ The current *Strategy* does not seem to depart significantly from previous governments' approach on this issue. It clearly recommends that the government should work to strengthen *the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, including support for their efforts to fulfil the European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations and engage in stabilisation activities in Poland's eastern neighbourhood, including within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.*⁷⁰ Successive Polish governments have encouraged and supported those figures in Ukraine who have advocated its integration into the

⁶⁶ K. Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn", p. 172.

⁶⁷ G. Grgić, "The Changing Dynamics of Regionalism in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of the Three Seas Initiative", *Geopolitics*, 2021, pp. 1-23, esp. 2.

⁶⁸ N. Copsey, K. Pomorska, "The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership", *Europe – Asia Studies*, vol. 66, no. 3 (2014), pp. 421-443, esp. 435.

⁶⁹ K. Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn", p. 170.

⁷⁰ *NSSRP*, p. 25.

EU and NATO. This was apparent during the 2004 Orange Revolution, where a *combination of realist, but also ideational, considerations explained Poland's vigorous support* for the opposition who challenged the legitimacy of Yanukovych's victory.⁷¹ Ten years later history appeared to repeat itself when Warsaw – along with Berlin and Paris – became directly involved in trying to defuse the political crisis that had erupted after President Yanukovych's decision not to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. Yet in recent years, relations between Poland and several states in the Eastern neighbourhood, notably Belarus and Ukraine, have been fairly strained. In the case of Ukraine, many of these tensions have arisen as a consequence of competing views about how Poles and Ukrainians were treated during the Second World War.⁷² It is far from clear how willing the current Polish government is to try and work around these difficulties in an effort to expand eventually the EU and NATO further eastwards.

There are at least two states which are conspicuous by their absence in the document. The first is China, which is only mentioned once in passing, and then only in the context of its growing rivalry with the United States.⁷³ Judging from the 2020 National Strategy, the current Polish government does not view Chinese activities as a major security problem. While obviously Russia represents a greater and more immediate threat to Polish interests, it is nonetheless striking just how little attention China receives in this document. Given that strategic culture in large measure influences which states are perceived as adversaries and those that might be viewed as being either neutral or partners, this would seem to be of some significance. Given that China is an emerging superpower, and that President Xi Jinping has hardly concealed his desire to expand Chinese influence across the world, China's absence in the 2020 *Strategy* is surprising. The other state that is notably absent from the 2020 *Strategy* is Germany. This is significant because after the Cold War ended, the reconciliation between Germany and Poland was a critical aspect of Poland's foreign policy in the 1990s. Germany played a major role in facilitating Poland's membership of both NATO and the European Union.⁷⁴ Certainly, the current government is less enthusiastic about Germany as a potential partner. Several disputes with Germany arose during the first period that PiS was in government, 2005-07, including how Germany commemorated aspects of their country's experience of the Second World War and calls from the Polish government for German reparations.⁷⁵ Other contemporary issues have created divisions between Berlin and Warsaw, such as Chancellor Merkel's decision to welcome refugees from the Near East and North Africa into Europe, and mounting concern in Berlin over the Polish government's judicial reforms. There has also been a great deal of concern in Warsaw over Nord Stream 2, the construction of a gas pipeline under the Baltic that connects

⁷¹ R. Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy*, p. 126.

⁷² J. Zając, *Poland's Security Policy...*, p. 149.

⁷³ *NSSRP*, p. 7.

⁷⁴ A. Cottey, *East-Central Europe...*, pp. 40-42.

⁷⁵ Ch. Reeves, "Reopening the Wounds of History? The Foreign Policy of the 'Fourth' Polish Republic", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2010), pp. 518-541, esp. 526-529.

