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The security of the Republic of Poland and the war in Ukraine in contemporary leftist thinking in Poland**

Bezpieczeństwo Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i wojna na Ukrainie w myśli politycznej współczesnej lewicy w Polsce

Abstract: The subject of the article is the security of the Republic of Poland and the war in Ukraine in contemporary Polish left-wing thought, represented primarily by the Democratic Left Alliance and the New Left. The security of citizens is the basic determinant of *raison d'état* and at the same time a key challenge for authorities. The study covered the 21st century because it brought a change in 1) the international system – the Russian Federation questioned the post-Cold War order, 2) lowering the level of security in Central and Eastern Europe, and 3) bringing new challenges for Poland after Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. The cognitive purpose of the article is the assessment of the international environment and threats to Poland made by the Left, as well as the postulated model of security, political and military security, and – in the context of the war in Ukraine – the attitude to the actions of the Polish authorities after 24 February 2022. It should be emphasized that the social democratic movement is a political environment that hopes to take political power in Poland after the expected electoral success in the autumn of 2023. The position of the Left on key matters for state security is interesting not only for researchers but also has a utilitarian meaning.

Keywords: state security, security model, political and military alliances, army
Streszczenie: Przedmiotem artykułu było bezpieczeństwo Rzeczypospolitej i wojna na Ukrainie w myśli politycznej współczesnej lewicy w Polsce, reprezentowanej przede wszystkim przez Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej i Nową Lewicę. Bezpieczeństwo obywateli jest podstawowym wyznacznikiem racji stanu, a jednocześnie kluczowym wyzwaniem dla rządzących. Badaniem objęto wiek XXI, gdyż przyniósł: 1) zmianę systemu międzynarodowego – Federacja Rosyj-

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ska zakwestionowała ład w wersji postzimnowojennej, 2) obniżenie poziomu bezpieczeństwa w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, 3) uwidocznienie nowych wyzwań dla Polski, przede wszystkim po rozpoczęciu pełnowymiarowej wojny przez Rosję przeciwko Ukrainie.

Celem poznawczym były dokonywane przez lewicę oceny środowiska międzynarodowego i zagrożeń Polski, postulowany model bezpieczeństwa, bezpieczeństwo polityczne i militarne, a w kontekście wojny na Ukrainie stosunek do działań władz RP po 24 lutego 2022 r. Należy podkreślić, że socjaldemokracja jest środowiskiem politycznym, które ma nadzieję na objęcie władzy politycznej w Polsce po spodziewanym sukcesie wyborczym jesienią 2023 r. Stanowisko lewicy w kluczowych dla bezpieczeństwa państwa sprawach jest nie tylko interesujące dla badaczy, ale też ma znaczenie utylitarne.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo państwa, model bezpieczeństwa, sojusze polityczne i militarne, armia

Introduction

The security of the state and its citizens is (commonly) the foundation of their *raison d'état*. It is also a key challenge for those in power. With regard to external security, this includes values that are essential to the citizens of the State, including sovereignty, territorial integrity, national identity, political independence, and diverse development that offers the opportunity for continuous improvement of quality of life for that society. In view of the war in Ukraine, territorial integrity and political independence are undoubtedly of key importance, as they are necessary to preserve the physical substance of citizens and a chance to fulfil the rest. In this context, the basic task of the state and the entire political class is to identify and eliminate threats to these primary values.

The subject of the research was one of the political entities in Poland, that is, the Left, most notably represented by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and, since 2020, by the New Left (Nowa Lewica). The Left party governed Poland from 1993-1997 and 2001-2005. In the 9th Sejm, it is part of a coalition of left-wing deputies, which includes the New Left and Together (Razem). New Left politicians hope they will take power by autumn 2023, following elections that will likely favour opposition groups. It is, therefore, important to know where they stand on key national security issues, not only for research purposes but also for practical reasons.

The 21st century has brought changes in at least three areas: (1) the international system, as the Russian Federation has challenged the post-Cold War order; (2) the lowering of the level of security in Central and Eastern Europe, revealing the weakness of the will of West-

ern European politicians and the military will of the European Union, which could already be observed in 2008 after Russia attacked Georgia when the position taken at that time was “soft”; (3) the emergence of new challenges for Poland, especially after Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine.

The subject of the research and the cognitive objective is the Left’s assessment of the international environment and threats to Poland in the context of the war in Ukraine, its views on political and military security, and its attitude towards the actions of the Polish authorities following 24 February 2022.

It should be said that the Left was a political environment that had as its basis both liberal and realist theories of international security. The former were visible in the definition of state power, seen primarily in asymmetric interdependence, rather than military potential¹. It is typical of these views to perceive relations between states as a possibility for cooperation as well as to avoid referring to the category of enemies in the global context, to favour adversaries², or to prefer soft power measures in the implementation of foreign policy³. In contrast, elements of the realist theory could be found in the perception of NATO as a guarantor of Polish security and the United States of America (hereinafter referred to as the US) as a strategic ally with a real possibility of helping Poland.

In the first years of its existence, the policy towards the East was also influenced by the concepts of the past. In particular, the assumptions made in the Polish-émigré literary-political magazine “Kultura” were accepted by other political circles as well⁴. The coupling of the

1 J. Czaputowicz, *Kryteria bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego państwa – aspekty teoretyczne*, [in:] S. Dębski, B. Górka-Winter (eds.), *Kryteria bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego państwa*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 26-28; idem, *Bezpieczeństwo w teoriach stosunków międzynarodowych*, [in:] K. Żukrowska (ed.), *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe – przegląd aktualnego stanu*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 69-71, 82-83.

