

SECURITY STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

THE POLISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICES AND SECURITY DILEMMAS OF A FRONTLINE STATE

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Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze the dynamics of Poland's intelligence sector reform following the 2015 general elections and present tasks and challenges facing the Polish intelligence services. In the aftermath of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015, the long period of liberal dominance was ended with the triumph of nationalist conservative Law and Justice Party. Illiberal elements incorporated into democratic governance have raised numerous concerns and official warnings from the European Commission. In parallel, strong support for NATO reinforcement, growing military spending and important changes in the national defence system (establishment of territorial defence forces) have appeased the critical voices and rescued Poland from isolation in the transatlantic security system. The new government has constantly highlighted Poland's position as a frontline state vis a vis Russia and its close ally – Belarus. Moreover, neighbourhood with war-torn Ukraine has added more risks to geostrategic location. In this complex environment, Poland's intelligence services have also undergone important changes: personnel reshuffling, politicization and partial reorganization. The paper aims at examining the capacity of Poland as a middle European state to cope effectively with security problems and challenges emerging from both internal political dynamics and external strategic shifts.

Keywords: Poland, special services, Law and Justice Party, security, defence, intelligence reform

Introduction

After the long 8-year period of liberal rule in Poland, the 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections brought about a true seachange in

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Polish politics, including defence policy and intelligence sector.¹ The victory of conservative Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS) party, under Jarosław Kaczyński strong-hand leadership, meant the beginning of a deep transformation of the political regime toward illiberal democracy saturated with nationalist discourse and confrontational posture both on the domestic political stage and in the international arena.² Although PiS's electoral triumph and the high popular support maintained since the elections have been the effect of inertia of the former liberal Civic Platform in the last period of its rule and weaknesses as the main opposition party after 2015, the strong position of PiS in the party system and political life raises a query of its impact on Poland's security strategy, defence policy and international posture as the NATO and EU member state. Consequently, it entails the issue of organization, performance and effectiveness of intelligence services.

The 2015 political change and its consequences for Poland's security policy and strategy

Poland's foreign policy has undergone a significant and substantive reconfiguration after 2015. Heavily critical of its predecessors, the Szydło government introduced under the slogan „getting up off our knees” a clear nationalist posture and a much more assertive, even hardened posture on external relations. First of all, Poland challenged the EU's policies and principles with regard to asylum and migration, environmental protection and rule of law. Moreover, having implemented some elements of illiberal democracy in the political system, it provoked growing concerns among EU institutions: the European Commission and the European Parliament. A confrontational stance adopted by the Polish government led to escalation of reactions of these institutions, including the possibility of triggering the sanction procedure under Article 7 TEU.³ A more defiant position was demonstrated in form of disobedience to the decision of the Court of Justice of the EU on adopting interim measures concerning suspension by the Polish

¹ See: Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Agnieszka Jasiewicz-Betkiewicz, “Poland” *European Journal of Political Research Political Data Yearbook* Vol. 55, 2016, pp. 204–215; Radosław Markowski, “The Polish parliamentary election of 2015: a free and fair election that results in unfair political consequences” *West European Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 6, 2016, pp. 1311–1322.

² Jakub Dymek, “Poland's Rightward Turn” *Dissent*, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2016, pp. 123–127.

³ Eszter Zalan, “EU Commission sets red lines for Poland on Article 7”, *EU Observer.com*, 26 July 2017, accessed 28 July 2017 at <https://euobserver.com/political/138618>.

authorities of intensive logging in the Białowieża Forest, which is a protected Natura 2000 and Unesco World Heritage site.⁴

The above mentioned examples of anti-EU stance stem from deeper structural prerequisites, strongly embedded in the mind set of PiS's leadership. The concept of counterrevolution, vowed by Jarosław Kaczyński, the chairman of Law and Justice, entails a deep revision of norms, values and attitudes dominating in Western Europe and their replacement by traditional ideological, societal and economic patterns, specific for countries of Central Europe long located on the periphery of the "modern" Europe. Counterrevolution directly addresses Europeanisation as a process of cultural modernisation and socio-economic transformation. It opposes supranational mechanisms of EU governance, deregulatory mechanisms of the common market, harmonisation of laws and the current institutional setting of the EU. European integration, according to Kaczyński, brought about a "gigantic cultural degradation". The European Union in order to survive must be constituted on national and religious values which should be an integral part of "European documents."⁵

