PART TWO

PARTNERSHIP
The general premises and problems of the last 25 years of Polish-German military cooperation

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present synthetically the major developmental tendencies with regard to Polish-German military cooperation since 1991, taking into consideration its salience for the security of both states. Even the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland of 17 June 1991, pointed in its Article 6 to the necessity of cooperation between both states in order to sustain security and peaceful collaboration in Europe (Tomala, 1996, p. 195).

The analysis draws upon the selected source materials and source literature, as well as the previous publications of the author, all of which are listed in the bibliography at the end of the paper. Moreover, the author himself had a chance to observe in person Polish-German military cooperation by means of his contacts with the Cracow Military District over the period 1994–1997 and during his study visits at the Universities of Hamburg and Munich in the years 1998–1999. The limited scope of the paper makes it necessary to address the research problem in a synthetic manner.

The significance of the military factor for the security of Poland and Germany

Military cooperation between reunited Germany and the Republic of Poland (RP) after 1991 should be considered as a salient component of the security policy of both states. In this context, the assessment of the importance of the military factor for the security of both countries needs to include as much the historical experiences and geopolitical localization, as the common interests of both nations to preserve peaceful cooperation within Europe.
Synthetically speaking, the importance of the military factor in the period of domestic and international changes for the security of Poland and Germany could be presented as follows:

First, the divergent historical experiences of both states were of utmost importance, especially within the context of the Second World War (1939–1945) during which the Third Reich was the aggressor, and Poland – its first casualty in 1939. After 1945 Poland lost its sovereignty and found itself under the complete military and political control of the USSR, being a member of the Warsaw Pact (WarPac – 1955). As a result of losing the war and the outbreak of the East-West conflict, occupied Germany was partitioned in 1949 into two states, each of which was integrated into opposing political-military blocks, namely the former Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) became NATO-aligned (1955), whereas the German Democratic Republic (GDR) became Warsaw Pact-aligned (1956). The official propaganda of the Polish People’s Republic (in Polish Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa – PRL) criticized the remilitarization of FRG and the establishment of the Bundeswehr, presenting it as a threat to the security of Poland. The People’s Troops of Poland and the National People’s Army of GDR participated in joint military manoeuvres of the Warsaw Pact as well as maintained occasional contacts within the border zone. Nevertheless, despite the officially declared amity, the political leaderships of both the Polish People’s Republic and GDR had little sympathy for each other, thus competed for the position of the USSR’s leading ally within the Warsaw Pact. The dispute over the maritime border in the Bay of Pomerania that was sparked off between PRL’s and GDR’s border guards provoked even several incidents with the use of force in early 1980s (Cziomer, 1996, pp. 96–109).

Second, as a result of overcoming the East-West conflict in 1989–1990 and the peaceful reunification of Germany (3 October 1990), the geopolitical localization of Poland became disadvantageous in comparison to its western neighbour. A reunited Germany as a member of NATO and the European Community found itself at the very centre of Europe, fully retaining guarantees of security on the part of the U.S. and NATO. On the other hand, Poland after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the USSR (1991) found itself in the “grey area of security” facing a volatile situation and numerous perils emerging alongside its eastern border (Cziomer, 2005, pp. 247–270).

Third, after the political breakthrough of 1989 Poland embarked on a path towards democratic and systemic transformations. Thanks to the es-
tablishment of both the new treaty foundations and peaceful cooperation with all neighbouring states Poland initiated in the first half of the 1990s regional cooperation in Central Europe as well as bilateral cooperation with its eastern neighbours. Since the second half of the 1990s Poland has cemented its relationship within the Euro-Atlantic structures. The crowning achievement of the above-mentioned actions was Poland’s accession to NATO (12 March 1999) and the European Union (EU) (1 May 2004).

