

# Security and Defense Initiatives of Poland

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## Introduction

In the context of the ongoing military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, Poland's military policy is undergoing a substantial modification by its government, with a view to the escalating likelihood of a Russian attack on another European nation. Consequently, as of 2025, Poland has the highest percentage of military expenditure as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) among North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) members, at approximately 4.5%. This figure is significantly higher than the proportionate figures of other European countries, including France, Germany and the United Kingdom, which stand at approximately 2%. Poland's stance as a proponent of increased European defence spending is noteworthy. This paper aims at summarizing the latest security and defense initiatives led or realized by Polish authorities.

## Background

The context of Poland's defence and security initiatives is influenced by a number of geopolitical, historical and strategic factors. Poland has a history marked by invasions and occupations, notably by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the World War 2 (1939-1945). This historical memory exerts a significant influence on the perception of national security and the necessity to maintain a robust defence. Poland's geographic location in a region characterised by high geopolitical tensions, particularly due to Russia's actions, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its support for separatists in Ukraine, further contributes to the complexity of the situation. This memory is also influenced by the Polish politician leadership, which is mainly constituted by former students of History in the current (Donald Tusk: current prime minister of Poland) and previous governments (Mateusz Morawiecki: former prime minister of Poland, Mariusz Blaszczak: former minister of defence, etc.).

Since 1999, Poland has been a member of NATO, thereby acquiring collective protection in addition to a commitment to enhance its own military capabilities. The presence of NATO troops on its territory constitutes a fundamental element of its defence strategy. Several programmes have been initiated with the objective of modernising its armed forces, with a view to enhancing its military capabilities. Moreover, Poland is an active participant in defence cooperation initiatives with other Central and Eastern European countries, including the Visegrad Group (V4), and has expressed support for cooperative endeavours with the

United States and other European allies through various initiatives like the Three Seas Initiative.

### **Polish expenses for the defense sector**

In light of the potential for Russia to invade Poland (Oskierko & Malinowska 2024: 22), the Polish political leadership has devised a comprehensive defence and security strategy to ensure the nation's protection in the event of a such scenario through different projects.

When it comes to the financement of military expenses (approx. USD 38 billion in 2024<sup>1</sup>), the government is using among other European Union (EU) loans to finance its military purchases, which will ease the burden on the budget.<sup>2</sup> The allocation of EU funds is earmarked for the compensation of equipment transferred to Ukraine through joint arms acquisitions. The increase in expenditure has prompted Polish authorities to pursue autonomy in terms of military capabilities, leading to an escalation in investment and production by Polish military companies. This suggests a potential for the Polish arms industry (for instance, Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa) to secure contracts and become a constituent of the EU supply chain.

Poland's reliance on foreign countries for military equipment is pronounced. According to data released by the State Department of the United States of America (USA), Poland was the country that placed the largest orders for the supply of US military equipment in the 2022/23 fiscal year, with Polish orders amounting to more than USD 30 billion.<sup>3</sup> This dependance goes beyond a cooperation with the USA, it is also enlightened by military transactions with South Korea. In terms of military cooperation between Poland and South Korea, this is justified on the basis that some American military devices are compatible with South Korean ones (Frysko-Son 2019: 27). For instance, Poland has expressed interest in acquiring K2 tanks and other military equipment, which could lead to long-term partnerships in defence manufacturing. The two nations' shared challenges in terms of regional security, as evidenced by their respective threats, present opportunities for intelligence sharing and strategic dialogue, particularly in the context of NATO and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *Poland's president vows to spend 4.7% of GDP on defence this year*, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/02/05/polands-president-vows-to-spend-47-of-gdp-on-defence-this-year> (date of access: 06.03.2025). )

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Znamy szczegóły nowej polityki obronnej UE. Polska zyska na kilku poziomach*, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/9753693,znamy-szczegoly-nowej-polityki-obronnej-ue-polska-zyska-na-kilku-poz.html> (date of access: 10.03.2025).

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Polska zdominowała zakupy uzbrojenia w USA. Amerykanie zarobią potężne kwoty*, <https://www.wnp.pl/przemysl-obronny/polska-zdominowala-zakupy-uzbrojenia-w-usa-amerykanie-zarobia-poteczne-kwoty,799908.html>, (date of access: 10.03.2025).

A significant challenge confronting the Polish military sector is the expectation that, between 2024 and 2035, approximately 40% of arms acquisitions were made domestically.<sup>4</sup> This figure may be further reduced due to the financial constraints associated with procuring foreign-built equipment, such as the K2 tanks and K9 cannon howitzers, which are licensed in other countries.<sup>5</sup> On the other side, the ranking of Poland in the Global Militarization Index (GMI), in which Poland ranks 52<sup>nd</sup> out of 154 which is still in a low position (Bielawski 2024: 232).