Although conservative, nationalist, sometimes xenophobic discourse has proliferated across the European Union, it was employed by smaller parties, not represented in the government, except Poland and other Central European countries: Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, forming the so-called Visegrad Four (V4). Given that the Orban government in Hungary has been an influential reference pattern for the Law and Justice party, the Polish-Hungarian alliance has been considered as the cornerstone of Poland's foreign policy. It was also a safeguard against the EU's growing irritation at Poland's defiant position in matters requiring unanimity in the Council of the EU. This has been particularly relevant in the face of deteriorating relations between Poland and the two "engines" of European integration: Germany and France.

Anti-German attitudes in Polish society were explored for the sake of electoral campaigns and popular mobilization around PiS's political projects. Germany was blamed for the migration crisis in Europe and – indirectly – the growing insecurity and terrorist threats. In historical context, it was portrayed as an unsolved nation which managed to avoid a

⁴ Ordonnance du Vice-Président de la Cour, 27 juillet 2017, dans l'affaire C-441/17 R, accessed 28 July 2017 at <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text&docid=193373&pageIndex=0&doclang=FR&mode=req&dir&occ=first&part=1&cid=455841>.

⁵ Jacek Karnowski, "Europejska (kontr)rewolucja" *W Sieci*, 12-18 September 2016, p. 28.

just punishment for the horrible crimes and atrocities committed during World War II. As a result, PiS demanded war reparations estimated at close to \$1 trillion.⁶

France has been criticized for anti-Polish motives in Emmanuel Macron's presidential campaign, concerning labour migration in the EU, especially posted workers from Poland, illiberal elements of PiS's rule and – last but not least – the questioning of “European values” by the Polish government. As the president of France, Macron marginalized Poland not only in the EU, but even in the central and eastern part of the Union. During his tour of Central and Eastern Europe in August 2017, he steered clear of Poland. While in Bulgaria, he commented that Poland is “a country that has decided to go against European interests in many areas” and added that it is “placing itself on the margins of Europe's future history”.⁷ France's criticism of the Polish authorities has addressed yet another controversial issue. The Szydło government decided in October 2016 to cancel a \$3.5-billion deal with Airbus Helicopters for 50 military multi-role Eurocopters EC725 “Caracal” which had been concluded by the former liberal government. Negotiations of a proposed offset agreement were broken off in suspicious circumstances by representatives of the controversial Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz.⁸ French president Hollande and his defence minister indefinitely postponed their visit to Warsaw scheduled for October 2016 and the relations between the two countries rapidly deteriorated.

Polish foreign policy traditionally has been pro-American. From the beginning of the 21st century, Poland has considered the United States as its strongest ally, the key actor in the Euro-Atlantic security system and guardian of its national security. Despite certain reservations regarding the Bush and

⁶ “Poland could seek war reparations from Germany, say parliament researchers” *Politico*, 11 September 2017, accessed on 14 September 2017 at <http://www.politico.eu/article/poland-could-seek-war-reparations-from-germany-say-parliament-researchers/>; “The Polish government is seeking \$1trn in war reparations from Germany” *New Statesman*, 18 September 2017, accessed 20 September 2017 at <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/observations/2017/09/polish-government-seeking-1trn-war-reparations-germany>.

⁷ “Emmanuel Macron called 'arrogant' and 'inexperienced' by Polish prime minister Beata Szydło in worker spat” *The Telegraph*, 25 August 2017, accessed 28 August 2017 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/25/emmanuel-macron-called-arrogant-inexperienced-polish-prime-minister/>.

⁸ “Polish defence minister denies overstepping powers” *Radio Poland*, 9 May 2017, accessed 28 August 2017 at <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/306113,Polish-defence-minister-denies-overstepping-powers>.

