

2. The Polish Armed Forces and Society

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Polish society has long held favourable perceptions of the Polish armed forces. The nineteenth century laid the foundations of the high prestige enjoyed by the armed forces in Poland that continues to the present day. This prestige, however, was built around the legitimacy ascribed to the National Security role of the armed forces as the defender of nation and state. Although the armed forces has acted as Nation Builder and in Regime Defence in the last century, these roles were not seen as being fully legitimate from the perspective of Polish society. As a consequence of the legacy of Regime Defence in the twentieth century, the Domestic Military Assistance role can be seen as being tainted with regard to dealing with civil disorder as compared to less controversial activity as disaster relief. Since the demise of communist Poland since 1989, the National Security role remains central but undergone considerable reinterpretation in the light of the new security environment and national policy goals. There has been a gradual shift away from its more traditional guise of territorial defence of the Polish state toward a role that would see the needs of national security met by armed forces more readily employed on power projection operations in the context of NATO or in other forms of coalition. Poland's membership of NATO is undoubtedly a major external factor in this reorientation in the National Security role. Its long-term legitimacy in terms of Polish society, however, has not been fully tested. A corollary to the new external power projection focus in the National Security role is the armed forces adoption of a more prominent Military Diplomacy role, and the number of bilateral and multilateral contacts has grown enormously since 1989. Polish initiatives and contributions to the creation of peacekeeping units with neighbouring states is evidence of the effort given to this very new role.

This shift toward greater external contributions of the armed forces comes at a time when Polish society, in geopolitical terms, feels safe. The domestic influences on military-society relations in the present and the foreseeable future are likely to be shaped by the shift underway in the armed forces towards the projection of military power. As this change in emphasis is moving the armed forces in the direction of an all-volunteer professional force better equipped and trained for power projection, it will confront Polish society with a number of issues including the willingness of society to fund the expensive changes that are required. Such a decisive move to all-volunteer forces also entails the end of conscription, which would substantially reduce society's contact with the armed forces. From the perspective of Polish society, there is little evidence that many of the social questions that are high on the agenda of long-standing NATO member states have yet emerged in the Polish military-society relationship. In Poland, the only equal opportunities issue that has come to the fore in a very limited way is the place of women in the armed forces. The values of Polish society remain traditional but are under increasing pressure as social and economic transformation moves Polish society closer to those of western European and north American states. This paper will examine the issues outlined above. It will focus on the roles of the armed forces and their impact on legitimacy along with domestic and transnational influences on military and society relations.

CONTEXT

Historical Legacies

Poland has a very deeply rooted military tradition that has contributed to the prestige of the armed forces in Polish society. The struggles to regain an independent state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created strong bonds between society and its soldiers, but these

bonds were qualified by a number of factors. The strength of these bonds can be seen in the way that Tadeusz Kościuszko, the military and political leader of the insurrection to thwart the final partition of Poland in 1794, reached out to the peasantry offering social reform in return for their support in defending the Polish state. The subsequent images of Kościuszko, however, wearing peasant garb and rallying peasant scythe-men on the field of battle brought to life an vision of unshakeable solidarity between society and its soldiers that was far from uncontested. Not all groups in Polish society were enamoured or totally united around the aims and cost imposed on Polish society during the great national uprisings between 1795 and 1863.¹ The change in the nature of Polish society from a gentry-dominated to mass society by the beginning of the twentieth century meant that military-society relations, when the opportunity arose, would have to be fundamentally re-grounded.²

One of the paradoxes of the relationship between the Polish armed forces and society is how the consistent prestige enjoyed by the armed forces was maintained despite the fact that not all of roles it adopted in contemporary history met the approval of Polish society. Since the re-establishment of an independent Polish state in 1918, the armed forces of Poland have served a number of roles. In the period of independence between the two world wars, the central role of the armed forces was that of National Security. For a country having regained its independence in circumstances of armed conflict, the victory of the army in the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-21, conferred not only prestige in the eyes of society but also confirmed its central mission of national defence. The army also had a strong Nation (and state) Builder role as an integrative force in education, the promotion of patriotism and a common identity.³