On the one hand, Polish membership in NATO and the EU favoured in the 21st century the tightening of the alliance and partnership with Germany; on the other hand, it revealed the different attitudes of both states towards the potential threats to European security or towards the nature of the Transatlantic cooperation. The Polish and German standpoints were essentially determined by the following:

a) For the security of Poland its membership in NATO as well as the U.S. army’s presence in Europe is of key importance. Not only was the expansion of NATO to other Central and Southern European states in the interests of Poland, but also the creation of a realistic chance for countries such as Ukraine and Georgia to join the Alliance. Additional guarantees of safety for Poland and Central Europe were supposed to be provided by American Ballistic Missile Defence (Łada, 2016, pp. 9–21).

b) Germany, due to its advantageous strategic and geopolitical localization as well as due to the lack of any direct military threats, is interested in both maintaining the alliance with the U.S. and in the simultaneous buttressing of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. The political leadership of FRG sees no prospect for Poland’s eastern neighbours’ accession to NATO, such as Ukraine. The Ballistic Missile Defence should rather make cooperation with NATO in Europe closer, without excluding the possibility of cooperation with Russia.

c) The essential differences between Poland and Germany touch upon the sphere of European security when it comes to assessing the role of Russia in this process. Despite critical evaluation of the Crimea annexation by the Kremlin and its active support for the separatists in Donbas since 2014, Germans consider the presence of the Kremlin to be necessary in the process of building European security. On the other hand, Germany advocates the prolongation of sanctions against Russia in mid-2016 and it also engaged in forming the core, of the so-called
“spearhead for the strengthening of NATO’s eastern flank” (Malinowski, 2015, pp. 43–110).

d) In contrast to Poland, Germany’s political elites and leadership are characterized by a more clearheaded approach to the participation of their armed forces (the Bundeswehr) in stabilization missions outside NATO’s territory. Formally, this became possible only since the mid-1990s. In accordance with the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany issued in July 1994 such missions need to obtain a legal international mandate and be approved by the Bundestag. In practice it means that pacifistic tendencies as well as the formal and legal requirements continue to affect the culture of “restraint in engaging in military action” when it comes to shaping Germany’s security policy (Malinowski, 2003, pp. 75–113).

In conclusion, one can assert that despite the existence of the above-indicated discrepancies in the approach to certain aspects of shaping and execution of European security policy, Poland and Germany, as close neighbours, were interested in the development of military cooperation since the 1990s.

The beginnings and the scope of Polish-German military cooperation up to Poland’s accession to NATO in 1999

Polish-German military cooperation after 1989 should be examined in the context of rapid changes in Europe and the desire to improve and foster neighbourly relations between Poland and reunited Germany, which was an important premise of the commonly expected in Poland “quick return to Europe” (Kuźniar, 1992, pp. 36–61). The analysis of prof. Hans Adolf Jacobsen of the University of Bonn, a long-serving member of the board of the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, indicates that the beginnings of Polish-German military contacts at ministerial level took place before agreeing on the treaties that regulated the bilateral relations (the border treaty of 1990 and the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 1991). The mentioned contacts were initiated in May 1990 with the visit at that time of the Undersecretary of State in the German Ministry of Defence – Agnes Hürland-Büning, that was received by the Ministry of National Defence in Warsaw. Thereafter, direct working contacts were established between representatives of the Inspector General
of the Bundeswehr and the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (Jaco-
bensen, 1993, p. 313). As a result, Article 3 Passage 4 of the Treaty on
Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation signed on 17 June 1991
states that: “Ministers of other departments, including the Minister of De-
ference, will maintain regular contacts. The same refers to the high-profile
officials of these departments” (Tomala, 1996, p. 165).

First military contacts of the highest level took place at the end of 1991. A
symbolic expression of such contacts was, among other things, a shared
Christmas Eve dinner on 24 December 1991 celebrated in the 5th Sapper
Brigade in Szczecin. The dinner was attended by the Chief of the Polish
General Staff – Gen. Zdzislaw Stelmaszuk and the Chief of Staff of the
Bundeswehr – Gen. Klaus Naumann. The cross-border contacts were inau-
gurated somewhat earlier, namely on 17–18 September 1991 by a delega-
tion of officers serving in the 7th Military District of Bundeswerh in the
Silesian Military District. At the turn of 1991 and 1992 the first Polish
military personnel training took place in the Bundeswehr Training Center
(Innere Fuehrung) in Koblenz. On 20 May 1992 the National Defence
University of Warsaw (Akademia Obrony Narodowej – AON) organized in
Rembertów near Warsaw a Polish-German seminar entitled “The role of
Poland and the FRG in European security-building” (Gryz, 2004, p. 52).

