



An EU Survey on Whole-of-Government Approaches to External Conflict and Crisis

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# Poland Report

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## 1 | Introduction

If the UK leaves the EU, Poland will become the fifth-most populous country in the EU, and it will boast its fifth-biggest economy (measured in GDP PPP) thanks to having the fastest pace of GDP growth among the major EU economies. What's more, it will have the fifth-highest military expenditures among EU states. In fact, these expenditures are increasing rapidly and are supposed to reach 2.5 percent of GDP by 2030.

These factors help to explain why Poland drafted a few strategic documents developing the idea of a whole-of-government approach (WGA), although they sometimes are rather selective and superficial. In theory, such economic, demographic and military potentials, combined with elements of strategic thinking and a holistic approach, make Poland one of the key stakeholders of potential cooperation within the WGA among EU member states. However, one should mention several caveats. First, Poland has been more of a follower than a leader when it comes to operationalising a WGA for responding to foreign conflicts and crises. Second, substantial Polish military and police deployments abroad tend to not include a strong civil (including diplomatic) component, and receive completely negligible assistance from development-cooperation bodies or organisations. Third, countries whose security is of strategic importance to Poland (e.g. Ukraine) occasionally do not receive sufficient financial and organisational support from Poland.

These shortcomings when it comes to operationalising a WGA in foreign affairs can be attributed to structural problems, such as insufficient formal cooperation between various

national institutions. Instead, such cooperation is overshadowed by informal relations, political interference and the 'insularity' of state structures (not to mention the unnecessary rivalries between them). Moreover, the situation has deteriorated decisively since the parliamentary elections of 2015, which represent a turning point in the most recent history of Poland. The election saw the establishment of the first single-party government (de jure, a single electoral list) since the fall of communism. After the elections, the Law and Justice Party (PiS), a soft Eurosceptic and national-populist party, implemented a comprehensive political programme. Titled 'Good Change', the programme is transforming Poland from a liberal democracy that is based on the rule of law and protects individual and minority rights into a majoritarian and 'national' democracy with authoritarian elements. The governing party's virtual capture of the state has been accompanied by an exceptional rise in the number of informal networks working behind the scenes. There has been a major decrease in the transparency of the decision-making process as well as in the oversight and efficiency of state institutions. The rivalry between various PiS factions constitutes another serious impediment to embracing a WGA because each of them controls different institutions or departments.

Furthermore, Poland's rather close cooperation with key EU members states and EU institutions in pursuing a WGA to foreign conflicts and crises has grown considerably more difficult in recent years. The PiS views any efforts to further integrate the EU with suspicion and, in fact, advocates for a radical reversal in such trends and efforts. The Polish government has also nurtured very close ties with the United States and particularly with the Trump administration. Meanwhile, the dismantling of the rule of law in Poland has resulted in an unprecedented deterioration of relations between the Polish government and key EU member states and EU institutions.

## **2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?**

In recent decades, Poland has drafted quite a few documents promoting the idea of a WGA that also applies to externally directed activities. At present, a Strategy for Responsible Development for the period up to 2020 (Ministry of Investment and Development 2017) constitutes the most important and comprehensive official document concerning a WGA. At almost 420 pages, the strategy, which was adopted by the Polish government in February 2017, covers a wide range of fields, including security, economic external expansion and energy. The strategy particularly focuses on establishing an integrated system for managing hard and soft security. Mention of a WGA related to external activities can also be found in other official documents, such as laws or decrees on a national framework for cybersecurity policy for the 2017–2022 period (GCS n.d.), the multiannual development-cooperation programme for the 2016–2020 period (MFA 2018), an ordinance on the inter-ministerial team on Poland's resource policy (Government of Poland 2016), and Poland's defence concept (MoD 2017).

The quality of the above-mentioned documents is relatively high, but they also have some considerable shortcomings. For instance, the Strategy for Responsible Development (Ministry of Investment and Development 2017) aims to be holistic, but it is sometimes too vague in practice, such as by assuming that more concrete solutions will be worked out in the future, and it also neglects to cover some important issues (e.g. ODA, China and Russia).

