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Poland's political and security strategy amid growing external threats

Abstract. The purpose of the study was to determine the areas of transformation of Poland's foreign policy and security approaches after 2022. The study used structural, functional, content and quantitative analysis, which allowed summarising the data of official documents, and scientific and analytical publications on the dynamics of threats and modernisation of the defence sector. The analysis showed that after 2022, Poland has implemented a systematic build-up of its defence potential, increasing military spending from USD 18.1 billion up to USD 38 billion in 2022, increasing its share of gross domestic product to 4.2%. It was established that the renewal of the regulatory framework and the creation of a fund to support the Armed Forces provided institutional conditions for financing large-scale weapons programmes. As part of the upgrade, key purchases were identified, including the purchase of 366 Abrams and 360 K2 tanks, 364 K9/K9PL self-propelled artillery guns (SPG), 48 AHS Krab, Patriot and Narew systems, and the expansion of missile capabilities through HIMARS and K239 Chunmoo. The results showed that these investments formed a multidimensional structure of defensive capabilities, able to insure increased mobility, depth of fire, and resistance to modern threats. It was established that Poland has strengthened its role in the decision-making process of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in particular, by participating in the development of regional defence plans and supporting the transition of the alliance to the model of advanced defence and expanding the new model of the Armed Forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to more than 300 thousand high-alert military personnel. It was revealed that Poland has become a key logistics hub on the eastern flank, which is confirmed by the development of the APS-2 infrastructure in Powidz and the expansion of Host Nation Support mechanisms. The study showed that the country simultaneously strengthened its position in the European Union by promoting the implementation of Strategic Compass, Military Mobility 2.0 and expanding defence cooperation tools, in particular, in the areas of sanctions policy and the defence industry. It was also determined that the Bucharest Nine and Lublin Triangle formats have become key platforms for coordinating regional positions, developing joint threat assessments, and coordinating practical measures, including joint counter-disinformation initiatives

Keywords: defence sector; hybrid threats; military challenges; institutional solutions; escalation

Introduction

The growing level of external threats in Europe creates challenges for states located on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Poland finds itself in a situation where traditional mechanisms for ensuring national security need to be revised and modernised. The changing geopolitical configuration, increasing military instability in neighbouring regions, and growing pressure from unfriendly actors have highlighted a number of structural vulnerabilities in the country's national defence and foreign policy system. The need for this study stems from the need to fill in the gaps in understanding how Poland adapts its diplomatic, defence, and strategic approaches to the new security environment. It was important to identify the limitations and capabilities of the

current strategy, determine its strengths and weaknesses, and assess the state's ability to adequately respond to long-term risks. In contemporary scientific discourse, the issue of transformation of Poland's defence policy and its role in the European security system has been developed. Results obtained by R. Atkinson (2025) demonstrated that the modernisation of the Polish defence and technology sector contributed to Poland's inclusion in new mechanisms of cooperation within NATO. The researcher found that Polish institutions play a significant role in defence innovation networks, as they ensure the rapid implementation of technological solutions in the alliance structures. It was emphasised that Poland acts as a catalyst for expanding the NATO innovation ecosystem in

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Central Europe, and its ability to combine public investment with private development was noted. Analysis by A. Jacuch (2024) focused on resilience and civil readiness as key elements of European security, singling out Poland as one of the countries actively expanding approaches to civil protection. It was established that the Polish response model is based on the interaction of state institutions, the security sector, and local structures, which allows forming a multi-level system of resilience. It is the civilian component that has become critical after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation (RF) in Ukraine, but the study only indirectly concerned the link between civilian readiness and Poland's strategic decisions in NATO and the European Union (EU). The focus of the study by M. Komarnytsky (2023) was a change in Poland's strategic culture under the influence of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The researcher showed that the Polish political elite has formed a new configuration of threats, which is dominated by assessments of the prospect of direct escalation on the eastern flank. It was revealed that this transformation is accompanied by a reorientation of Poland's strategic behaviour to strengthen its role in the Alliance and active support for Ukraine, which increases its influence on regional decisions. However, the researcher paid less attention to the relationship between strategic culture and institutional initiatives in the EU, which makes the topic open for further research.