However, not all of the army's actions won favour in Polish society. Marshall Józef Piłsudski's military coup d'état of May 1926 followed by the arrest and illegal detention at the Brest Litovsk fortress of major political figures and their subsequent ill treatment and trial in the early 1930s did not win universal favour in Polish society.⁴ After Piłsudski's death in 1935, a regime dominated by a coterie of colonels clung to power with its

legitimacy steadily declining.⁵ This culminated in the failure of the army in its National Security role. Its biggest failure was ultimately in its National Security role after its catastrophic defeat in September 1939. Despite these blows to its prestige, Polish society demonstrated a remarkable degree of tolerance toward the interwar army that can be explained only by its support for its central role as guardian of the reborn Polish state.⁶

The unprecedented brutality of the Nazi and Soviet occupations of Poland forged strong bonds between Polish society and its soldiers both at home and abroad. The support given to the underground struggle of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa - - AK) against the occupation that culminated in the ill-fated Warsaw Uprising (August-October 1944) was an important measure of the military's bonds with Polish society. The Polish armed forces in the West, fighting from exile, enjoyed enormous prestige and legitimacy as the heirs of the armed forces of the interwar Polish state. This can be seen in the strong links between the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, its armed forces and the Home Army.⁷ The air, land and naval contributions of these Polish forces in military operations in Northwest Europe was distinguished, but wartime east-west politics precluded their return as the basis of Poland's post-war armed forces.⁸ Parallel to the forces in the West was a second exile army that emerged in the Soviet Union from 1943.⁹ This communist-led force lacked legitimacy in Polish society. It was highly dependent on the Soviet Union, and its officer corps was made up of a high percentage of non-Polish Soviet officers.¹⁰

The roles of the post-war Polish People's Army (Ludowe Wojsko Polskie - - LWP) were very much tied to the security and ideological desiderata of the Soviet Union. In military terms, the army was meant to be a reliable instrument of Soviet security policy in the framework of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. Throughout almost half century of its existence, the LWP was at best a nationally autonomous rather than a truly sovereign national military organisation. The LWP's national security role was nicely illustrated in an article that appeared in the Polish military publication Zolnierz Wolnosci in December 1982:

‘It is evident that the foremost and fundamental task of the armed forces, as always in the history of the Polish people’s armed forces, is the defence of the country against the foreign enemy in a brotherly alliance with the Soviet Army and other Warsaw Pact armies’.¹¹

Conformity and commitment to Soviet ideology underpinned the strong Regime Defence role of the LWP. This had both international and domestic aspects. For example, it was an active participant in the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 to protect the ‘socialist commonwealth’ and extinguish the ‘revisionist’ experiment of Alexander Dubček. However, within Poland the LWP played a very strong regime defence role in defending ‘real socialism’ during major episodes of domestic upheaval that threatened the supremacy of the Communist Polish United Worker’s Party (PUWP). In the second half of the 1940s, the LWP operated in a counter-insurgency role against the remnants of the western-orientated Home Army (AK) and on a considerable scale against Ukrainian nationalists in eastern Poland.¹² In quelling major domestic unrest, the LWP played an important role in Poznań in June 1956, Gdańsk December 1970 and in the imposition of Martial Law in an attempt to crush the Solidarity movement on 13 December 1981.¹³ The LWP’s participation in the December 1970 events in Gdańsk gave rise to some ‘myths’ about the alleged reluctance of the armed forces to employ coercive military power against the civilian population. The use of lethal force by the army during the 1970 disturbances was authorised by the then Defence Minister, General Wojciech Jaruzelski.¹⁴ Subsequently, a myth grew that he actively opposed the use of force in his dealings with the communist political leadership.¹⁵ Paradoxically, the respect for the LWP as a military institution did not substantially diminish despite its record of defending the communist regime.¹⁶ The deployment of about 70 000 troops to implement Martial Law in December 1981 in a complex domestic operation only underscored the LWP’s utility throughout its history in the Regime Defence role.¹⁷

The LWP also had an overt Nation Builder role albeit within the confines of communist ideology. In the immediate post-war years, for example, the LWP was responsible for demining large areas of the country as well as contributing to the rebuilding of essential infrastructure.¹⁸ In ideological terms the LWP functioned as something of a school for socialism with a long-term responsibility for contributing to economic activity that included improvements to infrastructure (railways and bridges), the development of technologies with industrial (and no doubt military) applications and assisting in agricultural harvests.¹⁹ In the communist period, support for the civil community in dealing with such events as floods or other natural disasters was part of the Nation Builder role rather than the Domestic Military Assistance role as it would be in a democratic state. Indeed, military assistance during natural disasters fell under the nation-building rubric just as the domestic use of force was associated with regime defence.²⁰