Poland's WGA related to foreign affairs should be viewed in the context of its relations with the UN, especially as far as official development aid (ODA) is concerned. The Strategy for Responsible Development (*ibid.*) declares its compatibility with a number of UN documents, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Poland's multiannual development-cooperation programme for 2016–2020 (MFA 2018) also treats the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a point of reference.

However, in practical terms, the implementation of a Polish WGA in the UN context faces serious obstacles. For example, according to the above-mentioned UN documents, Poland is obliged to increase its ODA to 0.33 percent of GNP by 2030. Achieving this goal will be very challenging, and Poland doesn't even have a comprehensive long-term plan for how to reach that level. In 2018, Polish ODA accounted for just 0.14 percent of Polish GNP. Polish ODA increased in 2015 (from 0.10% of GNP), but it has stagnated again in recent years (OECD 2019).

In the 2000s, Poland's engagement in UN missions was very limited, and it was much more involved in NATO- and EU-led missions. The situation has recently changed to a certain degree because Poland started its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on 1 January 2018. In consequence, Poland decided in autumn 2019 that around 200 Polish soldiers would join the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Hard security occupies a considerably more important place in the Polish WGA in comparison to those of many EU member states owing to Poland's geographic location on the Eastern flank of the EU and NATO as well as to Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policies in Eastern Europe. The Strategy for Responsible Development (Ministry of Investment and Development 2017), the defence concept (MoD 2017: 30–32) and other security-related laws identify NATO (and particularly the US in the case of the defence concept) as Poland's main partner for security-related issues. Furthermore, Warsaw was an active participant in NATO's discussions about a WGA strategy. However, concrete linkages between the WGA of NATO and that of Poland are not explicitly mentioned in the official documents drafted by the Polish administration.

Due to NATO's importance to Polish security, Polish deployments abroad have usually come as part of NATO- or US-led missions, such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo. However, it should be noted that the PiS government has dramatically increased security-related cooperation with the US since 2015, and that this bilateral cooperation has seemingly taken precedence over working in a multilateral (i.e. NATO) framework. This strengthening of bilateral cooperation between Poland and the US is presented by both sides as being based on ideological affinities between US President Donald Trump and the PiS.

The EU does not constitute a key point of reference for Poland's WGA as it relates to foreign conflicts and crises. Generally speaking, the EU is mentioned rather rarely in Polish documents referring to its WGA. For instance, the EU Global Strategy of 2016 did not influence or inspire Polish documents regarding the national WGA, and it is not mentioned at all in the above-mentioned strategy and concept documents. Admittedly, one could say that some of them had been issued before the EU Global Strategy was even announced. But, if desired, these documents could have also been amended to include references to the Global Strategy.

In Polish documents especially focused on security, NATO occupies a much more prominent place than the EU. In contrast, when it comes to issues related to foreign affairs or ODA, the EU plays a more significant role as a point of reference for Poland's WGA. For instance, the country's multiannual cooperation development programme (MFA 2018: 44) states that "Poland will take care about the cohesion and complementarity of ENP with the development policy." Of note here is the fact that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is part of the Global Strategy. Moreover, almost 60 percent of Poland's total ODA is transferred to the EU budget (Polish Aid n.d.). However, Polish NGOs and public institutions are only involved to a very limited degree in efforts to implement projects co-funded by the EU.

In practice, Poland's cooperation with EU institutions and key EU member states in the WGA sphere results in a mixed picture and faces structural challenges and problems related to the most recent internal political developments in Poland. On the one hand, Poland is substantially engaged in EU-led missions in Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Western Balkans. However, Polish involvement in other EU missions is minimal or, more often, nonexistent. Furthermore, Polish deployment in EU missions operating outside of Europe has substantially declined in recent years. In consequence, Poland did not launch special WGA initiatives within the CSDP missions. In fact, since the decisive victory of the PiS in the parliamentary elections of October 2015, the domestic policies of the current Polish government have resulted in an unprecedented deterioration of Poland's relations with EU institutions and key EU member states, making WGA-based cooperation with them in the international arena more difficult than before.

### **3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?**

Poland has established an institutional setup that is tasked with elaborating and implementing the national WGA related to foreign affairs. Institutionally, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister occupies a central place in the WGA. As relates to the international dimension of the WGA, particularly prominent roles are played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, and the Ministry of National Defence.