A look at the security situation on the eastern flank of NATO was presented in the paper by M. Kulczycki & M. Musioł (2024). The researchers concluded that the decisions taken at the Vilnius Summit radically changed the Alliance's approach to defending the region. It was established that the transition to the model of advanced defence strengthened the strategic role of Poland, which became a key logistics and operational hub. The researchers also stressed that it is Poland that ensures the formation of collective requirements for building up forces and assets on the eastern flank. However, the paper did not cover the impact of Polish activism on EU policy, which opens up opportunities for broader analysis. A. Lanoszka (2020) highlighted the political and security dilemmas that Poland faces in the face of a changing international system. The researcher noted that the combination of the threat from the Russian Federation and tensions in relations with some EU partners forced Warsaw to look for new models of security behaviour. Poland is trying to balance between a transatlantic orientation and participation in European defence initiatives, which makes its policy multi-vector. However, the paper hardly considered the implications of these decisions for the regional security architecture. C. Leuprecht & R. Hamilton (2019) determined that Poland's participation in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) has created new opportunities for it to strengthen its defence potential and deepen European security integration. The researchers stressed that Poland plays the role of one of the most active participants in programmes related to military mobility and infrastructure integration. Their findings showed that by participating in PESCO, Poland is strengthening cooperation with EU partners, although the study did not assess this activity in the broader context of NATO. A. Pęziół & A. Borucka (2025) investigated the impact of Poland's

strategic documents on the development of the state's defence capabilities. The researchers found that in the post-war period, Poland significantly increased investment in the modernisation of equipment, and established long-term financial mechanisms to support the defence sector. It was proved that the growth of defence spending was accompanied by institutional changes that ensure more effective integration of Poland into collective defence mechanisms. However, the paper almost did not trace the link between financial modernisation and Poland's political activity in NATO and the EU.

Taken together, the above studies showed a significant increase in Poland's role in European and transatlantic security after 2014 and especially after 2022. However, they mostly covered individual segments – innovation, army modernisation, strategic culture, and activities in NATO or the EU – without an integration analysis of the relationship between these dimensions. The lack of comprehensive research that covered Poland's defence policy simultaneously in the context of NATO, the EU and regional formats that is the key gap that this study is designed to fill. The purpose of the study was to investigate the vectors of changes in Poland's political and security approaches in the context of increasing external threats. The hypothesis of the study was that the strengthening of external threats in Europe after 2022 prompted Poland to rethink and strengthen its political and security strategy, which was expressed in accelerated modernisation of the defence sector, expansion of regional diplomatic activities, and strengthening the role of the state as a key security actor on the eastern flank of NATO.

Materials and Methods

The investigation of the transformation of Poland's defence policy after 2022 covered the period 2020-2025, which allowed tracing both the prerequisites and consequences of the changes caused by the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war. It was based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combined qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to identify key factors that determined strategic changes in the military sphere of the state. The study was based on a structural and functional analysis that allowed characterising the interdependence between changes in the external security environment and the adaptation of Poland's defence policy. The application of this approach was conditioned by the need to explain the logic of state decisions in response to the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the increased military activity of the Russian Federation in the region. Materials for structural and functional analysis were scientific research and analytical assessments that recorded the impact of military, political, and nuclear risks on regional security. The theoretical base also included publications by K. Torbicka (2025), H.-J. Spanger (2025) and M. Beznosiuk (2025), describing scenarios for the spread of conflict and threats to the eastern flank of NATO.

To systematise information about the nature and dynamics of threats, including hybrid, informational, and cybernetic influences, the content analysis method was used, which provided an objective selection and interpretation of materials from official reports and open sources. As part of this method, statistical data on the

number and intensity of cyber incidents were processed. The results of research on information operations against Poland and materials on hybrid use of migration flows in 2021–2023 were also analysed, including *Analysis of the security...* (2025), W. Gizicki (2025) and Z. Ciekanowski *et al.* (2025). In order to assess the economic parameters of the transformation of the defence sector, a quantitative analysis was applied, which covered the interpretation of military spending statistics for 2020–2024. The main materials for this stage were data from Military expenditure in Poland... (n.d.). A significant block of sources was made up of official reports of the Polish Ministry of National Defence regarding the terms and volumes of contracts for the supply of key types of equipment. In particular, 116 Abrams M1A1 tanks... (2023) and K2 tanks will be produced... (2024) materials were analysed. Structured data on arms supplies were also obtained from Poland – M1A2 SEPv3... (2022) data, which contained information on the approval of export programmes and technical characteristics of American systems. A separate group of sources consisted of materials on the implementation of the Narw programme, the supply of CAMM/CAMM-ER systems, Patriot M903 air defence elements, and LTAMDS radars. In particular, such publications as Poland's HSW to deliver Krab... (2024) and MBDA delivers first CAMM... (2025) were processed. In addition, the mechanisms of functioning of the Armed Forces support fund (n.d.).