The Polish-German military contacts at the beginning of the 1990s
should be considered in terms of building mutual trust between NATO
member states, Western European Union (WEU) and the EU, and the erst-
while members of Warsaw Pact, including Poland. As regards military co-
operation, the signing of the Military Cooperation Agreement between the
FRG and RP by Ministers of Defence Volker Rühe and Janusz
Onyszkiewicz on 21 January 1993 in Bonn, was of utmost importance. The
agreement consisted of 5 chapters and in its preamble it referred to the
resolutions of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the Conference on
Security and Cooperation in Europe of 21 November 1991 and the already
mentioned Polish-German treaty of 17 June 1991. The most important
provisions were contained in Article 2.1, which comprehensively enumer-
ated 16 areas of strictly military cooperation, particularly: military and se-
curity policy (1), the military aspects of arms control (2), the regulation of
legal issues in the armed forces (3), formation and leadership in the armed
forces (4), the natural environment’s preservation (14), and the participa-
tion of armed forces in disaster relief operations as well as in humanitarian
assistance (15). Item 2.16 anticipated the execution of “other areas by
means of mutual agreement”. Article 2.2 provides for facilitation of cross-
border cooperation not only in the military sphere, but also in terms of
music or sport. Article 3 contains detailed executive provisions as well as
lists exhaustively the levels, types and forms of mutual contacts. The
agreement was signed for an indefinite period. Any amendments could be
introduced only by mutual consent (Jacobsen and Souchon, 1993, pp.
211–214).

The above-mentioned agreement contributed to the reinforcement and
intensification of Polish-German military cooperation in the period be-
tween 1993 and 1996, especially in the areas of the Air Force and Navy.
Consultations between both states’ Ministers of Defence and management
personnel were held on a regular basis. Cross-border cooperation of the
Land Forces was developing dynamically, as they also participated in joint
military exercises with their German partners (Gryz, 2004, pp. 53–55).
According to German analyses, at the close of the 1990s there were 14 of-
ficial agreements of partnership and lasting Polish-German military coop-
eration at the level of command, military districts, areas, brigades, corps,
divisions as well as Land Forces, Air Forces and naval units (Hopffgarten,

Upon Poland’s accession to NATO’s programme for its eastern neigh-
bours – Partnership for Peace (PfP, 1994) – Polish-German cooperation fo-
cused on providing Poland with support in its aspirations to the gradual
adaptation to NATO’s requirements. The most important forms of assis-
tance were: military and political consultation at ministerial and depart-
mental levels, upgrading the qualifications and skills of Polish military
personnel in the Bundeswehr Training Center in Koblenz or Military
Academies and the Bundeswehr Universities of Hamburg and Munich
(Schwarz, Tkaczyński and Vogel, 1997, pp. 59–118). The Polish analyses
indicate that 192 participants attended a variety of courses and training in

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Polish-German military cooperation
embraced also naval forces in the Baltic Sea. The most significant form of
cooperation within the joint naval operations were:

• joint manoeuvres of international teams,
• performing rescue operations,
• supplying vessels at sea,
• engaging in counter sea-mine defence and the anti-submarine warfare,
• engaging in occasional naval blockades,
• using naval forces for the purposes of humanitarian aid,
• tactical exercises (Sokołowski, 2015, pp. 161–170).

In some of these exercises warships from the Danish Navy also participated.

