

# The Flaws in the 2020 National Security Strategy: A Lack of Operational Concepts and Preparatory Priorities

On May 12, 2020, the Polish President approved a new National Security Strategy that replaced the 2014 Strategy<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, the new document resembles a development concept for the national security system, rather than a fully-fledged national security strategy.

## The Role of the National Security Strategy

The main purpose of the National Security Strategy is to determine conceptual foundations of organisation, preparation and the functioning of the national security system in peace and war, depending on the national interests and circumstances. Therefore, the implementation of the national security strategy ought to initiate the process of the state's strategic preparations as far as security issues are concerned.

Unfortunately, the new strategy seems to lack that function given that the document was approved at the end of the strategic cycle. The current government undermined the credibility of the 2014 strategy and denied its political aspects despite making various strategic decisions regarding the state's security by: modifying *the Political and Strategic Defence Directive of the Republic of Poland*<sup>2</sup>, implementing *Armed Forces Key Development Directions*<sup>3</sup> and the long-term plans regarding the development of Poland's Armed Forces<sup>4</sup>, introducing significant changes in the command and control system of the Polish Armed Forces<sup>5</sup>, and finally establishing a new branch of the Polish military. The aforementioned decisions had been made in the absence of new strategic foundations; therefore, the new strategy seems very derivative which shows that the government's approach to defence issues is deeply flawed<sup>6</sup>. Despite all recent developments, it is hoped that the 2020 document will initiate the next strategic cycle in the near future.

Regardless of the actual quality of the strategy, it is worth emphasising two major methodological flaws that might have a detrimental impact on the role of the document.

First, the 2020 strategy was approved without broader debate involving representatives of various political parties as well as non-governmental organisations and independent experts, which was one of the major principles of the *Strategic Defence Review*<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, the 2020 strategy ought to be perceived as a document reflecting the views of the ruling party instead of the state, which raises numerous questions regarding its future implementation if Law and Justice loses either parliamentary or presidential elections. Second, a new strategic cycle seems very unlikely given a number of decisions, including those related to the future of the Armed Forces, that have recently been made. Thus, the new strategy may suffer the same fate as its predecessor when it turns out that the ruling party does not need it anymore. It is worth noting that the 2014 Strategy has never been implemented due to the results of the 2015 general elections in Poland. The new strategy, however, may be doomed to failure due to the approach of the current ruling party, which seems to be focused on tasks and challenges that had been identified prior to the approval of the 2020 National Security Strategy.

### Structure of the National Security Strategy

The 2020 National Security Strategy differs considerably from the previous documents that were published in 2007 and 2014<sup>8</sup>. The aforementioned documents were based on four-stage strategic planning cycle of a politically independent state<sup>9</sup>: 1) identification of national interests as a basis for further analysis; 2) evaluation and analysis of the future security environment to determine major factors that can either support or impede the achievement of the state's objectives; 3) establishment of an operational strategy to determine how the national interests ought to be achieved; 4) establishment of a preparatory strategy to determine how the national security system should be changed to carry out key operational tasks.

The new document violates two principles of the strategic planning cycle. First, the Strategy begins with the review of Poland's security environment instead of identifying the state's national interests. It is unclear, however, why the authors decided to do so given that an independent country ought to shape its strategic thought based on its national interests<sup>10</sup>. In contrast, the strategic thought of the Polish People's Republic used to focus on the security environment rather than national interests for the prosaic reason that the communist Poland was not an independent state. The Polish People's Republic was strategically dependent on the Warsaw Pact, the national interests were irrelevant, and the

state had to follow objectives and tasks set by the Soviet Union. Despite that the 2020 document takes into consideration Poland's national interests, it is worth emphasising that they were not meant as a starting point for the new strategy. Second, the new document does not contain an operational strategy. The authors should have underlined the state's objectives and strategic tasks regarding threats, challenges, and opportunities related to Poland's security environment. Instead, the task-focused part of the document is limited almost exclusively to strategic preparations and the development of various components of the national security system. The document, however, fails to explain a number of crucial issues relating to state's security such as the ultimate purpose of the preparations; how the state ought to deal with potential threats and its priorities while facing a crisis; whether the state should prepare for unassisted defence in some scenarios; how to address hybrid threats and organise popular resistance in occupied territories etc. Given the aforementioned flaws, the 2020 National Security Strategy will be a very weak basis for developing or updating a *Political and Strategic Defence Directive*<sup>11</sup>.