2 According to the SLD, security policy is the ability to recognise “who is a friend, who is an enemy, who we are with, who we are not with, and where the real potential threats are”. Briefing by the Government on the provisions of the Accession Treaty and the responsibilities arising therefrom, 11 April 2003, [https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Stenogramy4.nsf/o/C5D2E8C5E1F1627DC1258967004549E8/\\$file/045.pdf](https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Stenogramy4.nsf/o/C5D2E8C5E1F1627DC1258967004549E8/$file/045.pdf) [22.03.2023].

3 J. Sanecka-Tyczyńska, *Racja stanu we współczesnej polskiej myśli politycznej 2001-2015*, Lublin 2018, pp. 305 et seq.

4 See the concepts put forward by the magazine in: P. Kowal, *Testament Prometeusza. Źródła polityki wschodniej III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw 2018, passim.

Promethean and Giedroyc traditions with the liberal trends in the West at the time was reflected in the policy of the Polish state under the SLD and the presidency of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, in the form of Poland's involvement in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine but also in "exporting democracy" to Belarus and supporting democratic reforms in Georgia, which clearly condemned Poland to conflict with Russia and was in line with the interests of the US.

1 Polish security assessment

Following the lead of other political groups, the Left, too, has had to address the security of the state in the international environment. Analysis of the political thinking of social democratic parties operating in Poland regarding the assessment of threats and Poland's external environment showed that until 2022, the Left considered Poland a safe country, both because of the (asymmetric) nature of threats and its NATO membership. At the same time, it was noted that "the moment of transition from peace to war is blurred nowadays"⁵.

Left-wing politicians, unlike the post-Solidarity parties, failed to notice any threat from Russia for a long time. They believed that a partnership-based cooperation free of ideological and historical burdens was possible. While Russia's measures to restore its superpower status were seen as obvious, it was deemed impossible that it could rebuild the empire. The change in Russia's international role after the collapse of the USSR was supposed to be permanent⁶. The threat was also overlooked in the cooperation of Western European countries with Rus-

5 *Strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z 2003 roku*, Warsaw 2003, pp. 4-5; T. Iwiński, The statement in the discussion on the draft act amending the act on the general obligation to defend the Republic of Poland, 28 August 2014, https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=67&dzien=2&wyp=114&type=P&symbol=WYPOWI EDZ_POSLA&id=134; The statements during the discussion following the briefing by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Poland's foreign policy in 2014, 8 May 2014: L. Miller, https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=67&dzien=2&wyp=90&type=P&symbol=WYPO WIEDZ_POSLA&id=246, and T. Iwiński, https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=67&dzien=2&wyp=114&type=P&symbol=WYPOWIEDZ_POSLA&id=134 [11.05.2021].

6 W. Cimoszewicz, *Polska w zamięcie świata*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 12-13 June 2004, no. 136, p. 10; see more in: M. Rydel, *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość oraz Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – dwie oceny międzynarodowej roli Rosji*, [in:] A.R. Bartnicki, E. Kuźelewska (eds.), *Wschód w globalnej i regionalnej polityce międzynarodowej*, Toruń 2009, pp. 123 et seq.

sia, even at the expense of Ukraine⁷. Russia's cooperation with other democratic states was assessed positively and regarded as beneficial for the security of the Republic of Poland. It was rather the isolation of Russia that could pose a threat. The SLD criticised the construction of the Northern Gas Pipeline for its bilateral nature and for bypassing Poland, yet when it became clear that the pipeline was going to be constructed anyway, it proposed that the Polish gas pipeline network be included in the European network and that it be connected to the Northern Gas Pipeline. At the time, no one thought about the far-reaching consequences of the EU's energy dependence on Russia. Raw materials and resources were not an object of SLD policy.

On the other hand, it was noted in numerous documents and statements by leaders of later years that Russia had violated international law by attacking Georgia in 2008. At the same time, however, the statement of the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, of 12 August in Tbilisi, in which he warned the assembled leaders of neighbouring countries against Russia, was regarded as an example of Anti-Russian sentiment and fear-mongering among Poles and the world as a whole⁸. Following the events of 10 April 2010, left-wing politicians believed that mutual relations should not be dominated by the issue of the Smolensk disaster and the return of the aeroplane wreckage. After Russia's annexation of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts and Crimea (2014), the postulate of improving Polish-Russian relations based on economic interests and cultural exchanges was repeated⁹. The Left's assessment of the international environment was consistent. In this matter, the Left adapted to the trends in the world: on the one hand to the US policy towards Russia, which took the form of a reset under Barack Obama, and on the other hand to the EU, based on multi-dimensional cooperation, which was the primary interest of Germany.

In 2021, there was a noticeable change, which was reflected in the (Left's) programme documents. The New Left decided that Russia

7 *Kłótnia polska: rozmowa A. Michnika i P. Smoleńskiego z L. Millerem*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 22-23 June 2002, no. 144, p. 10.

8 "Today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the Baltic States the day after tomorrow, and then perhaps the time will come for my country, Poland". L. Kaczyński, The statement in Tbilisi, 12 August 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEhJ-5xIJtg>.

9 *Godne życie, sprawiedliwa i nowoczesna Polska. Deklaracja ideowo-programowa SLD*, Warsaw, 12 December 2015.