The analysis of the transformation of Poland's interaction with NATO after 2022 was carried out based on a comprehensive study of the Alliance's regulatory documents, official reports of national and international institutions, and analytical reviews highlighting the change in the strategic logic of defence planning. The basis of this stage was an institutional and analytical approach, which allowed tracing the mechanisms of adaptation of Polish policy to NATO decisions, in particular, the introduction of a new strategic concept, a three-level Regional Defence Plans system and the scaling of the NATO New Force Model (NFM). NATO's defence capacity... (2023) and Strengthening NATO's eastern flank (2023) have become key sources for analysis that determine operational readiness parameters, force structure, and logistics support. A significant amount of information was obtained from official materials of government institutions in Poland and the United States detailing the development of Host Nation Support infrastructure and the functioning of pre-placement facilities, such as the APS-2 logistics complex in Powidz (NATO to increase high-readiness..., 2022; Bath, 2025). For research of engineering and defence projects in Poland, including Learn about the Tarcza Wschód programme (n.d.), the method of structural and institutional analysis was applied, which helped to compare national initiatives with the requirements of NATO's regional defence plans.

Results

Transformation of Poland's defence policy: Modernisation and military capacity building after 2022. After 2022, Poland's strategic security environment underwent transformations caused by the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Russia's full-scale aggression has created a new configuration of threats that affects Warsaw's political and defence priorities. Research showed that the

war in Ukraine has become a factor of increasing risks for Poland, as it has changed the balance of power in the region and updated scenarios for the spread of the conflict to the territory of NATO countries (Torbicka, 2025). There is an increase in Russian military activity in the western regions, including the deployment of missile systems, conducting military exercises near the Polish borders, and demonstration manoeuvres. Expert assessments interpret such actions as a means of political pressure and an element of a coercive strategy (Spanger, 2025). A separate element of Poland's external security environment is the nuclear risks associated with Russia's more active use of nuclear rhetoric and the transfer of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus. According to analytical estimates, these factors reduce the level of predictability of regional security and increase the need to improve strategic deterrence mechanisms (Beznosiuk, 2025). In parallel with military challenges, Poland is facing an expanding range of hybrid threats, including cyberattacks, information operations, and sabotage actions against critical infrastructure. According to the *Analysis of the security...* (2025) report, more than 600,000 cybersecurity incidents were reported in the country in 2024, an increase of 62% compared to 2023, which confirms the increase in the intensity and consistency of cyber-attacks in the state and critical sectors. Information operations aimed at undermining social resilience, creating antagonism in Polish society, and discrediting Poland's cooperation with its partners are also identified by researchers as an important component of advanced threats (Gizicki, 2025). Attempts to use migration as an instrument of political pressure are also a component of external risks for Poland. The crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, which worsened in 2021–2023, is considered in the scientific literature as an example of a hybrid operation aimed not at solving migration issues, but at destabilising the political system and weakening state institutions in Poland (Ciekanowski *et al.*, 2025).

In a broader context, the destabilisation of NATO's entire eastern flank creates conditions in which conventional security approaches become insufficient. The strengthening of Russian-Belarusian military integration, the militarisation of the Kaliningrad oblast, and the growing unpredictability of regional crises form a new level of strategic uncertainty that directly affects the planning of Poland's defence policy (Strategic Studies Institute, 2024). The analysis of scientific and analytical sources showed that Poland sees these processes as a cumulative threat that combines military, political, and information components and requires a multidimensional response aimed at improving defence capabilities, strengthening resilience, and expanding international coordination (Maślanka & Szymański, 2025; Mix, 2025). In general, after 2022, external threats have become a complex factor that determines the key areas of transformation of Poland's security policy and determines the need for a strategic rethinking of its role in the regional security architecture. From 2020 to 2024, Poland has demonstrated a steady increase in defence spending, which has become one of the key indicators of the transformation of the national defence policy. The analysis of the dynamics of expenditures shown in Figure 1 indicates an increase in both the absolute volume of military

expenditures and their share in GDP. According to military expenditure in Poland... (n.d.), in 2020 Poland spent USD 13.0 billion on defence (2.2% of GDP), while in 2021 this figure was USD 13.7 billion. (2.1% of GDP). Further growth occurred in 2022, when spending increased to

USD 18.1 billion. This was the basis for a record increase in 2023 – up to USD 31.6 billion, or 3.8% of GDP. In 2024, military spending reached USD 38.0 billion. (4.2% of GDP), which confirms an increase in defence investment and a change in public policy priorities.

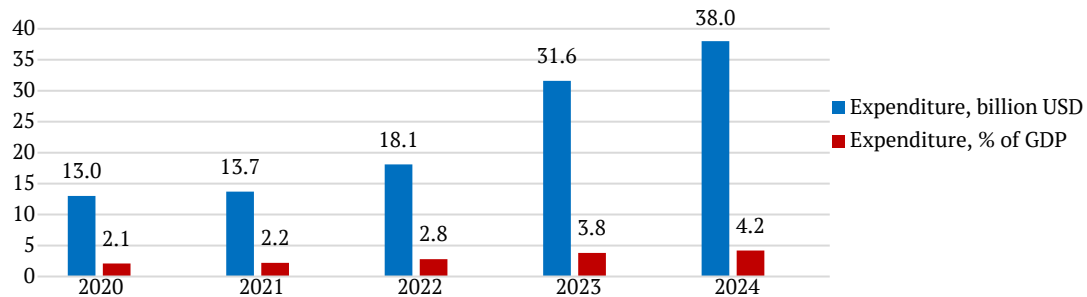


Figure 1. Poland's defence spending, 2020-2024

Source: compiled by the author based on Military expenditure in Poland... (n.d.)