The 2020 document can be divided into two parts: 1) diagnosis (assessment of the security environment and identification of values, interests, and strategic objectives); and 2) tasks (security pillars: security of the state and citizens; Poland in the international security system; identity and national heritage, socioeconomic development).

### Strategic Diagnosis

The Strategy begins with diagnosis of Poland's security environment. Given that the authors had not identified the state's national interests, this part ought to be perceived as a general review of strategic conditions related to almost all European countries. The authors do not analyse how the existing conditions could support or impede attempts to advance the Polish national interests, although such conclusions are essential to determine the final shape of the operational strategy. Perhaps the lack of the operational strategy in this document was a consequence of illogical approach to the relationship between national interests and the security environment. Despite these obvious flaws the authors accurately identified major challenges and highlighted Russia-related threats. The latter is of great importance not only in the context of the state's preparations, but also in terms of relations with NATO and Poland's allies. The document points out the significance of the security issues in NATO's and EU's eastern flank as well as internal threats relating to the EU and the North Atlantic Alliance. These conclusions are undoubtedly very important and ought to

be considered as an analytical basis for future contingency plans involving various political and strategic scenario<sup>12</sup>. Even though the authors pointed out hegemonic competition between the United States and China<sup>13</sup>, they failed to assess its impact on Poland's national interests.

Nevertheless, the 2020 Strategy accurately identifies all major trends and challenges in modern security environment such as hybrid threats (including hybrid warfare), the importance of cybersecurity and space exploration, development of unmanned vehicles, highly automated and computerised combat and support systems, growing significance of artificial intelligence, risks related to tactical nuclear weapons and the concept of nuclear de-escalation, and finally pandemic risks.

Despite the political narrative of the current ruling party, the new strategy maintains the gradation of Poland's external security pillars such as NATO and EU membership, strategic alliance with the United States, as well as regional cooperation. The latter is primarily based on the Bucharest Nine, which is considered the most efficient measure to coordinate and promote interests of the eastern flank within the framework of both NATO and the EU. It is worth pointing out that the Weimar Triangle is equally important, unfortunately, this format has been politically marginalised in recent years.

Despite that the strategy correctly identifies all key aspects of Poland's security environment, the authors neither attempted to draw potential future scenarios, nor analysed the impact of the evolving environment on Poland's security<sup>14</sup>. Possibly the lack of the scenarios is the major reason why the National Security Strategy does not attempt to formulate any operational strategy.

Moreover, the 2020 National Security Strategy pays very little attention to the identification of Poland's national interests and it remains unclear what methodology was applied by the authors. In the 2014 National Security Strategy, the security-related national interests were derived from the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which served as a basis for all definitions and typology (Figure 3.). Although the authors discuss Poland's national interests, they never refer to the Constitution. Consequently, it seems that another grave weakness of the document lies in purely arbitrary approach of the authors to the national interests.