At this instance it is worth mentioning that the initiative of the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher led in September 1991 to the first meeting, in Weimar, of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany, France and Poland. This event inaugurated habitual annual political consultations at the ministerial level, and on occasions also meetings between heads of state and prime ministers, within the Weimar Triangle. The purpose of such consultations was to bring closer both political elites, societies and the youth of all three nations. In this fashion, reconciliation between Germany and France that was achieved in 1962–1963 was supposed to, in a broader perspective, transform into a tripartite rapprochement between Germany, France and Poland. In practice, the fulfillment of such an objective proved to be more complex. The Polish side took advantage of the “Weimar political consultations” ever since 1994 and expanded the scope of subjects discussed in the forum to issues related with security, defence and military cooperation. During the session that took place in Weimar on 2–3 November 1994 the Weimar Triangle’s Ministers of Defence announced a three-year plan of joint drills, manoeuvres, training and other forms of Polish-German-French military cooperation (Koszel, 2006, pp. 43–67). Thus, the Weimar Triangle significantly enriched the foregoing military cooperation between Poland and Germany. Moreover, it also introduced periodic and regular meetings between French, German and Polish Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which in the second half of the 1990s proved to be of the utmost political importance for the promotion of Poland’s aspirations to join NATO.

Germany was keenly interested in Polish membership in NATO. After the withdrawal of Russian troops from eastern Germany (1994) Poland’s membership in NATO became relevant in terms of strengthening the advantageous strategic and geopolitical localization of Germany, as it would push the borders of the Alliance 1,000 km eastwards. The FRG’s political leadership was well aware of Polish limited finances, hence during numerous consultations that accompanied the accession talks with Poland it opted for lowering the upper limit of the financial costs related with joining NATO (Cziomer, 1998a, pp. 151–160). Shortly after concluding the negotiations and signing the NATO – Poland Accession Agreement in late De-
cember 1997, Germany moved to ratify the agreement on 27 March 1998 in the Bundestag. There were 555 votes in favour of the motion, including all members of CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD, even 12 out of 49 members of the Greens. Against ratification were 37 members of the post-communist PDS – Party of Democratic Socialists. 30 members of parliament abstained from voting. The following day in the chamber of federal states – the Bundesrat – the agreement was ratified unanimously (Cziomer, 1998b, p. 63).

Generally speaking, the U.S. played a decisive role in NATO’s enlargement process and in the accession of new member states from the East – the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary – on 12 March 1999. Germany, in agreement with the U.S., faced a serious challenge of palliating the trenchant criticism voiced by Russia that was levelled at the new NATO strategy. Thanks to direct top-level talks between Chancellor H. Kohl, French President J. Chirac and Russian President B. Yeltsin that were held in Moscow, the above controversies were successfully mollified. The talks culminated in signing in Paris on 27 May 1997 an agreement between Russia and NATO, which formulated new foundations for cooperation between Russia, the U.S. and its European allies, and which established regular consultations within the Russia – NATO Council (Cziomer, 2000, pp. 15–30). Those events and decisions were equally important for setting a new stage in the development of Polish-German military cooperation.

The major problems and challenges of Polish-German military cooperation after 1999

Prior to 12 March 1999 when Poland obtained the formal status of a NATO member state, Polish-German relations became cemented and expanded at a multilateral level. The idea behind initiating the Polish-German-Danish cooperation blossomed during the talks of Ministers of Defence of those countries that took place on Bornholm island in 1994. After numerous consultations held on Rugia island the concept of creating a joint staff unit was put forward in 1996. The formal decision about establishing a multinational corps was made by the Ministers of Defence of Denmark, Germany and Poland in July 1997.

However, not until Poland joined NATO did the Multinational Corps Northeast located in Szczecin officially commence operations on 18 September 1999. Its duties were related with the tasks envisioned in Arti-
Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 pointing to collective defence in the case of aggression and hostilities. The Corps’ staff, nevertheless, is additionally obliged to participate in rapid response operations or to offer support in times of peace. The Corp’s staff can perform the function of the command of the entire missions or the Land Forces’ component. Furthermore, the Corps is prepared to take command of the disaster relief and humanitarian missions. The decision about the Corps’ participation in any military action is taken by representatives of the Ministries of Defence and by representatives of the command of Land Forces. The Chief Commander, Deputy Commander and the Chief of Staff hold office by rotation and are appointed every four years by individual countries. After the Corps’ expansion between 2004–2014 it amassed 50,000 soldiers that are stationed in several dozen military units in different countries, yet are available for use only in case of war. In times of peace the Command’s personnel consists of about 160–200 officers, non-commissioned officers and about 20 civilian employees. The maintenance and operating expenses are covered consensually by Denmark, Germany and Poland.