After Communism

Since 1989, the roles of the Polish armed forces have been more closely linked to those of a democratic state. The two postcommunist roles that are well-defined in terms of official policy statements are those of National Security and Military Diplomacy. In the 'Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland' adopted on 4 January 2000, the National Security role is explicitly articulated as 'repelling a direct aggression against the territory of Poland' and participation in 'crisis management operations outside Polish territory'. Poland's National Security role thus operates 'both within the national defence system and within the NATO system'.²¹ The National Security role moves beyond simply defence of national territory to include power projection operations in the context of the Atlantic Alliance, the United Nations or other international coalitions. Poland's attainment of NATO membership in 1999 obviously created obligations to contribute in some form to power projection operations in support of crisis management. Nevertheless, Polish international activism in contributing to

peace-keeping and peace-enforcement operations pre-dates joining NATO and is characteristic of Poland's external policy throughout the 1990s. Deployments to the Balkans alongside NATO and UN operations further afield illustrate the postcommunist development of this new role for the armed forces.

The Military Diplomacy role is a new one for the Polish armed forces. In it, the armed forces are meant to undertake 'stability-enhancing and conflict-prevention tasks in peacetime'.²² This has been particularly evident in the development of bilateral 'mil-to-mil' agreements and efforts at regional cooperation. Between 1991 and 1995, for example, twenty five bilateral agreements military cooperation agreements were concluded between Poland and principally other European states. Prior to joining NATO, Poland was a strong participant in the Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and Polish-Danish-German trilateral cooperation eventually led to the formation of a joint Corps assigned to NATO.²³ The crowning feature of the Polish armed forces' Military Diplomacy role lies in the bilateral and multilateral joint peacekeeping units with neighbouring states. These are important and historically unprecedented examples of military cooperation and confidence building projects with Poland's neighbours. The first of these projects was the Lithuanian-Polish Peacekeeping Battalion (LITPOLBAT) launched in February 1995. The Polish-Ukrainian Peacekeeping Battalion (POLUKRBAT) followed in November 1995. POLUKRBAT has been sent out to Kosovo as part of KFOR and it remains unique insofar it is the only such joint peacekeeping formation to deploy as a unit among the many joint peacekeeping projects that have materialised in the region. A Czech-Polish Peacekeeping battalion was muted in February 1997 but never materialised.²⁴ This project has been overtaken by the agreement to create a Czech-Polish-Slovak Peacekeeping Brigade signed in September 2001.²⁵ The scale of development in the area of joint peacekeeping units is a measure of the growing importance of the military diplomacy role for the Polish armed forces.

Two previously held roles of the Polish armed forces have disappeared – that of Regime Defence and Nation Builder. The former role was abandoned because of its incompatibility with a democratic state and the second because of its irrelevance in terms of the absence of an ideological driver or perceived need for nation or state integration. Despite what is undoubtedly the welcome demise of these roles, it does not follow that the Polish armed forces have no further domestic role. As in any democratic state, the Domestic Military Assistance role for the armed forces embraces a range of activities from military assistance to the civil community to deal with things such as natural disasters, to maintaining law and order when the police are overwhelmed by public disturbance. In 1997, for example, the Polish armed forces deployed nearly 50 000 troops in flood relief operations when the Odra river broke its banks and inundated large areas of western Poland including major urban centres such as Wrocław. However, the military's response was not without its critics. For example, one report on Polish Radio 1 alleged that troops had used tear gas to drive farmers away from flood dykes they were attempting to repair near Wrocław.²⁶ What is clear is that the armed forces, rightly or wrongly, were tarred with the brush of the Polish public's critical assessment of the way the government handled the emergency.²⁷ Despite this, when floods again threatened two years later, the military had clearly assimilated the practical lessons of their previous relief and rescue operations.²⁸

The armed forces have not been called to assist the police in a civil disturbance. Although provision exists for the internal employment of the armed forces, given the recent history of the armed forces' involvement in Regime Defence, such a domestic role would be greeted with some suspicion and unease in Polish society.²⁹ Although the Polish President under Article 126 of the 1997 Constitution has the responsibility for safeguarding the 'security of the State' – which must include its internal dimension – the decision-making arrangements are complex and involve both the premier and government.³⁰ Given the sensitivity associated with the employment of the armed forces in the context of a domestic disturbance, it is not surprising that this aspect of a domestic military assistance role receives very little official

discussion. The National Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland of May 2000 makes a rather oblique reference to such a role in a paragraph labelled civil-military cooperation: ‘The armed forces are being prepared to co-operate with domestic non-military bodies to carry out a variety of tasks on the territory of Poland’.³¹