The way in which the Strategy for Responsible Development (Ministry of Investment and Development 2017: 5) was elaborated represents a good example of the WGA at the preparatory stage. This process involved officials from almost all ministries and agencies in addition to outside experts. They were divided into 12 inter-ministerial theme-based teams, such as ones dedicated to energy, transport and environment, security, economic expansion abroad and the efficiency of spending EU funds. Although the entire process was conducted under the auspices of the prime minister, individual ministries occasionally assumed a temporary role as the main coordinator of efforts to prepare concrete strategies.

The Government Centre for Security (GCS) is a software of the state, so to speak, on issues related to security, and it represents a key component of a comprehensive emergency-management system. It is headed by a director appointed by and subordinate to the prime minister. The mission and the main task of the GCS is to assess both threats (including external ones) and possible responses to them on the basis of data received from a range of sources, including international partners. The GCS also oversees cooperation with international

partners or organisations related to emergency management. In the case of external conflicts and crises, this usually involves NATO and/or the EU.

The National Coordinator for International Development Cooperation serves as a proxy for the minister of foreign affairs in efforts to coordinate development aid and chairs the Development Cooperation Programme Board. The tasks of this opinion-making and consulting body include making proposals regarding geographical and thematic priorities of development cooperation, issuing opinions on drafts of the multiannual development-cooperation programme and annual plans, issuing opinions on annual reports related to the implementation of development-cooperation tasks by state administration authorities, and drafting government documents related to development cooperation (MFA 2018: 3). The board consists of 21 members representing various state institutions and civil society organisations (e.g. ministries, the parliament, NGOs, academia and the business community) (OECD n.d.: 2). However, at the end of 2017, the Department for Humanitarian Aid was created in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. It is still unclear what the impact of this new entity will be on the effectiveness of Polish development cooperation, and the department's competencies overlap the activities of the MFA in the field of humanitarian aid. Furthermore, one should also note that ODA projects related to a WGA to foreign affairs sometimes also involve local governments, especially big cities and voivodeship (province) assemblies.

For many years, Poland has been struggling with the so-called 'silo' character of its state administration. Ministries and agencies have often operated as closed units. Insufficient consultation and coordination as well as rivalry both between and within ministries has constituted an impediment to the decision-making process regarding a Polish WGA to foreign affairs. Moreover, the informal networks of politicians and their interference in theoretically technocratic processes has a bigger impact on the functioning of state institutions and on the relations between them in Poland than in other states in Northern and Western Europe.

However, under the PiS government, parallel networks and informal actors in state institutions have gained unprecedented influence. For example, even though Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the president of the PiS, does not occupy any public post apart from being a member of parliament, any significant decision requires his approval. On the lower level, close and trusted allies of his have been inserted into state institutions, sometimes as *éminences grises*, where they play a similar role. Granted, in such a system, certain key decisions are taken more quickly if Kaczynski or his close associates are convinced of their importance and urgency. However, sometimes decision-makers do not take procedures or even laws into consideration. What's more, decisions regarding foreign affairs are often endorsed without consulting independent, genuine experts, but rather on the basis of political calculations and prejudices. This assessment is confirmed by internal confidential or secret reports and private correspondence between officials that have been leaked to the public.

The rivalry between factions within the ruling elite, which also plays out between and within state institutions, represents another challenge to the functioning of Poland's WGA. In order to maintain control of the party and state institutions, Kaczynski and his political nominees use the principle of divide and conquer, playing various factions within the elite against each other, which increases the unpredictability of the decision-making process and heightens tensions between state structures. However, since the 2015 elections, the polarisation of the political

landscape, which was already intensive, has deepened radically. This trend constitutes a grave impediment to the development of the WGA in foreign affairs.

#### **4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?**

General and structural challenges to the operationalisation of a WGA increased greatly in Poland after the sweeping victory of the PiS in the parliamentary elections of 2015. The degree to which the ruling elite captured state institutions is unprecedented in the modern history of Poland. Many thousands of civil servants, diplomats and officers were fired, forced or persuaded to retire early, suspended or demoted to lower posts. Many officials, diplomats and officers were marginalised. Among officials who experienced this kind of mistreatment, individuals with more professional experience, including positions held abroad and close contacts with foreign partners, were overrepresented. At the same time, many diplomats, officials and officers were hired or promoted solely on the basis of their political sympathies or loyalties instead of according to meritocratic principles.