### Objectives and Strategic Tasks

The task-related section of the Strategy is based on four pillars that embrace both objectives and tasks as far as the state's preparations and strategic actions are concerned. Given the aforementioned objectives, the pillars should have consisted of both an operational and preparatory security strategy. However, that is not entirely true when it comes to the 2020 document. The state's and citizens' security is the first pillar of the Strategy. The first strategic objective of the first pillar – national security management – seems to be of particular importance. The necessity of developing an integrated security management system has been signalled on a number of occasions<sup>15</sup>. The same objective was also approved in the National Security Strategic Review and included in the 2013 White Book on National Security<sup>16</sup>. Unfortunately, the development of the integrated security management system has neither been implemented nor included in the 2014 National Security Strategy due to the reluctance of successive governments to address this issues. Nevertheless, the National Security Bureau deserves praise for the inclusion of this task in the Strategy, along with the announcement of the presidential-governmental preparation of the Act on National Security Management. This task is of great importance given the complexity and dynamic developments in the field of international security. The development of the integrated security management system involves a number of processes including integration of defence-related management preparations, management and defence in times of war, integration of military and civilian defence planning (including civil defence), as well as coordination of those efforts at all levels of the administration. As far as the central government is concerned, it is necessary to establish an interagency coordination mechanism for the management of national security through setting up a national security committee of the Council of Ministers.

The state's resilience and common civic defence is the second objective of the first pillar. It is worth noting that the National Security Bureau started working on this objective in 2014<sup>17</sup>. The significance of the strategic resilience of the state has been underlined on a NATO forum as well<sup>18</sup>. The authors pointed out a number of tasks related to the second objective such as initiating common institutional defence preparations; increasing public awareness of security-related issues; improving the civil defence system, population protection system, and critical infrastructure system; and, finally, introducing a homogenous system of human resources management for national security purposes.

The third objective is focused on improving operational capabilities of the Polish Armed Forces. The National Security Strategy stipulates that Poland's defence spending ought to reach 2.5% of GDP by 2024, which – unfortunately – seems unrealistic given that the government had planned to reach that level of spending in the 2030s<sup>19</sup>. In light of the incoming economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the government's approval of that objective casts doubt on the importance of the 2020 strategy and may suggest that the ruling coalition perceives the document as non-binding.

Other tasks related to the development of the Armed Forces are included in a long and detailed description of all existing and planned programmes, including the technical modernisation; the strategy does not contain any new components in this matter. Unfortunately, this section of the document cannot be perceived as a "strategy". The authors should have pointed out the priorities of the Armed Forces development in the next decade. Such conclusions could subsequently be specified by the President and the government in the next planning cycle. However, it is unclear how the Armed Forces ought to be developed in the near future due to the aforementioned flaws of the document.

The other two objectives of the first pillar are related to cybersecurity and information space. The authors' decision to distinguish and emphasise these two issues is worth appreciating given that both cybersecurity and information space are crucial aspects of national security. Despite the significant progress in the field of cybersecurity<sup>20</sup>, it seems that the current administration renounced the idea of developing an information security doctrine<sup>21</sup>.

The situation of Poland in the international security system is the second strategic pillar of the National Security Strategy. The authors accurately pointed out that Poland's success in achieving security-related objectives ought to be based on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the European Union, as well as the Polish-American strategic partnership and regional initiatives. However, in order to formulate and specify major strategic priorities on this matter, the authors should have underlined major political dilemmas and challenges faced by NATO and the EU given the evolving threats and risks along the Alliance's eastern flank<sup>22</sup>.

The identity and national heritage constitutes the third pillar; however, the authors failed to address this issue as one of the principles of Poland's national security due to a limited number of tasks and poor-quality content. Undoubtedly, the national identity and the

willingness to be Polish are an important factor improving the state's security potential. Despite that the national identity has been shaped by the national heritage throughout generations, its current form also depends on the nations' social development. Therefore, it would be more efficient to consider this matter through a set of tasks and objectives as far as the social development is considered.

Social and economic development is the fourth and the last pillar of the strategy. This section contains tasks and objectives related to family protection, migration policy, economic and energy security (it makes little sense to distinguish these two categories given that the energy sector is part of the economy), protection of the natural environment, as well as scientific and technological potential. Surprisingly, the authors did not include any tasks related to national security education even though there is a general consensus that security education ought to be perceived as one of the principles in developing the security system of a democratic nation in the era of information revolution. This is an obvious oversight of the 2020 strategy. In the last section, the strategy emphasises that the verification and actualisation of the tasks can be conducted through national security reviews. This conclusion is quite justifiable, although it does contradict the approach to the development of the 2020 National Security Strategy.