“does not adhere to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity and cannot be treated in the same way as any other partner in international relations”¹⁰. Although this new situation did not pose a direct threat to Poland, the direct military action Russia took against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was assessed by the Left as a violation of the international order and a threat to peace¹¹. It treated Russia as an aggressor and declared that any talks would be futile because the agreement would not be honoured, and that hopes that Russia would change were illusory because this country would not shed its super-power ambitions¹².

In April 2023, the New Left clearly recognised that Russia’s imperialist policy was a threat to peace¹³. Its position on the desired security policy of the Polish state was determined by the slogan uttered by MP Marcin Kulasek on 24 February 2023 at the “Security and Cooperation” conference: “If you want peace, prepare for war” and that it was necessary to “prepare for the worst”¹⁴.

2. The international order as well as political and military alliances

Like other parties, the Left also saw the basis for Polish external security in the international security order, political and military alliances, as well as special alliances. For SLD, international cooperation and alliances were fundamental and instrumental for global security. What little was said before Russia seized Crimea showed that leftists,

10 *Przyszłość jest teraz. Priorytety programowe Nowej Lewicy. Materiał do dyskusji. Kongres Nowej Lewicy*, Warsaw, 9 October 2021, p. 38.

11 *Lewica: Polsce nie grozi atak Rosji, Polska jest bezpieczna. To jest sytuacja na dziś* [Left: Poland is under no threat from Russia. Poland is safe. That is how things stand today], <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1134925%2Clewica-polsce-nie-grozi-atak-rosji-polska-jest-bezpieczna-jest-sytuacja-na> [29.03.2022].

12 A.M. Żukowska, The statements in “Śniadanie u Rymanowskiego”, *Polsat News*, 3 April 2022 and 30 April 2023, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2022-04-03/sniadanie-rymanowskiego-w-polsat-news-i-interii-ogladaj-od-0955>; https://www.polsatnews.pl/wideo-program/sniadanie-rymanowskiego-w-polsat-news-i-interii-30042023_6822731 [2.05.2023].

13 Cf. A. Dziemianowicz-Bąk, Statement in “Graffiti”, *Polsat News*, 12 April 2023, https://www.polsatnews.pl/wideo-program/graffiti-agnieszka-dziemianowicz-bak_6819381/ [2.05.2023].

14 *Bezpieczeństwo i współpraca*, 24 February 2023, <https://klub-lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/2457-kompleksowy-plan-wzmocnienia-bezpieczenstwa-polski-konwencja-bezpieczenstwo-i-wspolpraca> [13.04.2023].

seeing a crumbling old order¹⁵, were in favour of a multipolar (multilateral) order and were placing their hopes on a reformed United Nations. Although they considered the US as a strategic partner, the Left did not endorse the view of a unipolar world. The greatest threat to world peace for the SLD was the imbalance of power¹⁶. Because it implied collective responsibility for maintaining peace, a collective international order was seen as the best solution. Yet this crucial security issue received little attention.

Two instruments of the new order can be identified from the sources of SLD political thought: 1) international law, which is compatible with the legal systems of the nation-states, especially in the fields of trade, human rights, and the environment; 2) existing and newly created international institutions, which assume some of the rights of the nation-states¹⁷.

It should be noted that although the collective system reflected the nature of contemporary international relations, characterised by pluralism and polycentrism, and was, therefore, natural for the left-wing formation, it failed to address the pillars of the collective order and its possible consequences for Poland. The Left, however, ignored the historical lessons of the security systems that existed in the history of the modern world. The two variants of the collective security system that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, while designed to maintain peace, posed a threat primarily to small states and those in Central and Eastern Europe. Their creation resulted in the emergence of the Concert of Europe and particular areas of influence. Pursuing their interests, the founders of the system were keen on maintaining the existing status quo, i.e., de facto, peace. In two cases, however, this ultimately led to war¹⁸.

15 The Left used the term "order", not "system". The concept of an international system corresponded to the realist theory of international relations. One of its components is the system of security. See B. Buzan, R. Little, *Systemy międzynarodowe w historii świata*, Warsaw 2011, passim.

16 A.D. Rotfeld (Foreign Minister), Speech containing government information on Polish foreign policy in 2005, 21 January 2005, <http://orkaz.sejm.gov.pl/Debata4.nsf/main/53CA9313>.

17 *Lewica dla Polski. Materiał opracowany z okazji Kongresu Polskiej Lewicy przez Radę Polityczno-Programową Sojuszu Lewicy Demokratycznej z udziałem partii, organizacji i związków zawodowych, które zadeklarowały udział w Kongresie Lewicy Polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Printshop, [2013], pp. 80-81.

18 Cf. W. Paruch, K. Trembicka, *Typologia systemów bezpieczeństwa w XIX i XX wieku*, Lublin 1996, pp. 47-48; W. Paruch see *II Debata czasopisma "Myśl Polityczna. Political Thought" pt. Polityka wschodnia we współczesnej polskiej myśli politycznej*, "Myśl Polityczna" 2020, no. 4, p. 91.

A possible third historical option is that of a concert of forces, including entities capable of acting as creators such as the United States, European Union, Russia, China, and maybe Japan. It would thus be a kind of pentarchy¹⁹. If the collective system were to work, there would have to be a mechanism leading to the formation of the real equality of the superpowers as well as a platform for cooperation, i.e., an organization and structures enabling joint action to prevent and defuse conflicts, to stimulate transformation, to agree on common interests, and to satisfy particular interests.