The operationalisation of the Polish WGA in foreign affairs faces other challenges in addition to the above-mentioned structural problems, such as a lack of sufficient diplomatic presences in countries with the biggest Polish military deployments, very limited support from civil society institutions, and insufficient dedicated financial resources. The internal political polarisation in Poland discussed above has also started to exert a negative influence on the Polish WGA regarding foreign affairs, and it may also be undermined by bilateral problems with countries in which it operates.

The conflict in Ukraine definitely represents the most important challenge to Polish security. For this reason, Ukraine constitutes the main area for the operationalisation of Poland's WGA regarding foreign conflicts and crises. Poland has strengthened its engagement in Ukraine, such as with ODA and by deploying monitors, advisers and border guards. For example, Poland is involved substantially in international missions of the EU and the OSCE operating in Ukraine or on its borders. Polish General Slawomir Pichor manages the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), whose headquarters are located in Odessa (Ukraine). The Polish contingent in the mission is one of the biggest: 18 police officers and border guards, or almost 10 percent of its staff. A maximum of 10 Polish police officers and civil servants are engaged in the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine, which was established in 2014. And 35 Polish officials participated in the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. However, given Ukraine's significance to Poland, one can say that Poland's WGA in Ukraine has had serious shortcomings, such as insufficient institutional coordination, bilateral problems between both countries, and levels of ODA and resource deployment that are both below Poland's potential and incommensurate with Ukraine's importance to Poland.

Poland's performance concerning ODA after the 2014 revolution in Ukraine, known as the Revolution of Dignity, also gives a rather mixed picture. After Euromaidan, Poland did not substantially increase its ODA allocated for Ukraine until 2017, when it was boosted by 250 percent over the previous year (although this did not even exceed USD 60 million in absolute terms). Whereas Poland's ODA in 2016 only made up 1.5 percent of the total ODA received by Ukraine, this figure rose to 5 percent in 2017 as a result of the increase.

The steep increase in Polish ODA allocated for Ukraine in 2017 largely resulted from the growing engagement of local Polish governments (e.g. provincial assemblies and the governments of larger cities) and civil society organisations (NGOs). Until the autumn 2018 elections, the vast majority of the institutions of local government were under the control of the opposition and were in sharp conflict with the central government. One should also note that the Polish government also takes a negative view of many Polish NGOs operating in Ukraine because they do not support its internal policy. Taken together, this political polarisation has complicated efforts to coordinate the activities of various Polish development-cooperation actors in Ukraine. Furthermore, clashes related to politics of history and identity, which have been fanned by the PiS, have led to an unprecedented deterioration of bilateral relations between Poland and Ukraine, which in turn has represented another challenge to the operationalisation of Polish ODA in the country.

Poland's development aid allocated to Ukraine focuses on supporting good governance, human capital, entrepreneurship and the private sector. In its efforts to ensure a more effective response to the protracted crisis in Ukraine, Poland has officially adopted an approach of mutually reinforcing humanitarian and development measures, including and particularly ones targeting internally displaced persons from the eastern region of Donbass. However, there has been a huge gap between words and deeds, as Poland only transferred slightly more than USD 2 million of its total humanitarian aid to Ukraine in 2017, and around 35 percent of that amount went to international agencies active in Ukraine.

At present, Poland's largest foreign deployment is in Kosovo, where more than 400 Polish police officers, soldiers and civil servants are operating. Up to 300 of them are soldiers serving in the NATO-led KFOR mission, and there are almost 100 Polish police officers serving in the EU-led EULEX mission. These police officers constitute the largest single contingent in that mission, accounting for around 30 percent of all servicemen (MFA n.d.). However, Poland's capacity to implement a WGA in Kosovo is limited due to a lack of diplomatic representation and Poland's very low level of interest in contributing to the development of Kosovo. Indeed, although Poland already recognised the independence of Kosovo in 2008, it is the only one among the EU countries to do so that has not yet established diplomatic relations with Pristina. This extremely lukewarm stance has been motivated by internal political calculations. For example, the fact that a majority of Poles and certain politicians were opposed to or at least sceptical about Kosovo's independence led Kosovo to be viewed as only a marginal item on the agenda of Polish foreign policy. What's more, Poland's ODA allocated to Kosovo is extremely low and has not surpassed USD 500,000 on average in recent years (Polish Aid n.d.).