Germany to Russia. Poland – and several other European states – are concerned that this will leave Central and Eastern Europe particularly vulnerable to Russian energy blackmail.⁷⁶ More recently, the Trump administration was also strenuous in its opposition to Nord Stream 2. The Biden administration, though initially opposed to the completion of the project, has since reached an agreement with Germany, a decision that has provoked much criticism both within Europe and the United States.⁷⁷ There is some evidence to suggest there may well be two rival strategic subcultures shaping the mental maps of Poland's strategic community regarding Germany's role in the European order. In 2011, at a time when the EU was reeling from both the financial and refugee crises, Sikorski – then Poland's foreign minister – controversially suggested that Germany should play a stronger leadership role, saying he feared 'Germany's power less than her inactivity'.⁷⁸ This suggests that he was keen to maintain the close Polish-German partnership that had been particularly salient during the 1990s and early 2000s. It can be argued that since 2015, this subculture has been supplanted by an alternative that perceives Germany as being inherently antagonistic to Polish national interests.⁷⁹

Poland's 2020 *National Security Strategy* adopts a broad conceptualisation of security. It covers the more 'traditional areas' that one would expect to see in a document of this kind, but it also includes other areas, such as protection of the natural environment and preserving national values, that fall beyond the traditional conceptualisations of national security. This obviously means that there is a danger that the conception of security is broadened to a degree that it *would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to any of these important problems*.⁸⁰ It is worth considering, however, which of these various dimensions are given the most weight in the document. One possible way of evaluating this is to see how much attention within the report is given to specific areas. When examining the document as a whole, the most attention is clearly given to military security. The first two pillars of the report, which largely deal with Poland's military capacity and the threats from external powers – chiefly the Russian Federation – account for over two-thirds of the document. In contrast, areas such as environmental protection, health and education are given relatively brief attention. Of the other, broader aspects of security, energy receives the most attention.⁸¹ This is unsurprising as Poland's dependency on Russian oil and gas has long been viewed as an area of vulnerability.⁸² Hence Nord Stream 2, from the Polish perspective, is regarded as being

⁷⁶ J. Dempsey, "Nord Stream 2 Is Germany's – and Europe's – Achilles' Heel", *Carnegie Europe: Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, 2021, at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/84704>, 8 September 2021.

⁷⁷ D. Fried, R. Morningstar, A. Simonyi, "Nord Stream 2: How to Make the Best of a Bad Idea", *Atlantic Council: New Atlanticist*, 2021, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nord-stream-2-how-to-make-the-best-of-a-bad-idea/>, 8 September 2021.

⁷⁸ R. Taras, *Fear and the Making of Foreign Policy*, p. 135.

⁷⁹ K. Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn", p. 174.

⁸⁰ Walt S.M., "The Renaissance of Security Studies", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 2 (1991), p. 213.

⁸¹ *NSSRP*, p. 8.

⁸² K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *The New Atlanticist...*, p. 61.

particularly problematic. Successive Polish governments have made considerable efforts to reduce their dependency on Russian energy supplies. The construction of Liquefied Natural Gas terminals is seen as an important step in this direction. Yet these efforts to diversify Poland's energy imports have to date yielded only limited results.

Climate change is a security threat that is, of course, inextricably connected to Poland's energy needs. Possible ways of reducing the country's dependency on Russian energy supplies might be to invest heavily in green technologies or in nuclear power. Yet the current government's commitment to tackling climate change is complicated by the fact that Poland is a major coal producer and that it is used for the bulk of its electricity generation – just under 70 percent in 2020⁸³. It is notable that the *Strategy* only explicitly refers to climate change once in the whole text, acknowledging that it *may cause dangerous and unprecedented weather anomalies (e.g. prolonged droughts), affecting vast areas of the country, as well as pollution and emissions of harmful substances, including those causing smog*. Yet the *Strategy* does not really present any concrete proposals for tackling this problem, other than stressing the need *to preserve all the functions of forests as one of the key elements of the ecological security of the state*.⁸⁴ Hence while the *Strategy* acknowledges that climate change is almost certainly an existential threat, there is clearly a mismatch between the text and the actual policies that the current government is pursuing. In this area at least, there appears to be an overlap with second generation thinking on strategic culture, which argues that there is often a 'radical delinkage' between the declared intentions of the strategic community and the implementation of particular policies.⁸⁵ Other, broader dimensions of security are also referred to in passing but are not dwelt upon at any length. These include observations about the need to improve the health of Polish citizens and to increase the resilience of the country's financial system.⁸⁶ Obviously, the ongoing pandemic has underscored the impact that infectious diseases can have, not only on the health of Poland's population but also their impact on the overall economy.⁸⁷ Yet there is an obvious disparity between the amount of attention that the report devotes to the more traditional aspects of security – over two-thirds of the text – and these other, broader dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the current Polish government's published *National Security Strategy* in an attempt to gain some understanding of the worldview and values of the strategic culture that infuse Poland's contemporary policymaking community. A 'fourth generation' perspective on strategic culture has been adopted; this view posits

⁸³ M. Jędra, *Energy Transition in Poland*, [s.n.] 2021.