The Left was more alliance-oriented. Poland was allied mainly with states interested in stability and peace in Central Europe²⁰. In its security policy, the Left relied on three assumptions: 1) the Polish presence in NATO and the alliance with the United States as the first and basic pillar of security, 2) the presence in the EU as the second pillar and the future common foreign and security policy, 3) the Polish army and the development of the Polish arms sector. This was complemented by a foreign policy that sought to promote good relations with neighbouring countries and the Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the former USSR, particularly Ukraine, as well as democracy in the east. The Left, which had long been in opposition, emphasised global economic and social security in its political manifestos²¹.

- 19 See P. Kennedy, *Mocarstwa świata. Narodziny – Rozkwit – Upadek. Przemiany gospodarcze i konflikty zbrojne w latach 1500-2000*, Warsaw 1994, p. 428. However, it is difficult to see how they can cooperate harmoniously with each other: 1) the EU is not a state-like body, there are differences of interests between its members and it is unknown what its further development will mean for individual partners; 2) most of them were taken over by the USA and Russia, which claimed to be the successor of the USSR and took over a part of its strategic commitments; 3) the inability to agree on a catalogue of values to be jointly realised by the concert of powers. Under the heading 'Fostering Partnerships', the 2009 SLD manifesto listed the USA, Russia, China, and India alongside the EU. Cf. *Po pierwsze człowiek. Nowy kierunek dla Europy*, Rada Krajowa SLD, 2009, pp. 57-58.
- 20 Government information on the participation of the Polish military contingent in the composition of the forces of the international coalition to enforce Iraq's compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution, 26 March 2003, pp. 11 et seq., [https://orkaz.sejm.gov.pl/Stenogramy4.nsf/0/4D773E0D96E93231C1258967004549E4/\\$file/044.pdf](https://orkaz.sejm.gov.pl/Stenogramy4.nsf/0/4D773E0D96E93231C1258967004549E4/$file/044.pdf) [23.05.2023].
- 21 L. Miller, The statement in the debate following the briefing by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2015, 23 April 2015, https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/wypowiedz.xsp?posiedzenie=91&dzien=2&wyp=41&type=P&symbol=WYPOWIEDZ_POSLA&id=246 [12.05.2023].

For the Left, NATO was the only real defence system of the West²². Its power and efficacy were contingent on the participation of the USA. In the dispute that emerged at the beginning of the 21st century over how to make NATO work, the Left chose to expand its functions, i.e., to side with the so-called globalists, who wanted to increase the Pact's involvement in stabilising the international situation on a global scale and assume greater responsibility in this area. There was no question about the need to carry out the existing tasks of collective defence; however, it was recognised that, given the low probability of armed aggression against member states, the Alliance should focus on activities that would shape the international order and prevent new threats in geographically distant regions, not only in the vicinity of the treaty area²³. According to the SLD, preserving NATO's traditional functions would be the "beginning of the end" of the American presence in Europe, since it was believed that the US saw Europe only as a partner in combating global threats, and not as a potential victim of armed aggression requiring care and guarantees²⁴. Among the political parties in Poland, this position was isolated. Law and Justice (PiS), the Polish People's Party (PSL), Civic Platform (PO), and Self-Defence (Samobrona) were in favour of the Pact, which first and foremost fulfilled its basic function – to protect the territory and population of the signatory countries in their immediate neighbourhood, whereas global security and stability were of a lower priority²⁵. Moreover, the Left favoured NATO cooperation with Russia²⁶.

Cooperation within NATO was to be complemented by a strategic alliance between Poland and the USA²⁷. When in power, the SLD chose a foreign policy model based on the theory of bandwagoning, rightly recognising that only the United States of America, with its presence in Europe and its military potential, had the ability to really help in the

22 J. Oleksy, *Przemiany we współczesnym świecie wyzwaniem dla lewicy społecznej*, [in:] *Socjal-demokratyczna alternatywa: kapitalizm na zakręcie, lewica na prostej. Materiały do dyskusji*, Warsaw 2012, p. 11.

23 Cf. B. Górka-Winter, M. Madej, *Wstęp*, [in:] B. Górka-Winter (ed.), *Stanowiska państw członkowskich NATO w pracach nad nową koncepcją strategiczną*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 7-8.

24 A.D. Rotfeld, op. cit.

25 J. Sanecka-Tyczyńska, op. cit., p. 404.

26 W. Cimoszewicz, *Polska racja stanu a nowe środowisko międzynarodowe*, "Roczniki Polskiej Polityki Zagranicznej" 2003, pp. 28-29.

27 *Kto jest dziś prawdziwym sojusznikiem Polski?*, <https://www.tygodnikprzeglad.pl> [10.07.2017].

event of a threat. The orientation towards the USA was constant. The Left pursued a pro-American policy, as shown by (1) the US military support in Iraq in 2003, without the consent of the United Nations, (2) the involvement in Ukraine in 2004. The involvement of all significant political circles in Poland in the Orange Revolution was, on the one hand, intended to support the USA and, on the other, to implement the project of spreading democracy in the East, based on the reception of the Parisian concept of “Kultura”, and (3) accepting the US policy towards Poland and Ukraine in 2022 and 2023 and fearing a change of government after the elections in autumn 2024, which could mean a correction of the policy towards Central and Eastern Europe.

While the strategic alliance with the United States was a constant for the Left, attitudes towards building military infrastructure and deploying Alliance troops in Poland were mixed. The leftist political thought on this issue evolved from opposing the installation of elements of the anti-missile shield in Poland and attempts, expressed by Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, to strengthen the state with NATO troops, to accepting the possible stationing of nuclear weapons on Polish soil.