The dynamics shown in Figure 1 show that after 2022, the growth of defence spending has become accelerated, which directly correlates with a radical change in the security environment in Europe. The sharp increase in funding indicates Poland's desire to strengthen its own defence capabilities, increase deterrence, and ensure the ability to quickly respond to potential threats. Investments are aimed not only at modernising equipment, but also at developing infrastructure, expanding the size of the armed forces and creating a multi-level defence system. The institutional mechanism that created the financial basis for such a sharp growth was the adoption of the Act of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland (2022). This law set a target increase in defence spending to a level exceeding the NATO standard of 2% of GDP, and provided for a long-term increase in defence funding. One of the tools of the law was the creation of the Armed Forces support fund (n.d.), which allowed accumulating additional resources outside the framework of conventional budget financing. The fund provided acceleration of arms purchases, modernisation of equipment, development of military infrastructure, and implementation of large-scale defence programmes. Its activities are financed by

government borrowing, bonds, and other extra-budgetary instruments, which allows the government to increase defence spending in a short time without overloading the annual budget. Taken together, these data confirm that after 2022, the growth of Poland's defence spending is not situational, but has a systemic character and is based on a comprehensive institutional and financial basis. The dynamics of expenditures shown in Figure 1 indicate the strategic course of the state to modernise the defence sector, strengthen resilience, and strengthen the ability to contain new external threats. After 2022, Poland has implemented a large-scale and systematically structured programme of technical modernisation of the Armed Forces, covering armoured, artillery, missile, anti-aircraft, and aviation components. Analysis of the data summarised in Table 1 shows that the key task of the state's defence policy has been to rapidly build up fire, mobile, and anti-aircraft capabilities in response to a changing strategic environment. A characteristic feature of this stage is the combination of short-term solutions aimed at immediate strengthening of combat potential, and long-term investments in high-tech systems that form the basis of defence for the next decades.

Table 1. Main weapons modernisation programmes in Poland after 2022

System/model	Quantity, units	Year of signing	Estimated cost, billion USD	Delivery time
Tanks				
M1A1 Abrams	116	2023	1.4	2023-2024
M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams	250	2022	4.75	2025-2026
K2 Black Panther	180 (1 st package) 180 (2 nd package)	2022-2023	6	2022-2026
Self-propelled howitzers				
K9A1/K9PL	212 152	2022, 2023	2.4 (212 units) 2.6 (152 units)	2022-2027
AHS Krab	48	2022	3.8	2025-2027
Air defence (AD)				
Patriot/M903 + LTAMDS	48 launchers 12 radars	2023-2024	1.23	2027-2029
Narew (CAMM/CAMM-ER)	23 batteries 138 launchers	2022-2023	12	2027-2035

Source: compiled by the author based on Poland – M1A2 SEPv3... (2022), 116 Abrams M1A1 tanks... (2023), Poland's HSW to deliver Krabra (2024), K2 tanks will be produced... (2024), V. Kushnikov (2024), MBDA delivers first CAMM... (2025)

In the field of armoured units, Poland has made purchases aimed at quickly updating the fleet of combat vehicles and increasing resistance to modern threats. The 2023 contract for the supply of 116 M1A1 Abrams tanks provided an opportunity to quickly strengthen combat units through rapid deliveries in 2023-2024 (116 Abrams M1A1 tanks..., 2023). In parallel, 250 M1A2 SEPv3 tanks are being delivered under the 2022 contract, which represent the latest modification of the Abrams platform and form the basis of high-tech tank capabilities for the medium term (Poland-M1A2 SEPv3..., 2022). A separate area is the purchase of K2 Black Panther tanks in South Korea, which includes two packages of 180 vehicles each with phased deliveries in 2022-2026 (K2 tanks will be produced..., 2024). This allows combining the possibility of rapid replenishment of equipment with the creation of conditions for localisation of production and technological cooperation. The re-equipment of artillery units is also significant in scale. Poland has signed contracts for the supply of 212 K9A1 self-propelled howitzers in 2022 and an additional 152 K9PLS in 2023, which significantly increases the ability to conduct high-precision fire at long distances. In parallel, the development of its own artillery platforms continues: in 2022, a contract was signed for the production of 48 AHS Krab self-propelled guns with deliveries in 2025-2027. The expansion of the artillery fleet indicates the priority of building up fire weapons in the structure of the ground forces. One of the most ambitious areas of modernisation is the development of a multi-level air defence system. The delivery of 48 Patriot M903 launchers and 12 LTAMDS radars in 2023-2024 ensured the development of medium-range air defence systems. In addition to them was the Narew programme, which included 23 batteries and 138 Camm/CAMM-ER system launchers, as specified in MBDA delivers first CAMM... (2025). Together, these systems create a comprehensive architecture capable of responding to a wide range of threats, from drones and rockets to cruise missiles. Analysis of the main contracts for the supply of weapons after 2022 showed that the modernisation of the Polish Armed Forces is carried out in line with the development of a balanced structure of defence capabilities. Purchases include high-precision artillery systems, advanced armoured platforms, long-range missile systems, and multi-level air defence systems. Their combination forms a wide range of opportunities to increase the mobility, firepower, and resistance of troops to various types of threats. Expanding the range of weapons and technological renewal of units creates conditions for greater operational variability, enhances the ability to respond in a multidimensional operational environment, and promotes Poland's integration into the joint defence mechanisms of NATO.