Obama administrations, Poland consistently supported U.S. global strategy.⁹ However, following the 2015 political change in Poland, U.S.–Polish diplomatic relations turned sour and reached a bottom during President Obama’s visit to Warsaw on the occasion of NATO summit in July 2016. Barack Obama rebuked Polish leaders over changes in the Constitutional Court and a presumed violation of standards regarding the rule of law.¹⁰ The electoral victory of Donald Trump was enthusiastically welcomed by the Polish right-wing sector. Despite his personal connections with Russia’s top officials, he was praised for anti-immigrant stance, distance from EU integration and criticism of European allies paying too little for the collective defence under NATO’s umbrella. Moreover, his passionate history-saturated speech in Warsaw during an official visit to Poland in July 2017 caused tremendous excitement among the Polish authorities and the national-conservative sector of society.¹¹

Good relations with the United States have been considered as a priority also for Poland’s security policy and strategy. Polish foreign policy strategy for the years 2017-2021, adopted in July 2017, put it straightforwardly: “Both within NATO and bilaterally, Poland will seek to reinforce its defence partnership with the United States, particularly with respect to US military presence in Poland and more broadly, across the entire eastern flank. American military involvement in Europe is key to maintaining NATO’s collective defence and deterrence capabilities.”¹² This is particularly important in the context of main threats to Poland’s security which were located on NATO’s Eastern flank: Russia’s aggressive stance, armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, Belarus’s submission to the Russian expansive interests. Therefore, Polish government strove for NATO’s greater interest in strengthening the Eastern flank and bigger involvement in defence capacities. NATO’s summit in Warsaw in July 2016 brought satisfactory results to the host country. The Alliance agreed on the military adaptation on the Eastern

⁹ See Artur Gruszczak, “Poland: A Skillfull Player”, in Eleanor E. Zeff, Ellen B. Pirro (eds), *The European Union and the member states* (Boulder, CO – London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015, 3rd ed.), pp. 259-278.

¹⁰ “Obama Rebukes Poland’s Right-Wing Government” *The New York Times*, 8 July 2016, accessed 28 August 2017 at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/09/world/europe/obama-poland-nato-summit.html>.

¹¹ “Right-Tilting Poland Welcomes Trump as Europe Watches Warily” *The New York Times*, 5 July 2017, accessed 28 August 2017 at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/05/world/europe/poland-trump-visit-g20.html>.

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, *Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021*, pp. 6-7, accessed 14 September 2017 at <http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/0c98c3b2-9c5d-4c42-8761-f7827134ee76:JCR>.

flank including the deployment of four multinational battalions with extended military tasks. One of them, to the satisfaction of the Polish government, will be stationed in Poland and – moreover – be composed of U.S. troops.

Although Poland – backed by the United States – attained its key security policy objective: a permanent NATO military presence on Polish territory, it has been marginalized in the European arena due to the disagreements with France and Germany over regional and European issues. As a form of compensation, in 2016 it launched along with Croatia the Three Seas Initiative¹³ built upon the core V4 (Visegrad Four) Group. However, this community is substantially diversified and a traditional geopolitical view on the eastern part of Europe is its lowest common denominator.¹⁴ Its security potential and military capabilities are fairly limited. The catalogue of threats and risks is quite heterogeneous and the attitude toward Russia rather mixed.

The above outlined portrayal of Poland's security features carries far-reaching implications for the Polish intelligence community. Firstly, the change of government in 2015 resulted in politicization of security sector and intelligence services, bringing about important personal and institutional alterations. Secondly, those changes weakened the potential and capabilities of intelligence and defence structures as well as complicated international collaboration links with major European allies. Thirdly, apart from the deficit of official information, one should acknowledge that foreign services, particularly Russian intelligence, have been increasingly active in Poland, particularly in the cyber/communication space, seeking to undermine Poland's position in NATO, weaken cooperation with EU institutions and enhance anti-Ukrainian attitudes. This constitutes a real challenge to Polish counterintelligence capacities and tests Poland's resistance to growing activities of adverse intelligence forces.