A major controversy within the Corps sparked off when the Ministry of Defence in Warsaw, without previous consultations with Germany and Denmark, granted consent to the Corps’ participation in the military intervention of the “coalition of the willing” led by the U.S. in Iraq. As Germany refused to send their troops to Iraq it was solely representatives of Polish and Danish units that participated in the mission. Once the differences were settled between the U.S. and the FRG and once the Ministries of Defence of Poland, Denmark and Germany reached an agreement in late 2005, the Corps’ representatives and soldiers of all three states joined the NATO-led stabilization mission in Afghanistan – the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2007. It should be emphasized that the Multinational Corps Northeast achieved full combat readiness in 2006. In the light of further NATO expansion eastwards since 2006, officers from 18 NATO member states also participated in a variety of the Corps’ combat trainings and drills (Sokołowski, 2007, pp. 171–188).

The accession of Poland and other 11 states to the EU in mid-2004 added to the European agenda the issue of bolstering the EU’s defence policy. Given the European Security Strategy of 2003 such an objective was planned to be accomplished by establishing the European Union Battlegroups. In October 2004 the Ministers of Defence of the EU member states determined their number at 13 battlegroups. This matter was also addressed at the meeting of the Weimar Triangle’s Ministers of Defence
that was held on 25 July 2006 in Wieliczka. That meeting concluded with expressing the need to bring into being the EU Weimar Battlegroup no later than by 2013. Due to the considerable military effort of Poland, Germany and partially also France that was put into the stabilization mission in Afghanistan, the implementation of the above-mentioned initiative was slightly delayed. Not before the negotiations in Warsaw on 28 January 2009 the structure of the battlegroup was devised, as well as the input and tasks of each participating state. Poland acquired the status of framework nation assuming the command of the battlegroup and making available the engineer battalion with the support subdivisions, which constitutes 70% of the group’s manpower. Germany was responsible for securing logistics, whereas France was obliged to provide medical support. As was agreed upon, the Weimar Battlegroup assumed combat duty from 1 January 2013 till 30 June 2013 (Janiszewski, 2014, pp. 41–42).

Altogether, one can assert that the Weimar Battlegroup serves the purpose of completing the so-called Petersberg tasks of the EU. Hence, within its capacity is to interpose between hostile parties, to prevent the escalation of certain conflicts and to support humanitarian and evacuation operations. Nevertheless, so far the EU battlegroups have not undertaken any foreign missions, therefore their readiness and mode of operation still require enhancement.

The Polish-German military cooperation demonstrated significant a weapons shortage on the part of the Polish army, in particular in case of obsolete tanks and warplanes. In 2000 the FRG offered Poland, for a symbolic price of 1 German mark (DM), decommissioned in Germany and in good technical condition, Leopard 2A4 battle tanks that were manufactured between 1979–1982. In January 2001 128 Leopard 2A4 battle tanks were given to the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade in Świętoszowo. Apart from battle tanks, Poland also received technical servicing and logistical support needed for their operations, with an estimated value of 90 million euros. Additionally, in 2003 Poland received from the FRG, again for a symbolic price of 1 euro, 23 MiG-29 fighter aircraft that were taken from the military resources of the former GDR. However, those aircraft were in poor technical condition, hence before being hangared in the 22nd Air Base in Malbork they had to undergo extensive repair and overhaul. It is worth mentioning that at the turn of 1994–1995 Poland was given free of charge 18 Mi-24 attack helicopters, previously belonging to GDR, which were in good shape, yet they were not taken over by the Bundeswehr (Ibidem, pp. 44–45).
Overall, it should be highlighted that the Polish accession to NATO (1999) and the EU (2004) resulted in a further improvement of Polish-German bi- and multilateral military cooperation. The 20th anniversary of the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 17 June 1991 created an opportunity to summarize the cooperation and to formulate new objectives for the future.