Regional diplomacy and Poland's foreign policy activity in the face of growing threats. After 2022, Poland has revised its engagement with NATO, focusing on strengthening its own role in decision-making. This transformation is explained by the fact that the Polish government sees collective defence as the main tool for neutralising the risks associated with the changing nature of Russian military activity and the emergence of new forms of hybrid pressure and the growing need for NATO operational readiness. On this basis, Warsaw has formed

a strategic line that combines the promotion of concrete decisions in the Alliance, institutional strengthening of the eastern flank, and support for Ukraine through NATO mechanisms (Strengthening NATO's eastern flank, 2023). After the approval in 2022-2023 of the new Strategic Concept of NATO and the three-tier system Regional Defence Plans, the Polish side actively participated in determining the parameters of defence planning for the eastern flank, in particular, to increase the level of readiness of forces, expand the elements of a permanent military presence and strengthen the infrastructure for receiving allied units (Vilnius summit communiqué..., 2023). Warsaw supported the transition from the concept of "deterrence through presence" to the forward defence model, which provides for the rejection of rotational logic in favour of deploying forces capable of immediate action on the territory of advanced states. Following NATO's decision to scale NATO NFM to more than 300,000 high-alert troops, Poland has adapted its own defence policy to the requirements of the new force structure and assumed the functions of one of the key logistics and operational hubs on the eastern flank, as evidenced by the deployment of facilities for receiving, supporting, and transferring allied units on its territory (NATO to increase high-readiness..., 2022). The second key area of Poland's activity within NATO was the development of an infrastructure and operational framework for strengthening the eastern flank. After the Vilnius Summit in 2023, which approved the transition from the Enhanced Forward Presence format to a more advanced Enhanced Forward Defence approach, it is planned to expand the fire and manoeuvring capabilities of advanced units and increase their air defence (Vilnius summit communiqué..., 2023). In this context, Poland has expanded its own infrastructure base under the Host Nation Support mechanism, providing the allies with facilities for placing, storing, and servicing equipment. The most significant element of this infrastructure is the APS-2 logistics complex in Powidz, which NATO and the United States use to pre-deploy equipment, ensure operational mobility, and conduct rotations of allied contingents (Strengthening NATO's eastern flank, 2023).

Furthermore, Warsaw started implementing the national engineering and defence programme East Shield, which includes the creation of engineering barriers, fortification elements, early detection systems, and fortified routes of movement of troops along the border with Belarus and the Kaliningrad oblast. The programme's objects are integrated into the framework of NATO's regional defence plans as a frontline infrastructure (Learn about the Tarcza Wschód programme, n.d.). In addition, Poland contributed to the expansion of the Alliance's ground capabilities by involving Territorial Defence Forces (WOT) in joint NATO exercises, in particular, Steadfast Defender and Dragon. WOT's participation in these multinational exercises ensured their inclusion in operational interaction scenarios and contributed to greater compatibility with NATO response mechanisms (Poland has launched military..., 2024). The third area of Polish policy within NATO was to strengthen diplomatic support for Ukraine and promote its integration into common defence mechanisms. Since the founding of the NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) in 2023, Poland supports its use as the main

format for political coordination and consultations between the Alliance and Ukraine, according to Vilnius summit communiqué... (2023). Poland also supports Ukraine's participation in the NATO Defence Capacity Building (DCB), which includes the development of command and staff procedures, cyber defence, and logistics capabilities (NATO trust funds, 2025). Polish diplomacy supports the expansion of training programmes for the Ukrainian military and their integration into NATO operational compatibility mechanisms. In this context, Warsaw also supports Ukraine's involvement in the Defence innovation accelerator... (n.d.) and the NATO Innovation Fund (n.d.), which allows integrating the combat experience of Ukraine into the development of technological solutions of the Alliance. Thus, Poland is shaping the role of a mediator between the Alliance and Ukraine, promoting the creation of a long-term security guarantee system in the region.