The organization and performance of the Polish intelligence services

Poland's intelligence community is relatively complex – in terms of a middle European power – and considerably diversified. Devoid of precise

¹³ Apart from the Visegrad Four, the Three Seas Initiative was backed by the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), several Balkan countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria) and Austria. See: *Geostrategic Insights Into the Joint Polish-Croatian "Three Seas Initiative"*, accessed 14 September 2017 at <https://www.globalresearch.ca/geostrategic-insights-into-the-joint-polish-croatian-three-seas-initiative/5598048>.

¹⁴ See Kamil Zwolski, "Poland's Foreign-Policy Turn" *Survival*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2017, pp. 172-173.

normative bases and clear organizational framework, it encompasses numerous institutions and agencies which are at least partially involved in intelligence activities. Moreover, the scope of competencies and duties is not always well established which may lead to overlapping or – in extreme cases – conflicting activities. While territorial division of competencies is generally clear, with foreign intelligence agencies possessing exclusive powers to act abroad, homeland intelligence is an area dominated by a plethora of agencies, services and bodies. Part of them is focused on external threats, performing the functions of counterintelligence; others deal with criminal intelligence, engaging numerous law enforcement bodies; and yet others try to handle new intelligence challenges, such as cyber threats or progress in artificial intelligence.¹⁵

Intelligence is the principal domain of special services. In the Polish legal system¹⁶ five institutions are recognized as “special services”: (1) Internal Security Agency; (2) Foreign Intelligence Agency, (3) Military Intelligence Service, (4) Military Counterintelligence Service and (5) Central Anti-Corruption Bureau. They are authorized to collect, process and disseminate information and intelligence acquired or produced by covert means or methods. Moreover, the 2002 Law on the Internal Security Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Agency in Article 12 lists other entities involved in the protection of state security, among them the Police, Gendarmerie (Military Police), Border Guard, Customs Service, Government Protection Office, treasury chambers, tax authorities and intelligence and reconnaissance units of the Armed Forces. Some intelligence functions are granted to them in order to enable their co-operation with the special services with regard to intelligence and information security of the state in the preventive and investigative contexts. What is more, some specialized institutions and bodies undertake certain intelligence activities. One should mention the General Inspectorate of Financial Information - a unit of financial intelligence within the Ministry of Treasury; the Government Protection Office – a uniformed and armed service tasked with the protection of VIPs and respective facilities and

¹⁵ See more: Artur Gruszczyk, “Poland: The Special Services Since the Independence”, in Bob de Graaff, James M. Nyce (eds.), *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 279-290; Stéphane Lefebvre, “Poland’s Attempts to Develop a Democratic and Effective Intelligence System, Phase 1: 1989–1999” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2016, pp. 470-502.

¹⁶ The respective legal acts are: The 2002 Law on the Internal Security Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Agency, the 2006 Law on the Military Counterintelligence Service and the Military Intelligence Service and the 2006 Law on the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau.

infrastructure; the Special Operation Forces Command – the special forces command integrating five elite commando units involved in special operations home and abroad and developing the required intelligence support.

The above listed numerous agencies and entities have been tasked with differentiated goals, duties and missions scattered across various areas of state activities in the area of security and defence. Their main objective is collection, analysis, processing and delivery to relevant authorities of information which may be vital for the state's security, its constitutional order, economic and defence potential, elements of critical infrastructure as well as international position. The resulting intelligence products should enable an appropriate and effective identification and countering of major threats to national defence, security and combat capacity of the Armed Forces, international terrorism, extremism and organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as well as threats emerging in the areas of international tensions, conflicts and crises.

The management of such a vast institutional structure has not been an easy task. Although formally subordinated to the head of government, the secret services and other intelligence-related bodies fall under specific competences of relevant ministers, subject to their prerogatives and the range of activities. The Prime Minister enacts statute to each of the secret services, appoints and recalls their heads after consultations with the President, the Board for Special Services and the Parliamentary Committee for Special Services. The Prime Minister also issues binding directives and requests information and opinion from the heads of the secret services as well as the Minister for Internal Affairs – with regard to civilian intelligence bodies and Minister of National Defence – with reference to the military branch of intelligence and counterintelligence.