### Conclusions

1. The 2020 National Security Strategy resembles a development strategy for the national security system, rather than a fully fledged national security strategy. The document does not contain an operational strategy – strategic objectives and tasks of the state in regard to threats, risks, challenges, and opportunities. Instead, the document consists of preparatory tasks and objectives and therefore ought to be perceived as a preparatory strategy.
2. Due to its flaws, the 2020 National Security Strategy cannot be perceived as a basis for developing (updating) a Political and Strategic Defence Directive. The document does not indicate any priorities as far as the preparatory tasks are concerned, since the authors failed to formulate a strategic plan. Each strategic pillar consists of a long list of various tasks; however, the authors should have prioritised them as well. Therefore, the 2020 Strategy cannot be used as a basis for determining the future development of the Armed Forces and other non-military aspects of the national security in the long run.
3. The 2020 Strategy is of little practical value as a starting point for a strategic planning cycle of the state. Therefore, the National Security Strategy may raise suspicions that the

actual objective of the document is to support the presidential campaign of the incumbent president. The allegations, if true, could suggest the downfall of strategic thinking in Polish politics, which may have a detrimental impact on the future of Poland's security.

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego RP* (Warsaw: BBN, 2020),

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<sup>2</sup> *POSTANOWIENIE PREZYDENTA RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ z dnia 29 grudnia 2018 r. o wydaniu Polityczno-Strategicznej Dyrektywy Obronnej Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,*

<http://www.monitorpolski.gov.pl/M2019000001501.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> „Prezydent określił główne kierunki rozwoju Sił Zbrojnych,” BBN,

<https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/wydarzenia/8565,Prezydent-okreslil-glowne-kierunki-rozwoju-Sil-Zbrojnych.html?search=518077544097>

<sup>4</sup> *Nowy Program Rozwoju Sił Zbrojnych przyjęty*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/nowy-program-rozwoju-sil-zbrojnych-przyjety>

<sup>5</sup> *USTAWA z dnia 4 października 2018 r. o zmianie ustawy o urzędzie Ministra Obrony Narodowej oraz ustawy o powszechnym obowiązku obrony Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,*

[http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc8.nsf/ustawy/2786\\_u.htm](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc8.nsf/ustawy/2786_u.htm)

<sup>6</sup> See: *Raport: Obronność Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej po trzech dekadach suwerenności* (Warsaw: Instytut Bronisława Komorowskiego, 2019), <http://bronislawkomorowski.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Raport-Obronno%C5%9B%C4%87-Rzeczypospolitej-Polskiej-po-trzech-dekadach-suwerenno%C5%9Bci.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Warsaw, 2014), p. 57, <http://koziej.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/SBN-RP.pdf> See: *Drugi Strategiczny Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego,*

<https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/wydarzenia/6838,Drugi-Strategiczny-Przegl%C4%85d-Bezpieczenstwa-Narodowego.html>

<sup>8</sup> See: Stanisław Koziej, Adam Brzozowski, „Strategie bezpieczeństwa narodowego RP 1990–2014. Refleksja na ćwierćwiecze,” in *Strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Pierwsze 25 lat*, ed. Robert Kupiecki (Warsaw: Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, 2015), <http://koziej.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Strategie-bezpiecze%C5%84stwa-1990-2014.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> See: *Biała Księga Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, (Warsaw: BBN, 2013), p. 19-23, [https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/Biala\\_Ksiega\\_inter\\_mm.pdf](https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/Biala_Ksiega_inter_mm.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See: Stanisław Koziej, *Interesy narodowe jako podstawa strategii bezpieczeństwa narodowego oraz kryterium akceptacji strategii sojuszniczych*, <http://koziej.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Interesy-narodowe.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Stanisław Koziej, Adam Brzozowski, „Strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego (państwa),” in *Podstawy bezpieczeństwa narodowego (państwa). Podręcznik akademicki*, ed. Jacek Pawłowski, (Warsaw: Akademia Sztuki Wojennej, 2017), p. 505-546

<sup>12</sup> See: Stanisław Koziej, „Polska bez NATO,” *Res Publica Nowa*, „Pamięć i bezpieczeństwo,” No 229, 3/2017.