### **The Polish Defence Fund**

In response to the growing needs of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of National Defence of Poland has established the PDF (Polish Defence Fund) in 2022.<sup>6</sup> The fund's objective is to enhance the defence technology sector by allocating financial resources to military and dual-use technologies. The initiative aspires to establish a dedicated funding ecosystem for defence technologies, thereby providing support to innovative companies. Key areas of investment include artificial intelligence, unmanned weapon systems, advanced materials and interference-resistant communication systems. The fund was initially endowed with USD 110 million, with 51% of the shares being held by Poland to ensure the protection of national interests. The funding was provided by entities under the control of the State Treasury, with the remaining funds being contributed by investors and investment funds from NATO allied countries. The PDF works in close collaboration with the Polish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence to direct investments towards the necessary technologies. This project is contributing to the strengthening of defence capabilities, the improvement of resilience to threats and the development of production capacities in Poland. The fund is particularly focused on supporting start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) developing technologies that are critical to national security. The beneficiary companies are not only Polish but also from countries in the region, particularly those situated on NATO's eastern border, and from allied countries. The objective is for these companies to contribute directly to national security while developing local technological and production capacities, including by transferring research and development or production processes to Poland. With this financial and strategic support, Poland aims to strengthen its defence capabilities while stimulating technological and industrial innovation at the national level.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: *Do 2035 roku wydatki na obronność Polski mogą wynieść nawet 1,9 bln złotych*, <https://www.deloitte.com/pl/pl/about/press-room/do-2035-roku-wydatki-na-obronnosc-Polski.html> (date of access: 07.03.2025).

<sup>5</sup> Source: *Do 2035 roku wydatki na obronność Polski mogą wynieść nawet 1,9 bln złotych*, <https://www.deloitte.com/pl/pl/about/press-room/do-2035-roku-wydatki-na-obronnosc-Polski.html> (date of access: 07.03.2025).

<sup>6</sup> Source: *Wykonanie Funduszu Wsparcia Sił Zbrojnych w 2024 roku*, <https://dziennikzbrojny.pl/artykuly/art,2,4,12119,armie-swiata,wojsko-polskie,wykonanie-funduszu-wsparcia-sil-zbrojnych-w-2024-roku> (date of access: 07.03.2025).

### **Other measures**

Except military spendings, the Polish governmental leadership is also taking some measures toward the Polish population. In 2025, The Polish government decided to create a crisis survival guide that is supposed to be sent to the Polish population. This project is a part of a series of projects aimed at boosting the defense capabilities of Poland, which borders Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, including a large-scale military training program for civilians. The guide will contain information that “will cover how to handle various emergency situations.”<sup>7</sup> The problem that may arise is how the population will use this booklet. Simply receiving it may prove to be insufficient. Will the Polish population know how to correctly apply the solutions provided in this booklet. As of today, it is unfortunately impossible to answer these questions with certainty.

Furthermore, in terms of human factors the Polish government is now aiming for an army of 500,000 men, more than double the current strength of just over 200,000.<sup>8</sup> Some additional military trainings will be provided to the Polish population. It would be not compulsory, but with incentives to encourage men to take part in annual training.<sup>9</sup> This would make it the largest army in the European Union and the third largest in NATO, behind the United States and Turkey.

### **Conclusion**

In light of contemporary geopolitical challenges, Poland has implemented numerous security and strategic initiatives, primarily on a national level, yet also in collaboration with other European nations and NATO members, including the USA. From an internal standpoint, Poland has undertaken substantial investments in the modernisation of its armed forces, substantial increases in the defence budget, and the acquisition of advanced military equipment, including missile defence systems. In the face of mounting cyber threats, Poland has developed strategies to protect its critical infrastructures and enhance the resilience of its cyberspace. Externally, Poland plays an active role within NATO, participating in joint military exercises and welcoming allied troops to its territory to bolster collective security. Poland has strengthened its relations with countries such as the United States, signing defence cooperation agreements and hosting US military bases. Furthermore, Poland is involved in regional security initiatives, such as the V4, which brings together Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to coordinate security and defence efforts. Finally, Polish authorities also recently welcomed the French idea of extending France's "nuclear umbrella" to cover

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European allies.<sup>10</sup> Poland is also currently engaged in the establishment of a unified EU air defence system.<sup>11</sup> Poland will also withdraw from the Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel mines, a decision also taken by neighbouring Lithuania.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, these initiatives are indicative of Poland's commitment to ensuring its national security and contributing to regional stability. As a peripheral state between East and West, Poland should pursue a realistic policy in the current situation in Europe and the world. It cannot leave either the EU or NATO: the EU is the guarantor of Polish economic security, and NATO of its military security. In addition to these external considerations, Poland faces significant internal challenges, including effective resource management and the delicate balancing act of prioritising military needs while considering other national objectives.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: *Poland declares interest in French nuclear deterrent – or even developing its own*, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2025/03/10/poland-declares-interest-in-french-nuclear-deterrent-or-even-developing-its-own/> (date of access: 11.03.2025).

<sup>11</sup> Source: *Poland and Greece urge EU to create common air shield, says Polish PM*, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-greece-urge-eu-create-common-air-shield-says-polish-pm-2024-05-23/> (date of access: 08.03.2025).

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