The defence intelligence organizations have kept a specific profile in the system of special services due to their institutional affiliation, international obligations and sensitivity of matters and areas of their concern. They have striven to distinguish themselves from civilian intelligence agencies in terms of internal organization, hierarchization, and external environment. In fact, they are much more hermetic and inward-looking than the civilian counterparts. The role of the Defence Minister is also more relevant with regard to the essential intelligence tasks.

The head of government is assisted by Minister-Coordinator for Special Services which occupies a special and prominent position in the Council of Ministers. The Office of Minister-Coordinator was established in

1997 with the purpose of fulfilling such tasks as supervision over the functioning of the special services, coordination and control of their activities and cooperation with internal security agencies as well as competent authorities and services from other states. In 2007, the new Prime Minister Donald Tusk, the head of liberal Civic Platform, initially had shifted control over the special services to his Chancellery but later decided to delegate this responsibility to Minister of Internal Affairs. Therefore, the special services were directly supervised by Interior Minister as coordinator appointed by and subordinated to the Prime Minister and also head of an agency of government administration responsible for internal security and law enforcement and thereby active in criminal intelligence and civilian counterintelligence. Such a strict attachment of intelligence services to the Prime Minister was abolished after the 2015 elections. Minister-Coordinator for Special Services was reconstituted as a member of the cabinet fulfilling tasks allocated by the Prime Minister and acting on behalf of the head of government as coordinator and supervisor of the special services.

Apart from the Office of Minister-Coordinator for Special Services, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers (the government) is assisted by the Board for Special Services. It is a consultative body entitled to give opinion and advice on matters concerning the planning, supervision and coordination of operations of the special services and of activities performed by the Police, Border Guard, Military Gendarmerie, Customs and other relevant institutions protecting the state's security. The Board is chaired by the Prime Minister and consists of the Secretary and the members who are Ministers of Defence, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Finance as well as the Head of the National Security Bureau and – if appropriate – Minister-Coordinator for Special Services. Meetings of the Board may be attended by the heads of the five special services as well as the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Special Services. In extraordinary circumstances the President may delegate his representative to a meeting of the Board.

The post-2015 developments in the intelligence community and the project of a “big reform”

The new government, headed by Beata Szydło but formed under heavy influence from Jarosław Kaczyński, the Chairman of the Law and Justice party, was composed of his staunch followers advocating uncompromised change in domestic politics as well as firm promotion of the national interest abroad.

One of them, Mariusz Kamiński, was nominated to the re-established post of Minister–Coordinator for Special Services. During the earlier short period of PiS’s rule (2005-2007), he was an originator of the idea of establishing a special anti-corruption service. Having established the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, Kamiński was appointed the first head and held this post until 2009 when he was dismissed on the charge of misconduct and abuse of his powers with regard to investigation into one of potential corruption plots (the so-called Land Affair). Next he was sentenced to three years in prison and banned from performing public functions for ten years.¹⁷ He launched an appeal and in the meantime his party PiS won presidential and parliamentary elections. Soon after having been sworn as the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda pardoned Kamiński which provoked a stormy reaction of many lawyers claiming that act unlawful and the liberal opposition accusing the president of cronyism. The reason was that Kamiński’s appeal was still with the appropriate court. Later on, Poland’s Supreme Court ruled that the pardon was premature.

Notwithstanding these reservations, concerning particularly security clearance and access to classified documents¹⁸, Minister-Coordinator Kamiński energetically started to perform his duties. He strengthened the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau in order to reduce tax fraud and evasion and thereby contribute to increased budgetary incomes required to finance costly social programs launched by the Szydło government. He also took up the task of preparing a “big reform” of the special services. The concept of reform emerged already before 2015. The former liberal government outlined a plan of consolidation of intelligence services under a single new ministry. Oversight would have been executed by a special governmental committee of state security. The Internal Security Agency (ABW) would have lost its law-enforcement competencies and converted into a classical counterintelligence service responsible to Minister for Internal Affairs. After the change in power, PiS revived a blueprint which had been prepared during the earlier period of its rule (2005-2007). It also entailed consolidation of intelligence services

¹⁷ “Poland’s Jailed Anti-Corruption Boss Hails ‘Justice and Fairness’, as President Side-steps Court Procedure to Pardon Him” *Inside-Poland.com*, 19 November 2015, accessed 15 September 2017 at <http://inside-poland.com/t/polands-jailed-anti-corruption-boss-hails-justice-and-fairness-as-president-side-steps-court-procedure-to-pardon-him/>.