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[https://pulaski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pulaski\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_Nr\\_02\\_20-1.pdf](https://pulaski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Pulaski_Policy_Paper_Nr_02_20-1.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Stanisław Koziej, *The U.S. and China: The rivalry escalates*, Geopolitical Intelligence Services, March 5 2020, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/the-us-and-china-the-rivalry-escalates,defense,3155.html>

<sup>14</sup> See Stanisław Koziej, „Ewolucja i scenariusze kształtowania się środowiska bezpieczeństwa europejskiego,” in *Bezpieczeństwo Europy w globalnym świecie. Szanse i zagrożenia przyszłości w warunkach przesilenia cywilizacyjnych*, ed. Jerzy Kleer, Konrad Prandecki, (Warsaw: PAN, 2018), p. 280 – 309, <http://koziej.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Koziej-Ewolucja-i-scenariusze-%C5%9Brodowiska-bezp.pdf>

Stanisław Koziej, *Nowa zimna wojna na wschodniej flance – scenariusze dla rozwoju środowiska bezpieczeństwa państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Pulaski Policy Paper, No 3, 2019, <https://pulaski.pl/pulaski-policy-paper-s-koziej-nowa-zimna-wojna-na-wschodniej-flance-scenariusze-dla-rozwoju-srodowiska-bezpieczenstwa-panstw-europy-srodkowo-wschodniej/>

<sup>15</sup> See Stanisław Koziej, *Między piekłem a rajem. Szare bezpieczeństwo na progu XXI wieku*, (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2006), p. 283-324

<sup>16</sup> *Biała Księga Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego*, (Warsaw: BBN, 2013, p. 194-202

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<sup>17</sup> *Koncepcja systemu strategicznej odporności kraju na agresję*, <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/prace-biura/glowne-inicjatywy/lata-2010-2015/koncepcja-strategicznej/6059,Koncepcja-systemu-strategicznej-odpornosci-kraju-na-agresje.html>

<sup>18</sup> *Commitment to enhance resilience. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, 8-9 July 2016*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133180.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>19</sup> *Ustawa o przebudowie i modernizacji technicznej oraz finansowaniu Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, <https://www.lexlege.pl/ustawa-o-przebudowie-i-modernizacji-technicznej-oraz-finansowaniu-sil-zbrojnych-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej/>

<sup>20</sup> *Doktryna Cyberbezpieczeństwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, (Warsaw: BBN, 2014), <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/DCB.pdf>. *Strategia Cyberbezpieczeństwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej na lata 2019–2024*, <https://cyberpolicy.nask.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Strategia-cyberbezpiecze%C5%84stwa-rp-na-lata-2019-2024.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> *Doktryna Bezpieczeństwa Informacyjnego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (projekt)*, BBN, Warszawa 2015, [https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/Projekt\\_Doktryny\\_Bezpieczenstwa\\_Informacyjnego\\_RP.pdf](https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/Projekt_Doktryny_Bezpieczenstwa_Informacyjnego_RP.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> See Stanisław Koziej, *Obrona strategiczna NATO w warunkach hybrydowej zimnej wojny*, Pulaski Policy Papers, No 6, 2019, [https://pulaski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Pulaski\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_Nr\\_06\\_19.pdf](https://pulaski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Pulaski_Policy_Paper_Nr_06_19.pdf) -

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