DOMESTIC, INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY

Polish society has had a long-standing affaire d’amour with its armed forces. Rooted in the historical experiences of the nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the popularity of the military is woven into the fabric of national consciousness.³² In broad terms, this support for the armed forces remains true today, although contemporary society’s approval cannot be viewed as uncritical. This can be illustrated by a series of opinion polls assessing public views of the armed forces in 1998. In December 1998, the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) opinion poll asked a random sample of just over 1000 Poles how they rated an extensive list of institutions including the armed forces. In the survey, the armed forces were ranked in seventh place behind Polish radio, the fire brigade, public television, the National Bank of Poland, the Roman Catholic Church and the Presidency. Fifty-six per cent of respondents thought that the armed forces worked well and 18 per cent that it functioned poorly.³³ An opinion poll by the Social Research Laboratory (PBS) that sought a positive or negative opinion of institutions in June 1999 also ranked the armed forces in seventh place but with only 41 per cent of respondents having a positive opinion and fifty-nine taking a negative view.³⁴ As if to contradict the sliding level of positive opinion of the armed forces as an institution, a CBOS opinion poll in March 1998 asked respondents to rank institutions by their popularity. The armed forces scored highly, occupying third place with 71 per cent. Only Polish radio and television were more popular.³⁵ Similarly, polling evidence on the Polish public’s trust of the armed forces as an institution has been consistently very high for

a long period of time. For example, in February 1998 and April 2002 the armed forces occupied first place among institutions at 71 and 79 per cent of respondents.³⁶ What this opinion polling evidence tells us about attitudes in Polish society is that as an institution, the armed forces are generally held in high esteem, though with important provisos.

The values of Polish society condition its relations with the armed forces, though in ways that are generally not consistent with the 'postmodern' agenda found in the societies of long-standing NATO member states.³⁷ Indeed, Polish society may be characterised as being in a contradictory position, where traditional values still run strongly in the mainstream of Polish society but are increasingly challenged by processes of major economic and social change driven by the postcommunist transformation.³⁸ Although Poland is counted among the more successful examples of economic transformation, the cost to society has been impoverishment and increasing economic stratification.³⁹ This contradictory picture is best illustrated by contrasting the fact that Poland since the end of communism has seen the expansion of the number of Roman Catholic archdioceses and dioceses – suggesting the strength and enduring qualities of traditional values – at the same time as a growth in opportunities for women in business and the professions.⁴⁰ Although the latter development cannot be seen as more than the first tentative steps toward a postmodern society, it does suggest that major social change is underway in parts of Polish society. This mixture of tradition and change can be readily seen in military-society relations.

In 1991 and 1993 respectively, the field ordinariates (Bishoprics) for the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church were created in the Polish armed forces. These represented an effort to strengthen the armed forces' links to the dominant values of Polish society. In 1995, a military chaplaincy was established for Protestants in military service.⁴¹ During the communist period, the Christian Churches faced serious obstacles to their work in the armed forces. Given the denominational composition of Poland, the Catholic ordinariate dwarfs that of the other Christian churches making it a

dominant influence.⁴² In terms of relations with Poland's tiny national minorities the creation of the Autocephalous Orthodox ordinariate represents an important effort to cater to the needs of the small Belorussian and Ukrainian minorities in Poland. Traditionally in Central Europe, religious affiliation is an important indicator of national identity. Church activity in the armed forces, however, has provoked some criticism. There are officers who think that the Priest in uniform has replaced the political officer as a guide of ideological orthodoxy.⁴³ The discontent that has surfaced over alleged clericalisation, however, is not overwhelmingly present even among officers groomed under the pervasive influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology prior to 1989. The revitalisation of the influence of Christian churches on armed forces personnel serves an important role. It helps to reconnect the Polish military to the mainstream values of Polish society.