¹⁸ The Polish Law on the Protection of Classified Information stipulates in Art. 30.2. That the person who has been sentenced by final judgement to imprisonment for an intentional offense prosecuted by public accusation or for a deliberate fiscal offense may not be granted security clearance.

under a separate ministry. However, the influential Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz was hesitant toward losing his control over military intelligence and counterintelligence. In November 2016 the media informed that Minister-Coordinator for Special Services had a ready-made proposal for reform. It included the establishing of a new Ministry for State Protection which would encompass all civilian intelligence services. Therefore, they would no longer be subordinated directly to the Prime Minister and their personnel would be significantly reduced.¹⁹ However, no official draft was presented and several months later, in July 2017, the issue of reform reappeared in new circumstances.

Following the presidential veto over judicial reform, Jarosław Kaczyński gave an interview in July 2017 to the main conservative Catholic media outlet TV Trwam heralding an intention of launching new “big reforms”, amongst them one concerning special services. Earlier, the media disclosed central tenets of a draft law on the National Security Agency prepared by Minister-Coordinator Kamiński. The new service will integrate the civilian intelligence services: ABW and AW and have expanded competencies with regard to surveillance, interception of communication, data mining, counterterrorism and all “threats to national security”. A new Ministry of National Security will be established with the aim of controlling, overseeing and coordinating all special services, including the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau and both military intelligence agencies. Although the latter will keep falling within the remit of Defence Minister, the new Minister for National Security will be authorized to set guidelines as well as control and coordinate their activities. Political control over the Ministry of National Security also will undergo deep changes. The Board for Special Services will be replaced by a Board of the Chiefs of Special Services composed by the heads of four intelligence institutions chaired by Minister of National Security. Representatives of the president and prime minister **may** be invited to the meetings of the Board. Moreover, National Security Minister will have the right to request from the members of the Council of Ministers and other governmental bodies any information indispensable for the matters of national security.²⁰

¹⁹ “ABW i Agencja Wywiadu w jednym superresorcie? Minister Kamiński chce wielkiej reformy służb specjalnych” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 22 November 2016, accessed 14 September 2017 at <http://forsal.pl/artykuly/994934,ministerstwo-ochrony-panstwa-abw-i-agencja-wywiadu-sluzby-specjalne-reforma-kaminski.html>.

²⁰ “Superminister od bezpieczeństwa” *Onet.pl*, 12 June 2017, accessed 14 September 2017 at <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/superminister-od-bezpieczenstwa/v7k36cl>.

Meanwhile, the Internal Security Agency (ABW) underwent reorganization in mid-2017. Regional representations were reduced to only five and “external departments” replaced the resting representations. This entailed significant personal reshuffling aiming to dismiss officers with professional record tracing back to the Communist period. Although details were not announced to the public, budgetary plans point to a relatively wide scope of changes in the personnel. According to a well-informed “Rzeczpospolita” daily, the changes resulted in resignation from service of many experienced officers, especially from counterintelligence division.²¹

So far, the intelligence community was based on five agencies – special services. A draft law on the State Protection Service (PSO) suggests the emergence of yet another special service. PSO is intended to replace the Government Protection Bureau (BOR) – a uniformed and armed service with the task of protecting top government officials and key state buildings. PSO is endowed with additional competencies, going far beyond the routine activities of close executive protection and escort of top public officials and main state facilities. Its tasks include detection, identification and prevention of crime through investigation and information gathering. Specifically, PSO officers are responsible for identifying and analysing threats to protected persons and properties. For this purpose, they can introduce operational control in order to gather criminal intelligence through surveillance, eavesdropping and interception of communications as well as processing and storing data acquired from IT systems, including personal data, and biometric traits as well as genetic data amongst them. PSO is headed by the commander whose status is comparable to that of the chiefs of civilian intelligence services.