The intensification of Polish political activity within NATO after 2022 naturally led to the strengthening of its activities in EU institutions, primarily in the European Council, European Commission, since Warsaw considers NATO and the EU as complementary elements of a single regional security system. The Polish position is based on the fact that effective deterrence of threats in Europe requires the coherence of transatlantic and European mechanisms, including defence planning, sanctions policies, joint defence instruments, and long-term support of partners under military pressure. In this context, Poland systematically advocates strengthening the EU's role in strengthening the defence capabilities of member states, building resilience to external threats, and developing a common crisis response policy. Poland consistently supports the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) tools, considering them as components of a mechanism for strengthening the EU's operational and crisis capabilities. In position documents and during intergovernmental consultations, Warsaw emphasises that the EU should strengthen its own ability to respond to security challenges in neighbouring regions, in particular through the implementation of the provisions of A strategic compass for a stronger... (2022), aimed at creating EU rapid deployment capacity, improving crisis management tools, and increasing military mobility. From a practical standpoint, Poland supported the implementation of measures defined in the Action plan on military mobility 2.0 (2022), which provided for the harmonisation of cross-border movement rules, modernisation of dual-use infrastructure, and adaptation of transport corridors to military needs. This approach is consistent with Poland's stated goal of strengthening the EU's ability to act as a strategic security actor in Eastern Europe and the Baltic region. Warsaw also emphasises the need to closely coordinate European defence processes with NATO planning, emphasising the importance of interoperability, sharing logistics infrastructure, and avoiding duplication of functions between the two institutions. In the Joint report to the European Parliament and the Council (2023), which outlines the areas for deepening cooperation between NATO and the EU in the field of logistics, standards, and procedures for operational deployment. This approach allows Poland to play the role of a state that forms the

institutional link between transatlantic and intra-European security mechanisms.

The regional dimension of Poland's security diplomacy organically complements its activities in the CFSP/CSDP. Poland uses EU tools to improve coordination at the Union level, and the Bucharest Nine (B9) and Lublin Triangle formats to form common positions of Eastern European states, which are subsequently implemented in NATO or EU decisions (Nagy, 2024; Joint statement of the ministers..., 2025). Thus, initiatives within the EU and regional platforms do not function in isolation, but form an interconnected architecture, where the EU forms a regulatory and institutional framework, and regional associations provide rapid coordination of positions and operational support for decisions. In the B9 format, Poland plays a leading role in developing consolidated threat assessments and recommendations for further submission to the NATO Council and Alliance summits. The joint statement of the B9 leaders in Warsaw (22.02.2023) confirmed support for strengthening the NATO military presence on the eastern flank, the transition to a model of advanced defence (Bucharest Nine in Warsaw..., 2023). The statement became a political reference point before the NATO summit in Vilnius and served as a "preliminary agreement" on the positions of the eastern flank states. In further assessments, think tanks, in particular T.A. Nagy (2024), confirmed that B9 retains its role as a key platform for coordinating military readiness requirements and increasing defence spending in the region. The format of the Lublin Triangle complements B9, focusing on hybrid threats, strategic communications, and practical support for Ukraine. Joint statement by the leaders... (2023), prepared by Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, identified the main Russian narratives and methods of information influence, and proposed joint mechanisms for response and interagency interaction. Poland's combined activities in CFSP/CSDP and regional formats are characterised by complementarity: the EU's institutional mechanisms form the legal and operational basis for collective action, while the B9 and the Lublin Triangle provide political consolidation and rapid coordination. As a result of the combination of policy input, policy coordination and policy uptake, Poland is strengthening the strategic security architecture of Eastern Europe, while strengthening its position as a key actor in regional security diplomacy. Thus, the intensification of Poland's regional diplomacy after 2022 led to complex changes in the security architecture of Eastern Europe and confirmed the growing ability of Warsaw to influence the development of joint defence solutions in NATO, the EU, and regional formats of multilateral cooperation. The results of this policy are manifested in three main dimensions: the institutional and structural strengthening of the region, the growth of Poland's political weight in the European security system, and the development of new coordination mechanisms between the states of the eastern flank.