The efforts of PiS and PO in the first and second decades of the 21st century received a negative assessment from the Left. They were critical of initiatives which went against allied will and provoked retaliatory measures from Russia (e.g., increasing the military presence in Kaliningrad or Belarus). It also saw no need to deploy NATO troops in Poland. There was no threat to Poland’s security. It did, however, see the need to review “contingency plans based on which it can be clearly stated who will come to our aid, when, and how” and to prepare for the need to establish bases, conduct joint exercises, training, etc²⁸.

It should be noted that in both situations the actions of the Left did not have any direct consequences: the Obama administration withdrew from the idea of building a missile defence shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, and in 2014, NATO did not agree to a deployment in Poland. However, the Left could have tried to boost its

28 Cf. S. Wziątek, The statement at the Parliamentary Defence Committee *SLD przeciw NATO w Polsce*. Kowal: myśl, że Rosja zjadła Krym jak dziewicę i się uspokoi, <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art12549501-sld-przeciw-nato-w-polsce-kowal-mysla-ze-rosja-zjadla-krym-jak-dziewice-i-sie-uspokoi> [11.08.2022].

numbers, particularly as left-leaning and centrist Poles opposed the move²⁹. Nevertheless, there is one constant element in the position on deploying NATO troops in Poland or having one of the Allies assist – the need to coordinate actions and obtain the consent of all countries. The New Left accepted military aid from Germany in the form of a Patriot missile battery in November 2022³⁰. At the same time, it criticised the United Right's government for proposing to deploy it in Ukraine, because it went against the ally's intention³¹.

The war in Ukraine led to another development – the Left came to support possible attempts to place nuclear weapons in Poland to deter the West. The latter emerged following Putin's announcement of the deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus³². The issue of weapons deployment in Poland has undergone a radical change. Whereas a few years earlier the Left had been opposed to it³³, by 2023 it had come to accept such a solution³⁴.

The second external security pillar was the EU. The Left was in favour of a common foreign, security, and defence policy. Expanding cooperation between European countries in these matters should ensure the European Union's civilian and military operational capacity and lead to the creation of a common army in the future. For the Left, the European project was complementary to NATO and the US alliance, because "there is no choice between the United States or Eu-

29 *Opinie Polaków o tarczy antyrakietowej*, BS/128/2009, p. 2, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_128_09.PDF.

30 Cf. W. Czarzasty, The statement in "Śniadanie u Rymanowskiego", Polsat News, 28 November 2022, https://www.polsatnews.pl/wideo-program/sniadanie-rymanowskiego-w-polsat-news-i-interii-28112022_6812230/.

31 The fact that Germany's action in the autumn of 2022 was more about improving its image than providing real help was not mentioned. The Germans decided to take the launcher back after only about a dozen weeks.

32 Cf. R. Biedroń, The statement in "Śniadanie u Rymanowskiego", Polsat News, 26 March 2023, https://www.polsatnews.pl/wideo-program/sniadanie-rymanowskiego-w-polsat-news-i-interii-26032023_6818688/.

33 *Kto chce broni atomowej w Polsce*, <https://www.rp.pl/kraj/art714951-kto-chce-broni-atomowej-w-polsce> [25.04.2023]; The US Ambassador in Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, hinted at the possibility of deploying nuclear weapons in Poland in her tweet on 15 May 2020: "If Germany wants to diminish nuclear capability and weaken NATO, perhaps Poland – which pays its fair share, understands the risks, and is on NATO's eastern flank – could house the capabilities here", <https://www.rp.pl/kraj/art8940621-mosbacher-moze-polska-moglaby-przyjac-potencjal-nuklearny>.

34 K. Gawkowski, *Nowe państwo*, Wydawnictwo BookPlan.pl, 2023.

rope for Poland”³⁵. Europe cooperating with the US within NATO was the “quintessence” of global security and strengthening ties with the United States stemmed directly from the Polish *raison d'état*³⁶.

Although the EU's security and defence policy was a project for the future, it should be noted that while the Left was in power, it followed the American policy, but after going into opposition it opted for deepening European integration and linking Poland's interests to those of Western European countries. This also meant a correction of the involvement of the Polish army in US projects and, until 2015, the postulate of cooperation with Russia.

The second pillar was, in fact, an illusion as the EU did not become a hard security factor: 1) it had no army, 2) member states had difficulties agreeing on a plan to reform the Common Security and Defence Policy, 3) the initial phase of the war against Ukraine exposed difficulties in deciding how to help the attacked state or collect and send a sufficient amount of necessary weapons. This area of EU cooperation is still in its infancy. Undoubtedly, for the Left, EU funds were important because they served the social and economic development of Poland and were treated as the Polish *raison d'état* (from the perspective of the National Reconstruction Plan and the next budget).

The sources of the New Left's political thought are, to a small extent, directly related to the important proposals of recent years in France and Germany with regard to European strategic autonomy. While the members of the New Left wanted to deepen integration, they were unequivocal about France's initiatives, considering “Emanuel Macron's love affair with Beijing to be harmful to Europe”³⁷. They also criticised the French concept of European military autonomy as an alternative to the US³⁸.

35 Government information on the participation of the Polish military contingent in the composition of the international coalition forces..., 26 March 2003...