The post-2015 political transformation under the heading of “good change” entailed massive personal movements. They resulted partially from disagreements with the new authorities over the course of reforms, and were particularly evident in the Armed Forces, partially from ideological and political motivations behind PiS’s strategy. They could also be observed in the special services, although had less to do with dissent among the personnel; rather, they were imposed by the new authorities as an element of reconstruction of the intelligence community and “cleaning of deposits” left by former Communist officers. The latter objective corresponded with the conspiracy-like “system theory” heralded by the opponents of the political pacts concluded by Solidarity-led opposition with the Communist authorities

²¹ “Wielkie czyszczenie w ABW” *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 September 2017, accessed 29 September 2017 at <http://archiwum.rp.pl/artukul/1354418-Wielkie-czyszczenie-w-ABW.html>.

in 1989. Its main exponent, Andrzej Zybertowicz, a professor of sociology and the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and adviser to leading PiS politicians, maintained that the former communist secret services controlled the transition from Communism and kept their influence on the post-1989 transformation. Economy, security and law enforcement were the main domains of their hold. They were tolerated by the consequent democratic governments because either of their opportunism and fear of vengeance or by direct involvement of the protagonist of democratic transformation in collaboration with the former Communist services, including the famous leader of Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa. This thesis was resolutely advanced by the current Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz, a representative of the national-Catholic wing of the right sector who strove towards a systemic exposition of the former Communist assets in the state institutions. He has been a leading advocate of the conspiracy theory claiming that the tragedy in Smolensk in April 2010²² was orchestrated by Russian secret services in the passive attitude of Polish intelligence and counterintelligence agencies.

Conclusions: Intelligence and Poland's security dilemmas of a frontline state

Geopolitically, Poland's traditional position between Germany and Russia escalates dilemmas of cooperation and conflict. Germany has turned into Poland's biggest and most important economic and political partner, whereas Russia, after the annexation of Crimea and open interference in Ukraine, has been considered to be the biggest threat to stability in Europe. It was underlined in the Defense Concept of the Republic of Poland that "Russia is ready to destabilize the internal order of other states and to question their territorial integrity by openly violating international law. Russia's actions are often camouflaged and conducted below the threshold of an armed conflict. [...] Russia is also likely to provoke proxy wars in various parts of the world in order to exert pressure on the Western countries. [...] This policy is highly coordinated with the operations of Russia's special services, including the deployment of such instruments as disinformation campaigns against other countries."²³ For now, the priority

²²The presidential airplane with top officials on board, including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, crashed near the Russian city of Smolensk descending in extremely hard weather conditions. The Polish delegation travelled to mark the 70th anniversary of the massacre in Katyn, where the Soviet secret police NKVD slaughtered 20,000 Polish officers.

²³ *Koncepcja obronna Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. The Strategic Concept of the Republic of Poland*, Ministry of National Defense, May 2017, p. 24.

for the secret services, particularly ABW and CBA, has been investigation of cases of suspected offences or the most harmful for the national interest, especially in finance and economic management, activities of the former Civic Platform government.

Facing the increasingly complex security environment combining traditional pressure from the historical enemy in the East and new technology-driven threats in cyberspace, the Polish intelligence community must undergo substantive adjustment in order to cope effectively with constant challenges and tasks. Recent changes did entail reshaping and internal reorganization of agencies, services and units responsible for intelligence and counterintelligence, though they have not contributed yet to a higher effectiveness. Rather, they reflect the characteristic traits of the ruling party: politicization, ideologically motivated human resources management, double standards in democratic governance (de-communization, protection of fundamental rights, judicial oversight, public communication etc.), historical view on the current complex security environment, weakened cooperation with external partners, especially in the EU. A long-announced "big reform" of the special services seems to consolidate such model of the Polish intelligence community which would probably go more obsolete and dysfunctional with regard to Poland's national interests.

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