Where the armed forces are facing very modest pressure for change is in the acceptance of women into military service. Women are clearly one group with extremely modest representation in the armed forces. Apart from the impact of traditional values in Polish society, there exist major barriers to increasing the number of women in the armed forces in the military itself. In a January 1992 interview, the then defence minister, Rear Admiral Piotr Kołodziejczyk, demonstrated the resistance in the armed forces to increasing the participation of women:

To my mind, there is no room for a woman, a lovely and fragile being, on the brutal and cruel field of battle. Still, I perceive a niche for women in the armed forces. At present we have some 60 lady officers, chiefly in the medical service, but ladies could also serve in signal troops or monitoring services. . . I still cannot imagine that a 20-year-old girl in whom the maternal instinct might arise at the most unexpected moment could sign a contract for five years of regular military service.⁴⁴

The Polish armed forces only began to accept women into the armed forces as volunteer professional soldiers at the end of 1988. The only area in which women could serve was in the medical services.⁴⁵ The total numbers of women serving represented a minuscule proportion of the armed forces. With a strength in excess of 200 000 in 1995 there were nevertheless only around 100 women in military service. By December 1997, this total increased to 143 women (139 officers and four warrant officers). These women serve only in medical services and many of them being highly qualified doctors.⁴⁶ In contrast, the British armed forces contained 14 831 women of all ranks in 1997 and approximately 70 per cent of all military trades were now open to them.⁴⁷ Reductions in the personnel strength in the Polish armed forces have continued but the proportion of women has only increased in numbers that can only be described as negligible. In January 2001, only 277 women served in the Polish armed forces representing about 0.1 per cent of the total serving personnel.⁴⁸ In comparison with other NATO members this was less than the Czech Republic (3.7 per cent) and Hungary (9.6 per cent) and very distant from the United States' 14 per cent.⁴⁹ By the end of 2001, numbers of women in military service had risen to 288 with 230 in training.⁵⁰

The most significant change in numbers of women serving and their opportunities was prompted by changes introduced in 1999. The number of corps (or specialist areas) that women could join in the armed forces was expanded with the list now including signals, the air force, administration, electronic engineering, logistics and medicine.⁵¹ Moreover, the increase in numbers of women in training after 1999 can be explained by the fact that women could now enter officer training establishments and schools for warrant officers and NCOs.⁵² The opening of military schools to women has led to a debate on physical fitness requirements for women because there is no uniform set of criteria for admission.⁵³ While this might be seen as the first embers of change beginning to glow, it has not been supported by major policy changes. Indeed, the official position on women in the armed forces can be described as cautious to the point of regression:

The increase in the number of women was not spectacular but the situation of the reduction in the Armed Forces is generally not conducive to recruiting women to the military service . . . Currently there are no programmes of maintaining the recruitment of women due to the deep restructuring changes in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. In 2001 women will be able to apply for the military schools as it was in the previous year.⁵⁴

For the time being, women represent a tiny element in the personnel structure of the Polish armed forces. Some pressure for change may come from the direction of the Atlantic Alliance's 'Committee on Women in NATO Forces', but this external influence is not likely to be very significant.⁵⁵ Polish society, however, is changing rapidly and the traditional roles of women are coming under pressure. Although the legal framework has expanded opportunities for women, radical changes are likely to be a long-term proposition.⁵⁶ Over time it is inconceivable that the armed forces of Poland will be immune from the wider changes in society that are expanding the role of women. At present, however, the armed forces are not prepared either in attitude or in meeting the practical challenges of having larger numbers of women in the military.⁵⁷

The impact of the large-scale manpower reductions on military-society relations, particularly among the professional (volunteer non-conscript) element of the armed forces, is not well understood. Despite the sizeable numbers of officers and warrant officers discharged since 1989, not much study has been made of their reintegration into society. The armed forces have developed a resettlement programme that has seen thousands of officers participate during the period between 1996 and 2000. However, the results seem somewhat meagre in terms of the numbers who gain employment through this programme. In the absence of more detailed data (perhaps separating officers who retire from those with a considerable number of working years ahead of them) a more accurate analysis could be made of the resettlement programme's results.⁵⁸ The considerable turbulence in the officer corps caused by successive

years of downsizing nevertheless seem not to have adversely affected either the perception of the officer corps in wider Polish society or in the officer corps itself regarding the prestige of the military profession. This remains generally high. Opinion polling evidence shows that in a hierarchy of prestige among professions, being an army officer stands in fourth position. Only doctors, managing directors of major firms, university professors and diplomats are held to be more prestigious.⁵⁹ Since 1988, evidence indicates the prestige of the officer corps in the eyes of society has increased.⁶⁰

