

ON MILITARISM, ITS MANIFESTATIONS AND CAUSES IN POLAND
SEVENTY YEARS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR:
CULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS
OF SPENDING ON ARMAMENTS

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This paper asks why, seventy years after the Second World War, spending on armaments has been on the rise in Poland. The author grounds his analyses and reflections on his own quantitative studies performed on a representative sample of the Polish people. The paper shows Poles' opinions on foreign missions in which Polish troops participate, planned increases in spending on armaments, the stationing of American troops in Poland, and alternative models, such as remaining a neutral country. Regarding Poles' acceptance of armaments policies, the paper notes a correlation between the respondents' economic standing and their education: the worse their economic standing and the lower their education level, the higher their scepticism towards the government's armaments policies. One reason why it has been relatively easy to build social acceptance for military spending is because Poland is still considered a "semi-peripheral country." The Polish media and political elites have argued that spending on armaments is a part of modernization and a way of engaging with the rich West.

EUROPEAN PACIFISM

The European Union, which was originally seen as the panacea for all the ills of the 1939-45 conflict and guarantor of peace in Europe, does not have a common strategy for solving today's armed conflicts. In addition,

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the governments of individual countries have a range of approaches toward ongoing armed conflicts, from the most pacifist-minded leaders of Germany to those of Great Britain, the traditionally faithful European ally and participant in American military missions. Despite this range of perspectives, Zygmunt Bauman sees an emerging pacifist consensus:

After hundreds of years of blood lettings, whether talked of in religious, ethnic, tribal, racist or class terms—of the holy and unholy crusades that in retrospect look uncannily like fratricides every bit as iniquitous, unlofty and unheroic as they were cruel and ferocious and that could be dismissed as the mere teething troubles of immature, inchoate and still irrational humanity were not the devastation they left behind so enormous and so appalling in its inhumanity—came the moment of awakening and sobering up, ushering Europe into an as yet unfinished era of experimentation with what Balibar (after Monique Chemillier-Gendreau) names “transnational public order”: a kind of setting in which Clausewitz’s rule no longer binds and wars are neither natural, nor permissible extensions of political action.¹

Bauman also tells of a May 2003 interview in which Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida discussed the birth of “a genuine shared European conscience” that emerged 15 February 2003:

On that day, millions of Europeans went out into the streets of Rome, Madrid, Paris, Berlin, London and other capitals of Europe to manifest their unanimous condemnation of the invasion of Iraq about to be launched—and show obliquely their shared historical memory of past sufferings and a shared revulsion towards violence and atrocities committed in the name of national rivalries.²

Tzvetan Todorov makes much the same observation. Regarding the Europeans’ response to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, he emphasizes,

[Each] country has its own language, customs, and problems. [Yet] it was all the more conspicuous to observe the similarity of public opinion in the various countries during the preparations for the Iraq war. The kinship went beyond the contradictory positions adopted by their governments: Spanish and Italian citizens were of the same mind as the Germans and the French,

and even the support of the British for the war was fragile.³

Krzysztof Pomian, like Todorov, considers Europe a “pluralistic community of values,” and regards “peace” as one of the most significant European principles:

Peace is not only to exclude violence between and among the states and to recognize that all conflicts can be settled through negotiations and arbitration. It is also to endeavour to remove hatred and revenge from within these nations’ relations, “grub up their roots” and bring up new generations in the spirit of mutual understanding and friendship. It is also to strive to erase borders and eliminate any potential emergence of territorial disputes.⁴

Having endured a history, particularly in the twentieth century, of mass violence, armed conflicts, sophisticated and modern forms of killing, and, following the principles of mass production, “death factories” in the form of concentration camps, Europe now significantly distances itself from military solutions. European pacifism is not only a moral attitude but also stems from pragmatism, rationalism, and scepticism towards all seemingly irrefutable truths and seemingly finished social projects.