36 W. Cimoszewicz, *Polska racja stanu...*, p. 25.

37 M. Konieczny, The statement in the debate on the Minister of Foreign Affairs information on the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2023, 13 April 2023, p. 173, http://orkaz.sejm.gov.pl/Stenolnter9.nsf/0/67D5771909333250C1258991000832A7/%24File/74_b_ksiazka.pdf.

38 Cf. J. Gotkowska, *Europejska autonomia strategiczna czy europejski filar w NATO? Niemcy wobec inicjatyw Macrona*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2020-02-21/europejska-autonomia-strategiczna-czy-europejski-filar-w-nato>; Cf. A. Dziemianowicz-Bąk, op. cit.

The Left proposed a partial course of action in this matter. It was not necessary to implement a “European strategic autonomy” immediately, but a regional military pact was needed to “leaven a common European defence force”. The “Safe Poland in a United Europe” conference of 23 April linked military security with the creation of missile defence units with Germany, so that “such European units could protect the territory of Germany, Poland, and other Central and Eastern European countries against aerial aggression”³⁹.

Without a doubt, the uncertainty of US policy after a possible change of administration influenced the Left’s attitude toward the postulates of creating a European army. That is why it was recognised that although the basis of Polish defence was and will remain NATO and the US military presence in Europe for the time being, that does not mean that Europe should not strengthen its own defence capabilities so that it can protect itself against another aggressive action by Russia, even “if the White House finds another Donald Trump”. It is worth mentioning here that there were no concrete accusations and that the real benefits for Poland during Trump’s presidency were not taken into account⁴⁰. The Left ignored the fact that in 2008 the Democratic Administration of Barrack Obama sent a signal to Moscow that it agreed with revising the order in Europe, while Joe Biden, at the beginning of his presidency, bet on Berlin, Paris, and London. He also viewed Central Europe and Russia from the perspective of Western countries. Trump, on the other hand, demanded that European countries increase their defence spending and accused their leaders of relying too much on NATO.

One innovation was to expand the alliance and work closely with the Nordic states (Finland and Sweden) and Central and Eastern Europe. These were the countries most at risk of hostile action by Russia. After the war, however, it was considered necessary to: 1) strengthen the sub-region within the framework of the European Union and NATO

39 *Bezpieczna Polska w zjednoczonej Europie*, Lewica, 23 April 2022, <https://lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/7574-bezpieczna-polska-w-zjednoczonej-europie-lewica-prezentuje-postulaty-wzmocniajace-bezpieczenstwo-polek-i-polakow> [23.05.2023].

40 Cf. *Donald Trump i polska polityka bezpieczeństwa*, <https://www.google.com/search?q=usa+w-obec+polski+w-okresie+prezydentury+trampa&oq=&aqs=chrome.o.69i59i450l8.34426999joi15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> [25.05.2023].

in the Bucharest format (nine eastern flank countries) and 2) renew the EU's Eastern Partnership and make the EU's Eastern policy more fruitful⁴¹. This proposal has not been taken any further. An alliance with Hungary, which the Left considers pro-Russian, was ruled out.

They also rejected the United Right's concept of strengthening Poland's international position through regional agreements outside the EU. As far as the Left was concerned, none of the regional structures could act as a counterweight to the EU. This position also referred to the concept of the Three Seas Initiative, which was a 21st century idea. The Left did not support the Three-Sea Concept because it was seen as a rival to the EU. It raised the issue of lacking financial resources for the implementation of a large infrastructure project that would enable Poland to diversify its hydrocarbon supplies⁴². No reference was made to the political arguments supporting the implementation of the concept: the creation of a blockade for Russia's ability to act outside the EU or the real empowerment of the sub-region.

For the Left, relations with European countries, especially France and Germany within the Weimar Triangle, were the basis of Polish foreign policy. The Left was critical of the policies of the Right towards the EU and certain states, which they saw as incapable of maintaining the "fire of European solidarity" towards Ukraine. Since Poland also bought coal and oil under the United Right's rule, it was accused of lacking credibility⁴³.

3. War in Ukraine

The Left associated Poland's security with a political change in its neighbours to the East and with the independence and security of Ukraine⁴⁴. The fall of the Putin regime, boosting Polish influence in

41 *Bezpieczeństwo i współpraca...*

42 Golub-Dobrzyń. Pytania do posła Janusza Zemke o Polskę w Unii [Golub-Dobrzyń. Questions for MP Janusz Zemke about Poland in the EU], Lewica, 21 September 2017, <https://lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci-kujawsko-pomorskie/722-golub-dobrzyn-pytania-do-posla-j-zemke-o-polske-w-unii>; Liberadzki: *postępowa i wrażliwa socjalnie Europa*, 9 April 2019, <https://tczewski.lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/4237-liberadzki-postepowa-i-wrazliwa-socjalnie-europa> [2.03.2022].

43 Cf. The statements in the debate on the Minister of Foreign Affairs information on the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2023, 13 April 2023: A. Szejna, p. 184, and M. Gdula, pp. 190-191, http://orkaz.sejm.gov.pl/StenolInter9.nsf/0/67D5771909333250C1258991000832A7/%24File/74_b_ksiadzka.pdf.

44 M. Konieczny, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

the East and good relations with Ukraine were Poland's (new) *raison d'état*⁴⁵. Thanks to the Left, Poland has been treated as the chief proponent of the accession of Ukraine to the Euro-Atlantic structures. Hopes for democracy have long been pinned on Russia. Although the Left wanted good relations with Russia, and during the period of their government they expressed their will to do so, they misjudged Russia, just like the majority of the political forces in democratic countries. The Left was wrong to believe that Russia had come to terms with NATO's eastward enlargement, and it was also wrong to imagine it was ever possible to have good and equal relations with it and to separate the ideological and historical issues from the economic ones. Even when the Left was in power, it received many signals that this was not achievable. In addition, it carried out a lot of activities that ran counter to the political interests of Russia as defined by the centre of power with Vladimir Putin at the helm⁴⁶.

After Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022, the Left was in favour of the Euro-Atlantic world adopting immediate and tough sanctions against the Russian state and its ruling elite: 1) freezing of Russian financial assets, trade in Russian bonds, exclusion of Russian banks from the European market; 2) seizure of assets of Russian oligarchs in Poland; 3) ban on vehicles with Russian (but also Belarusian) licence plates entering Poland; 4) freezing of Nord Stream 2. They believed that the EU should take steps towards long-term energy independence from Russia in order to "stop feeding the regime by paying for oil because it serves to strengthen Russia's resources" and to speed up energy transition; and 5) after the media showed the crimes against civilians in Bucha, they called for the punishment of the murderers. If Russia refuses to enter into dialogue with Ukraine and continues the war, the sanctions should be expanded, particularly since the EU has stocks and procedures to minimise the negative effects of cutting off Russian oil and gas. The Left was cautious about sanctions against Belarus, recognising that it was in Poland's interest not to be part of the war. The sanctions that were adopted were aimed at the Belaru-

45 K. Gawkowski, The statement in "Śniadanie u Rymanowskiego", Interia.pl, 7 May 2023, <https://www.interia.tv/wideo-gawkowski-niech-morawiecki-i-ziobro-ida-na-dobra-wode-my-im-,vld,3315058>.

46 Cf. K. Trembicka, *Lewica wobec polityki wschodniej*, "Przegląd Sejmowy" 2023, no. 1, pp. 95 et seq.

sian regime. The left proposed economic and personal sanctions, as it did against Russia and its political and economic elite⁴⁷.

At the same time, the Left proposed aid to Ukraine. The idea of debt relief for Ukraine, following the example of Germany's creditors after the war, and talks with the US authorities on this issue, was raised at the *Security and Cooperation* conference on 24 February. The Left supported the Government in providing military support to Ukraine and in accepting refugees⁴⁸.

The war in Ukraine inspired the Left to issue demands for the rearmament of the Polish army and the Polish defence industry as the internal pillar of security. There was a reasonable recognition of the need for Poland to have "its own comprehensive defence cooperation" alongside NATO and the EU, with the hope that, after a series of measures taken, "in a few years the Polish army would be one of the strongest and most modern in Europe"⁴⁹.

The project for improving Poland's security was presented in 2022-2023 and resembled old proposals although it introduced several new ones. They 1) accepted the Government's arms purchases, declaring their willingness to continue these contracts after they assume power in autumn 2023; 2) called for the development of current arms programmes and special support for projects involving Polish industry and research institutions⁵⁰; 3) proclaimed military cooperation with

47 *Postulaty zostały przedstawione. Lewica wzywa Prezydenta RP do zwołania RBN. Potrzeba zdecydowanych sankcji ekonomicznych wobec rosyjskiej elity* [The postulations have been presented. The Left calls on the President of the Republic of Poland to convene the RBN. Strong economic sanctions against the Russian elite are necessary], 22 February 2022, <https://klub-lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/2106-lewica-wzywa-prezydenta-rp-do-zwolania-rbn-potrzeba-zdecydowanych-sankcji-ekonomicznych-wobec-rosyjskiej-elity>; *Majątki rosyjskich oligarchów w Polsce. „Zamiast czekać 120 dni na zmianę konstytucji, uchwalmy jedną ustawę, w której będzie zapisane czyj majątek podlega konfiskacie* [Russian oligarchs' assets in Poland. "Instead of waiting 120 days for the constitution to be changed, let's pass a law specifying whose property is subject to confiscation"], 23 March 2022, <https://klub-lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/2140-majatki-rosyjskich-oligarchow-w-polsce-zamiast-czekac-120-dni-na-zmiane-konstytucji-uchwalmy-jedna-ustawe-w-ktorej-bedzie-zapise-czyj-majatek-podlega-konfiskacie> [24.03.2022]; W. Czarzasty, The statement in "Gość Wydarzeń", Polsat News, 4 April 2022, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2022-04-04/czarzasty-jablonski-i-kolodziej-w-gosciu-wydarzen-ogladaj/?ref=wyszukiwarka> [4.04.2022]; M. Gdula, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

48 *Bezpieczeństwo i współpraca...*

49 A. Szejna, op. cit., p. 184.

50 In particular, it concerned the construction of AW-149 helicopters in Świdnik and Rosomaks in Siemianowice Śląskie, the completion of work on the battlefield management system, and the continuation of the Wisła, Narew, Pilica, Homar, Rak, and other programmes.

Ukraine and the creation of a Polish-Ukrainian arms consortium after the war is over; 4) announced the creation of the Cyber Security Agency, a kind of cyber shield to protect the banking system, databases, public administration, and the economy; and 5) called for the creation of a European counter-intelligence service to combat Russian agents in the EU⁵¹.