Discussion

The results obtained are consistent with the researchers' conclusions regarding the transformation of the security environment in Central and Eastern Europe after 2022 and the role of Poland in the architecture of regional

stability. The analysis of the threats caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war largely correlates with the concept of representation policy proposed by D. Cadier (2021). The study showed that Poland's foreign policy is formed in the face of constant security challenges, and the strategic narratives of the state are focused on positioning the country as a key actor on the eastern flank of NATO. The results obtained confirm this logic: the revealed aggravation of Russia's military activity and Warsaw's rethinking of its own defence role reflect the mechanisms of political representation that the researcher described as a tool for developing national interests. Simultaneously, the scale of defence reforms after 2022 exceeds the trends outlined by D. Cadier, since latest decisions are based not only on symbolic policies, but also on a significant increase in material defence capabilities. Comparison of the study results with the conclusions of M. Mälksoo (2021) showed significant consistency in the interpretation of security risks and the dynamics of strategic behaviour of Eastern European states. The researcher paid attention to the phenomenon of "military democracy" – strengthening security policy through a heightened perception of threats and the development of collective narratives of historical vulnerability. The results obtained in this study confirm the effectiveness of this mechanism in the case of Poland: the combination of military, nuclear, and hybrid challenges encourages the government to systematically modernise the defence sector, and the sharp increase in military spending and structural reforms can be seen as a response to increased historical sensitivity to Russian pressure. Empirical data – in particular, an increase in the defence budget to USD 38 billion in 2024 – helps to specify and quantify the general theoretical provisions given in the paper by M. Mälksoo.

The results of this study are also consistent with the findings of M. Sus & Ł. Kulesa (2023), who analysed the implications of Poland's desire to join the NATO nuclear sharing programme. The researchers noted that the escalation of Russia's aggressive policy encourages Warsaw to strengthen strategic deterrence and rethink the role of the nuclear component in its own security policy. This study revealed a similar trend: threats related to the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus form an important area of the Polish Defence Strategy. However, the results show a much wider range of practical responses: large-scale purchases of Abrams and K2 tanks, K9 and Krab artillery systems, Patriot and Narew air defence systems create the material basis for deterrence, while the analysis by M. Sus and Ł. Kulesa focused mainly on the political and conceptual aspects of strategic escalation. It was established that Poland has increased institutional and political activity in NATO and the EU after 2022, seeking to strengthen regional containment mechanisms – and this is in line with the trends recorded in the paper by H. Edström & D. Gyllensporre (2023). The researchers considered NATO's expansion in Northern Europe as a structural process of military transformation and emphasised the importance of adapting command, logistics, and defence plans to integrate regional security efforts. The results of this study extend their conclusion, showing that Poland has not only responded to the transformation processes in NATO, but has also become one of the state actors actively shaping the architecture of new regional defence plans, in

particular, in the field of front defence, military mobility, and advanced deployment infrastructure development. Unlike the study by H. Edström & D. Gyllensporre, emphasis was placed not only on institutional changes in the structure of the alliance, but also on the specific invested capabilities of Poland – infrastructure hubs, participation in NFM and logistics hub functions, which indicates a greater practical detail of the Polish contribution. The results also correlate with the findings of the study by Ł. Stach & P. Pizzolo (2025), which explored the modernisation of the Polish Armed Forces in the context of domestic political polarisation and external cooperation. The researchers pointed out that Warsaw's modernisation decisions after 2014 were generally characterised by high dynamics, but depended on a combination of domestic political priorities and international obligations. The analysis of this study showed that after 2022, the trend towards intensifying modernisation has reached a qualitatively new level, since the volume of investment (an increase in defence spending to more than 4% of GDP), the scale of acquired platforms (Abrams, K2, Patriot, Narew) and structural changes in military planning have gone beyond the previous modernisation cycles described by Ł. Stach & P. Pizzolo. In this aspect, the results of the study did not contradict their conclusions, but demonstrated the strengthening of their identified trends and the transition from gradual modernisation to an accelerated, comprehensive, and multi-vector defence transformation integrated with the regional needs of NATO.

Observations on the growth of Poland's diplomatic activity in the areas of NATO, the EU and regional formats were consistent with the reasoning of M. Sus (2025). Polish foreign policy was viewed in terms of "status aspirations" and leadership behaviour during Russia's war against Ukraine. M. Sus stressed that Poland used the crisis context to strengthen its role as a strategic benchmark in Eastern Europe, in particular, through increased political activity in NATO, allied support for Ukraine, and regional coordination. The results obtained in this study confirmed such observations, but showed that Poland's leadership ambitions have a less symbolic and more institutional and practical dimension. This refers to the creation of logistics hubs, participation in DCB, support for NUC, and the institutional development of B9 and the Lublin Triangle. Unlike M. Sus, the current study highlighted the instrumental, multi-level nature of Polish diplomacy. The results are consistent with the conclusions of J. Mejino-Lopez & G.B. Wolff (2025), who stressed that strengthening the EU's defence capabilities in the face of growing threats requires systematic integration of industrial, technological, and strategic resources of member states. Their study emphasised that without the active participation of the eastern flank countries, in particular Poland, the EU cannot provide a sufficient level of defensive autonomy and resilience. Simultaneously, the results obtained demonstrate that Poland not only supports pan-European efforts, but also directs them towards the practical readiness of NATO-EU for joint operational actions. C.O. Meyer *et al.* (2024) stressed that the transition from EU battalion groups to rapid deployment capacity reflects the need to reorient the EU from declarative to practical security policies. The paper substantiated that the implementation