Poland has deployed members of its armed forces in the Middle East (Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar), but they are not engaged in military operations. The contingent operating in Iraq is composed of more than 115 soldiers and civil servants (MFA n.d.), who particularly focus on training Iraqi soldiers while operating within the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve and NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). One possible criticism of Poland's WGA in Iraq is that there is minimal engagement in fields other than hard security. For instance, the Polish ODA allocated for Iraq between 2014 and 2017 roughly amounted to only USD 5 million (ibid.). Moreover, during the September 2014 offensive of the Islamic State, Poland closed its embassy in Baghdad (and only reopened it after two years) even though the main EU and NATO member states did not take such a drastic step.

Poland also has a military contingent in Afghanistan operating within NATO's Resolute Support Mission. Composed of a maximum of 350 soldiers and civil servants (MFA n.d.), it is responsible for providing Afghan police and soldiers with training on strategic planning and operational activities. As in the case of Iraq, a criticism of Poland's WGA in Afghanistan is that it only has minimal engagement in fields other than hard security and, in fact, even less than in Iraq. Furthermore, Poland closed its embassy in Afghanistan in 2014, and Polish ODA transferred to Afghanistan has been minimal in recent years (Polish Aid n.d.).

## 5 | Conclusions

Poland's considerable economic, diplomatic and military potential led it to elaborate official documents dedicated to a WGA to foreign conflicts and crises. However, the operationalisation of the WGA in foreign affairs has been only moderately success. Poland's particular preoccupation with hard security has prompted it to deploy Polish soldiers, monitors, police officers, advisers and border guards abroad, but these resources receive very limited civil assistance, lack a supporting diplomatic presence on the ground, and are insufficiently reinforced by Polish ODA.

Poland's WGA regarding foreign affairs also suffers from the general and structural deficiencies of Polish state institutions, such as the unsatisfactory coordination between them, institutional rivalries and the strength of informal networks. In fact, Poland's WGA regarding foreign affairs represents an exceptionally interesting case at present, as the capabilities of the state structures engaged in the WGA are rapidly deteriorating. This negative trend stems from the fact that Poland has been experiencing a structural transformation of its political system since the national elections of 2015 from a liberal democracy based on a division of powers towards a 'majoritarian' democracy with authoritarian elements that is dismantling the rule of law. What's more, due to the high level of factionalism within the ruling elite, its opaqueness and its inclination to reject technocratic and meritocratic criteria, the unprecedented scale of capture of state institutions that has occurred in the wake of the 2015 elections has injected more unpredictability into decision-making processes and more volatility into efforts to coordinate activities within and between state institutions.

The exceptional polarisation of Poland's political landscape (e.g. between the government and the opposition) is also contributing to a weakening of the operationalisation of the WGA regarding foreign affairs, especially when it comes to ODA. In consequence, even though the PiS government is continuing to develop new comprehensive strategies promoting the WGA, successfully implementing them has become much more difficult than in the past. In fact, the Strategy for Responsible Development (Ministry of Investment and Development 2017), which includes a robust external component, largely remains just a strategy on paper more than two years after its announcement.

Moreover, the negative trends related to Poland's WGA to foreign crises and conflicts may strengthen considerably in the years ahead. The PiS won the national elections in October 2019 and re-established a single-party government. Most probably, the process of de-democratisation and, by default, the PiS's capture of the state will substantially accelerate and will further aggravate tensions with EU institutions and key EU member states. In accordance



with its 'sovereigntist' vision of Europe, the PiS government is also likely to pursue its policy of distancing itself from the EU mainstream. Such a scenario will further hamper the operationalisation of Poland's WGA related to foreign affairs.

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