The concerns expressed were twofold; firstly, the wisdom of buying K9 howitzers in South Korea. Left-wing politicians prioritised the production of Krab howitzers in Huta Stalowa Wola, which were also considered one of the best in the world and successfully used in Ukraine. The Left did not want to cancel the agreement but believed that Krab was more important. The second concern was the lack of modern technology in Poland. It was believed that the purchase of arms should be combined with the import of technology for the domestic defence industry. The defence industry was rightly treated as a strategic branch of the economy. The transfer of technology was to be arranged after the change of government, while “for now”, it was necessary to absorb technologies from the Ukrainian defence industry. In general, they were very optimistic, despite the critical comments made in some instances. For example, the Polish army should gain the necessary know-how and intelligence from the government’s planned import of F-35 aircraft and French reconnaissance satellites⁵².

In addition to weapons, technology, and new services, it was necessary to draw on Ukrainian experience in the field of reserve forces. The military reserve was needed to secure areas not covered by military operations, to help with logistics, to support the civil population and, if necessary, to take part in combat. It was also deemed important to have good relations with society at large. The left was critical of the Polish Army restructuring process. In particular, it criticised the unnecessary and costly removal of experienced officers from the army, the exclusion of special military units from the structure of the army, and the subordination of these units to a politically empowered intelligence coordinator⁵³.

51 *Bezpieczna Polska w zjednoczonej Europie...*

52 *Bezpieczeństwo i współpraca...*

53 *Likwidacja WSI – krok w tył*, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl> [13.04.2023].

A wall along the Belarusian border was one of Poland's most controversial measures, and it fell under harsh criticism from the Left, for whom humanitarian considerations are paramount. Left-wing politicians, faced with a threatened state border, turned their attention to the migrants transferred by the Belarusian services and accused the Polish authorities of violating international law, lacking sensitivity toward the fate of people and using the crisis to strengthen the political position of the governing party. The accusations contained a great deal of demagoguery and statements aimed at discrediting the state authorities. This was exemplified by Krzysztof Gawkowski, President of the Parliamentary Club of the Left, who likened the behaviour of the Polish authorities to that of Alexander Lukashenko. Although Gawkowski did not doubt that the border crossing was a provocation by Lukashenko's regime, he also blamed the Polish authorities for the crisis⁵⁴. The government was accused of a lack of transparency. He demanded that NGOs be given access to the areas where people were being transferred so that they could provide assistance to those in need, regardless of their status⁵⁵. The solution to the crisis was to receive the migrants and then, together with the EU countries, readmit them⁵⁶.

Conclusions

Four conclusions can be drawn from a reflection on the views of the contemporary left on state security and the war in Ukraine:

- 54 "Usnarz Górny did not appear out of nowhere. It was created by the PiS government in partnership with Lukashenko's regime. (...) There is no doubt that the dictator of Belarus is playing his game, and President Kaczyński is playing with him. And the whole situation is very convenient for both of them. If it were otherwise, if you really wanted to manage this crisis, you would not allow it to develop". Cf. K. Gawkowski, The statement in the Sejm on declaring a state of emergency, 6 September 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUHRaAvABdl> [23.03.2022].
- 55 Cf. Włodzimierz Czarzasty in "Graffiti" on Polsat News, 22 March 2023, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2023-03-22/wlodzimierz-czarzasty-w-graffiti-transmisja-od-740/>.
- 56 Biedroń: *Nie odpuszczajmy Białorusi* [Biedroń: "We are not going to give up on Belarus"], Lewica, 21 October 2021, <https://lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/6777-biedron-nie-odpuszczajmy-bialorusi>; Żukowska o rozwiązaniach ws. kryzysu na granicy z Białorusią [Żukowska on resolving the crisis on the border with Belarus], Lewica, 4 November 2021, <https://lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/6829-zukowska-o-rozwiazaniach-ws-kryzysu-na-granicy-z-bialorusia>; Rząd Morawieckiego pozwala zarabiać na sprzedaży cementu w Polsce. Apelujemy o nałożenie embarga [Morawiecki's government is allowing Belarus to earn money by selling cement in Poland. We call for an embargo], <https://klub-lewica.org.pl/aktualnosci/1891-rzad-morawieckiego-pozwala-bialoruskiemu-rezimowi-zarabiac-na-sprzedazy-cementu-w-polsce-apelujemy-o-nalozenie-embarga> [23.03.2022].

First, the left has analysed the international system and the environment of the Republic of Poland. The left's political thinking reflected changes in US policy towards Russia and the EU as well as divergences between US and EU policies. In the years when it was in power, the Left pursued a pro-American policy by participating in the Orange Revolution. In later years, however, it adapted to the tendencies of its European allies and preferred cooperation with Russia at the expense of Ukraine.

Secondly, the Left's political thinking has evolved, first and foremost, in its assessment of the threats to the Polish state from an unambiguous and fairly constant assessment of Poland as a safe state, to recognising that the war in Ukraine has lowered the level of security and that we should arm ourselves. There has also been a radical change in the Left's assessment of Russia and the EU's policy towards that country.

Thirdly, state security was associated with Poland's presence in NATO and alliance with the United States, Poland's permanent political, economic, social, and cultural "embedding" in Western Europe, and the building of a strong army supported by the Polish defence industry. NATO was the most important military alliance for the Left and other political forces in Poland. There was no alternative to Poland's presence in NATO and its alliance with the United States. The US alliance has been rightly considered the only true alliance. The acceptance of the EU as a federation with a common foreign and security policy meant a rejection of the French version of European military autonomy.

The Left supported the plan to expand the army, buy arms, implement signed contracts, and help Ukraine. It refused to accept the border wall and focused its attention on humanitarian issues.

Fourthly, what was new was the proposal of a rapprochement with the Nordic countries and of closer cooperation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe within the EU.

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