⁸⁴ *NSSRP*, p. 9.

⁸⁵ A.I. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture", pp. 39-41.

⁸⁶ *NSSRP*, pp. 32-33.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

that strategic culture is not monolithic, and that while there might be one hegemonic strategic paradigm, there may well be several competing strategic subcultures that may well challenge at least elements contained within the dominant paradigm. In this sense, it would be wrong to view the 2020 *National Strategy* as a definitive statement on Poland's current strategic culture. Rather, it represents the current consensus among the most prominent figures within Poland's strategic community. It is quite possible that a strategic subculture could challenge and eventually weaken the hold of the current hegemonic paradigm. Arguably, in recent years a shift of this kind has been seen, with a move away from participating in multilateral overseas missions to a renewed emphasis on territorial defence. Furthermore, it is also possible that events – particularly some form of exogenous shock – could force the strategic community to radically reorient their policies.

An examination of the 2020 *National Security Strategy* reveals obvious continuities in Poland's strategic culture, in the sense that every Polish government since 1989 would agree with many of the views and policy objectives expressed in the document. As one brief survey of the *Strategy* has noted, there are *no major departures from its 2014 predecessor or traditional Polish security policy*, but there are, however, *shifts in tone and emphasis*⁸⁸. A state's strategic culture largely determines which states can be viewed as potential partners and which are viewed as adversaries. It is clear from the 2020 *Strategy* that the activities of the Russian Federation are viewed as the single biggest threat to Poland's national security. This is unsurprising and is the strongest element of continuity in Poland's strategic culture. The intensity of the threat that Russia represents has increased since 2008 as a consequence of the Russo-Georgian War and particularly Russia's incursions into Ukraine in 2014. Nonetheless, since 1989 every Polish government has viewed Russia as a potentially hostile state. The current Polish government has a reputation for having a particularly negative view of Russian intentions, and this may well also be reflected in the document. Similarly, the fact that the 2020 *Strategy* stresses the importance of international organisations – especially NATO – for strengthening Poland's security must be viewed as another area of continuity. The *Strategy* also adopts a relatively broad conception of security that encompasses not just the traditional military dimension, but other areas such as cybersecurity and even environmental security. It should be noted, however, that the bulk of the text focuses upon traditional security threats.

There are some areas where it may be possible to detect shifts in emphasis – but not, it should be stressed, any revolutionary changes – from previous government's views on security. The *Strategy* discusses the importance of national values and patriotism, which would seem to fit comfortably into the current government's desire to promote a 'historical policy'. The *Strategy* also emphasises the importance of co-operating with Poland's partners in both NATO and the European Union. It could be argued that there

⁸⁸ Ł. Janulewicz, "Poland's New National Security Strategy: The Potential for Regional Leadership, Co-operation and Cohesion on NATO's Eastern Flank", *RUSI Europe: Commentary*, 2020, at <https://rusieurope.eu/commentary/polands-new-national-security-strategy-potential-regional-leadership-cooperation>, 12 September 2021.

is something of a mismatch between the stated objectives of the *Strategy* and the actual policies that the current Polish government is pursuing. Controversies surrounding the government's judicial reforms and laws to regulate the Polish media, to give two examples, have served to increase tensions with several of Poland's European partners, particularly Germany. This is an indication that the government's radical domestic reforms could become a foreign policy problem. Critics may well argue that at a time when the security situation in the East is deteriorating, these controversies are putting unnecessary strains on Poland's relations with its key NATO and EU partners. This problem may well have been compounded by the new administration in the United States, which is decidedly less sympathetic towards Poland's governing coalition than its predecessor. On the basis of the 2020 *National Security Strategy*, it would seem that the current dominant strategic culture is reasonably entrenched and that it is unlikely that there will be a major reorientation in Poland's foreign and security policies in the near or even medium term.

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