of Strategic Compass is possible only with the active participation of states capable of ensuring political consolidation and contributing to collective defence readiness. The results of this study showed that Poland actually performs just such a function, since it combines the formal mechanisms of the EU with the regional formats B9 and the Lublin Triangle, ensuring prompt coordination and coordination of positions before their implementation in the decision of NATO or the EU. In contrast to the conclusions of C.O. Meyer *et al.*, as for possible challenges in implementing rapid deployment capacity, this study found that Poland sees the new EU tools not as a limitation, but as an extension of opportunities to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security. Comparison of the results obtained with the study by B. Lesyk (2025) showed that its findings on the military potential of Central and Eastern European states and its impact on the strengthening of EU military subjectivity are consistent with the trends identified in this study. It was proved that the states of the eastern flank, in particular Poland, make a significant contribution to the development of EU security decisions due to their defence capabilities, strategic location, and political coherence. The results obtained in this study confirmed this conclusion and demonstrate that Poland uses its regional diplomacy as a tool to strengthen the EU's position in the international arena. B. Lesyk also noted that the growing military capabilities of the states of the region contribute to improving the effectiveness of CSDP; simultaneously, this study showed that such capabilities are realised not only through national modernisation programmes, but also through institutional synergy between the EU, NATO, and regional platforms. Thus, the comparison of the results obtained with the available scientific publications showed the overall consistency of the provisions on the role of Poland in strengthening the security of Europe.

Conclusions

The analysis showed that after 2022, the transformation of Poland's defence policy became systemic and was based on a combination of foreign policy factors and internal institutional decisions. It was established that the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the growth of military activity of the Russian Federation in the immediate vicinity of the Polish border, and the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus formed a new level of military and political risks, which affected national defence priorities. The study identified an increase in hybrid threats, in particular, an increase in the number of cyber incidents to more than 600 thousand in 2024 (with an increase of 62%), the activation of information operations, and the use of migration pressure as a tool for destabilisation. Quantitative data showed an increase in Poland's defence spending: from USD 18.1 billion in 2022 to USD 31.6 billion in 2023 and USD 38.0 billion in 2024, with an increase in the share of spending in GDP to 4.2%. The systematisation of data on modernisation purchases allowed

establishing that Poland is implementing one of the largest defence investment programmes in Europe, including the supply of 366 Abrams tanks, 360 K2 tanks, 364 K9/K9PL SPGs, 48 AHS Krab SPGs, 48 Patriot launchers, and 138 Narew launchers. It was found that these purchases are aimed at the development of multi-vector capabilities – armoured, artillery, anti-aircraft, and missile – which provide an increase in mobility, fire depth, and stability of the Polish Armed Forces.

An analysis of Poland's regional diplomacy and foreign policy activity in the face of growing threats after 2022 has shown its strengthening role in shaping the security architecture of Europe. The study confirmed that Warsaw has adapted its own foreign and defence policies to the new risk configuration, using a multi-level institutional approach that encompasses NATO, the European Union, and regional cooperation platforms. Within NATO, Poland has moved from a model of participation to a model of political and operational influence. This was reflected in its involvement in the development of Regional Defence Plans, support for the transition to the forward defence concept, and integration into the NATO New Force Model structure, which provides for increasing the readiness of more than 300 thousand military personnel. Such indicators as the deployment of Host Nation Support infrastructure nodes, the development of the APS-2 logistics complex in Powidz, participation in the Steadfast Defender and Dragon exercises confirmed that Poland plays the role of one of the central elements of the eastern flank of the Alliance. In the EU, Poland has focused its efforts on strengthening the EU's structural ability to act as a security actor. Its activities within the CFSP/CSDP, implementation of the EU Strategic Compass provisions, and support for Military Mobility 2.0 confirm Warsaw's focus on strengthening defence integration. The activities of Polish scientific institutions and enterprises within the framework of the European Defence Fund have shown the expansion of their participation in EU projects in the fields of radar, CBRN protection, space-related knowledge, and artificial intelligence, which indicates the growth of innovative and industrial potential of the defence sector. Further research should focus on assessing the long-term impact of Poland's new defence capabilities and multi-level diplomatic formats on the evolution of the regional security system and the ability of the EU and NATO to provide sustainable deterrence.

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Conflict of Interest

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