During the anniversary celebrations held in Warsaw on 21 June 2011, which were accompanied by political consultations, both states made an extensive declaration and issued a program of further cooperation. The military cooperation matters were included in chapter 11 of the document – “Security, defence and humanitarian aid”. Aside from general expressions of the United Nations (UN), NATO, the EU and other international organizations’ need to cooperate in order to keep peace, security and disarmament, the document postulated, in terms of Polish-German military cooperation, the following:

1. An optimistic assessment of cooperation within the Multinational Corps Northeast that after achieving its operational capacity (2006) had to strive to meet the high standards of NATO and had to foster internationalization of the cooperating NATO member states.
2. An increase of the joint commitment (together with France) to develop the EU’s Weimar Battlegroup.
3. The development and enhancement of the ground anti-aircraft system, together with specialized units of the armed forces, in particular the missile defence brigades in Warsaw and Bad Suelze.
4. The development of partnership between units supporting the logistic brigades of the Polish Army and the tactical units of the Bundeswehr.
5. The endeavour to strengthen cooperation between the Polish and German Navies.
6. The acceleration of actions undertaken to adjust both states’ armoured forces to NATO’s Rapid Reaction Force, in particular taking into account similar Polish and German units.
7. The declared intention to negotiate a new international agreement concerning bilateral cooperation in the field of defence, which shall be elaborated on below – Program współpracy, 21 June (2011).

One of the components of the above-mentioned Program of Intergovernmental Cooperation was the publication of two documents by the German and Polish Ministries of Defence:
1. Information on Polish-German military cooperation,
2. Information on the new framework agreement concerning defence cooperation between RP and the FRG that was signed on 21 June 2011 by both states’ Ministers of Defence (Ministrowie Obrony Polski i Niemiec podpisali umowę o współpracy, 2011).

The information on military cooperation specified major areas of cooperation, thus emphasizing that between 1991 and 2001 423 representatives of the Polish army participated in various forms of professional training. The contacts between the National Defence University in Warsaw, in particular its War Gaming and Simulation Centre, and the Warfighting Simulation Centre in Wildflecken in Germany, were assessed as highly valuable. In addition, the new framework agreement nullified the previous four agreements, including the first agreement, namely the accord between the Ministers of Defence signed on 21 January 1993. Article 2 Passage 1 of the new treaty painstakingly enumerates 24 areas of bilateral cooperation, taking into account both purely military matters, scientific research in the field of defence, leading-edge technology and cooperation within the defence industries. Article 2.2 points to numerous forms of execution the collaboration in 24 areas mentioned in the accord. The final part of the accord indicates the departments responsible for implementing and honouring the agreement. On the Polish side these were the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Economic Cooperation with Foreign Countries, whereas on the German side these were the Federal Minister of Defence and the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy. A list of priorities for both Ministries of Defence as concerns future cooperation includes:

- Joint preparation of Polish and German armed forces for combat duty of the Weimar Battlegroup (2013),
- The development of international relations on the part of the Multinational Corps Northeast,
- Exchange of experiences as concerns the number reduction of the armed forces, the reforms of the Polish Army and the Bundeswehr, as well as the professionalization of the armed services,
- The development of contacts between military academies and universities of Poland and Germany.

In order to unlock the potential of its Land Forces Poland purchased in 2013 yet another batch of used tanks, namely 14 Leopard 2A4 and 105 of the more recent Leopard 2A5. Such an acquisition complemented 128
Leopard 2A4 tanks that were purchased in 2003 and that were stationed in the 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade in Świętoszowo (Dąbrowska, 2013).