The external influences on military-society relations in Poland come from the broad integration process into western institutions. The impact of this process is more likely to come from the direction of the economic and social change prompted by Poland's efforts to join the European Union (EU). The economic and social spheres have a much more generalised effect on the attitudes of Polish society. In the longer term they may lead to increasing convergence with the postmodern values of western European states. In the short to medium terms, however, it is the economic and social costs of transformation and preparation for EU membership that have the most immediate impact. Indeed, it is likely that the competing economic and social desires in Polish society will make defence a lesser priority. For Poland, like many of its regional partners, 'in the absence of any direct external military threat, the internal crisis [of transformation] of each country is, by far, the dominant source of anxiety'.⁶¹ Since joining NATO, preoccupation with economic and social transformation issues is complemented by the fact that Poles also believe that their country now well protect from external threat by virtue of the Alliances' collective security guarantees.⁶² Indeed, although NATO may bring a feeling of security to Polish society, it also presents challenges to the military-society relationship.

CONCLUSIONS: THE CURRENT AND FUTURE MAJOR CHALLENGES OF LINKING
THE ARMED FORCES TO SOCIETY

Relations between the armed forces and society in Poland are governed by three interrelated factors: first, the requirements of NATO membership; second, the move toward all-volunteer professional armed forces and the growing unpopularity of conscription in Polish society; and third, economic constraints on defence spending. It is clear that Polish membership in NATO brings with it a shift within the national security role towards power projection in keeping with the Alliance's new emphasis on 'crisis management' operations. In broad terms this means that Polish society will be confronted with deployments to conflicts outside national borders that carry a number of risks – not the least the possibility of Polish casualties. Opinion polling illustrates that members of the Polish armed forces are willing enough to serve abroad.⁶³ However, the support of Polish society cannot so easily be taken for granted. When the Polish public was asked what kind of cooperation with NATO is most acceptable in a August 2001 opinion poll, the largest number, 80 per cent, supported the category of Polish missions in regions of conflict.⁶⁴ Yet when examining the Polish public's reaction to sending troops to join coalition operations in Afghanistan in October 2001, 65 per cent were opposed to sending troops.⁶⁵ By January 2002, opposition considerably lessened but views were evenly split with 43 per cent in favour and against.⁶⁶ This suggests that support for Polish participation in operations abroad, whether in the context of NATO or not, will be given on a case by case basis.

The new missions for the Polish armed forces underscored by NATO membership have contributed to the emerging prospect that Poland will eventually have all-volunteer professional armed forces. Indeed, the Polish Defence Minister, Jerzy Szmajdzinski confirmed that although it would not be a rapid process, 'professionalisation' was certainly increasing with rapid reaction forces receiving priority.⁶⁷ The ultimate consequence of any move toward all-volunteer professional forces would be an end to conscription in Polish society. Males in Polish society have been subject to conscription since 1918. If one discounts the period of occupation between 1939-44, then conscription has been a feature of

military-society relations for 80 years. In Poland, approximately 300 000 young men a year become eligible for conscription. In the first half of the 1990s, between 100 000-120 000 were conscripted out of the available pool.⁶⁸ In 1997, some 40 per cent of the pool was conscripted; by 2001 the percentage had dropped to little more than twenty-two.⁶⁹ Although conscription is impacting on fewer individuals, should it disappear entirely, it would sever a long established link between the armed forces and society. It is a link, however, that Polish society seems all too willing to break.⁷⁰

In the next decade – as in the past one – the most important challenge in Polish military-society relations is the issue of funding. Defence Minister Szmajdzinski recently stated that ‘the greatest problem of the Polish military is its chronic underfunding’.⁷¹ The significant changes to the employment of the armed forces entailed by NATO, professionalisation and the end of conscription require the application of substantial resources. Indeed, some analysis argues that even deeper manpower cuts might be necessary to create all-volunteer professional armed forces and adequately fund modernisation within the likely resource base.⁷² With the competing resource demands of a difficult economic and social transition, Polish society is less willing to make defence a priority budget item. As is often the case on key issues at the centre of military-society relations, democratic societies find it easier to will the ends rather than the means of achieving them.

NOTES

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