Between 2011–2015 regular contacts between the Polish and German Ministers of Defence were maintained, and provisions of the agreement on defence cooperation of 21 June 2011 were gradually implemented. This was a consequence of NATO’s deteriorating relations with Russia in the aftermath of the Crimea annexation, the continuing support offered by the Kremlin to the separatists in Donbas along with other Russian actions aiming at destabilization of Ukraine, or finally – the NATO Wales Summit declaration (spring 2014) that postulated the reinforcement of the “eastern flank” of the Alliance (Cziomer, 2015). At a meeting of the Ministers of Defence – Ursula von der Leyen and Tomasz Siemoniak – in Berlin on 29 October 2014 a joint agenda for action drawn up by the Polish Armed Forces and the Bundeswehr’s General Staffs was published. It envisaged, among other things, the intensification of cooperation at the level of brigades and battalions, interaction between different types of armaments – tanks, infantry, artillery, mountain infantry; the joint training for the new generations of soldiers, or the enhancement of interoperability between Polish and German troops (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2014).

At the end of 2014 the NATO command in Brussels commenced preparation of the eastern flank’s “spearhead” that will be formed primarily by German, Dutch and Norwegian troops, with participation of the Multinational Corps Northeast and Polish Armed Forces (Ziedler, 2014). The preparations for the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016 caused that the meeting between the Polish Armed Forces’ Chief of Staff General and the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr held on 13 March 2015 was devoted to discuss, with the help of co-workers and experts, the cooperation between the Multinational Corps Northeast and the Bundeswehr or further details of Polish-German military cooperation (Bundeswehr, 2015). The familiarization visit of the new Polish Minister of Defence Antoni Macierewicz (member of the Law and Justice Party government) to the German Federal Ministry of Defence on 28 January 2016 also served as preparation purpose for the NATO Summit (Romaniec, 2016).

All things considered, despite the discrepancies in the approach of Poland and Germany into diverse aspects of European and international security, Polish-German military cooperation after 1999 was subjected to development and intensification in both bilateral and multilateral dimensions.
Conclusions

For the last 25 years Polish-German military cooperation has constituted a vital element of European security. Due to different geopolitical localizations resulting from the end of the Cold War at the turn of 1989–1990, as well as due to NATO’s and the EU’s expansion eastwards (1999–2006) and a distinct assessment of the Russian threat, Poland and Germany do not evince equal interests in the field of security. Still, for 25 years it has not hindered both states’ desire to enter into partnership and establish close cooperation within various domains, in particular in the field of the military affairs.

The first stage of such cooperation, up to 1999 was dominated by different forms of bilateral partnership, whereas between 1999–2016 this cooperation was amplified and acquired a multilateral dimension. The greatest accomplishments of the multilateral collaboration are: the activity of Polish, German and Danish Multinational Corps Northeast within NATO since 1999 as well as the Polish, German and French Weimar Battlegroup operating since 2006 that was created as part of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy. Cooperation between Poland and Germany within the NATO and the EU structure exerted a beneficial impact on the amplification and intensification of the bilateral cooperation, especially subsequently to the signing of the new agreement on defence cooperation on 21 June 2011. Polish-German military cooperation grew in importance after the Russian Federation annexed Crimea in March 2014 and engaged in supporting pro-Russian separatists in Donbas ever since the spring of 2014. As a result of the aggravation of NATO’s relations with Russia, Germany has assumed a significant role in the formation of the “spearhead” that would strengthen the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Summary

The article presents general premises and problems of the last 25 years of Polish-German military cooperation. The paper consists of three sections, that offer a synthetic presentation of: 1) the significance of the military factor for the security of Poland and Germany, 2) the beginnings and scope of military cooperation up until Poland’s accession to NATO in 1999, 3) major challenges and problems of military cooperation after 1999. The diverse historical experiences and the geopolitical localization
of Poland and Germany have affected their approach to military affairs, which constitute an element of their security interests. Nevertheless, this has not exerted a negative impact on Polish-German military cooperation. Up until 1999, that is in the first stage of such cooperation it was of a bilateral nature. The first ministerial agreement on military cooperation signed on 21 January 1993 encompassed the armed forces in their entirety – Land Forces, Navy and Air Forces. After Poland joined NATO (1999) and the EU (2004) the bilateral cooperation was amplified and covered different forms of multilateral collaboration. This partnership was based on the agreement on military cooperation of 21 June 2011, in which major significance was given to the Polish, German and Danish Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, operating within NATO, and the EU’s Weimar Battlegroup.

**Keywords:** Poland, Germany, 25 years, military cooperation

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