In August 2014, the European edition of *The Wall Street Journal* stated, “German involvement [in world affairs] has been very poorly palpable.” This was a reflection on “Engagement or Moderation,” the Körber Foundation’s widely commented study on German public views on Germany’s role in the world.⁵ While Europeans, who experienced the World Wars first hand, are reluctant to spend public money on armaments and carnage on battlefields in the name of questionable benefits, some right-wing American spokespersons depict the United States as pro-military. The American politician Robert Kagan, among others, claims that Americans are guided by the values of Mars, the god of war. As Joseph S. Nye notes, “The United States has ‘designed a military that is better suited to kick down the door, beat up a dictator, and go home than to stay for the harder work of building a democratic polity.’”⁶ Emphasizing that European and American modes of operation are different, Jeremy Rifkin claims that “American hard-liners like to repeat that, though maybe the European Union is an economic superpower, it is a dwarf in the world of geopolitical ‘rough and tumble.’” Rifkin adds that, among American elites, “there is a perception that the European Union is soft, feminine and has no skill or willingness to stand alone to fight.”⁷

POLISH SOCIETY SEVENTY YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II

We may ask whether this European pacifism is consistent across the various societies and countries in Europe. As the war in the former Yugoslavia or the conflict in the Ukraine showed, Europe still has to face its own potential “hot” conflicts even after the end of the Cold War, and in places, political problems are resolved by guns within Europe. In other words, the reality around us does not support Bauman’s thesis that the vast majority of Europeans do not want to shed blood on the battlefield.

The seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II was a good opportunity to test this pacifist orientation. The results of the Körber Foundation’s study encouraged me to examine how Poles regard their involvement in international affairs in the context of security. This paper looks at public attitudes towards militarism in Germany and Poland, between whom the 1939-45 conflict started. Since 1989, people in Poland have been willing to “celebrate” selected historical events and reignite domestic disputes, but they tend to avoid the debate on Poland’s place in the contemporary world. Polish foreign policy, like many other topics, is never discussed within public discourse. Only a few aspects of foreign policy have been raised in the media, such as the strength of involvement in the Ukrainian conflict compared to other countries of the region and the participation of Polish troops in war missions in recent years, which have not brought Poland splendour, economic benefits, or a rise in its standing in international politics. The “supervision” by Polish people over Poland’s position in international affairs is similar to that on many other issues—close to zero.

Thus it was worth asking Polish people for their opinions on Polish foreign policy and Poland’s military engagements. The survey results were obtained in the last quarter of 2014 through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) with a representative sample of 758 adult respondents from Polish society, aged eighteen years of age or more (see Table 1).

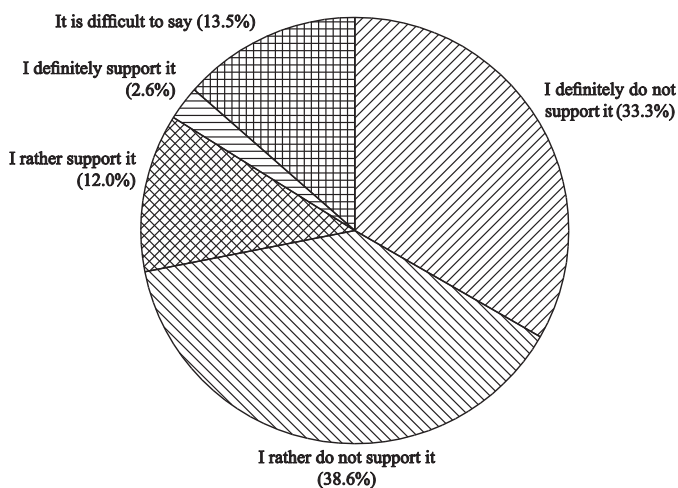
Table 1. Age of the surveyed respondents

Age (in years)	N	Percentage
18-24	128	16.9
25-34	140	18.5
35-44	130	17.1
45-54	125	16.5
55-64	125	16.5
65 or more	110	14.5
Total	758	100.0

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

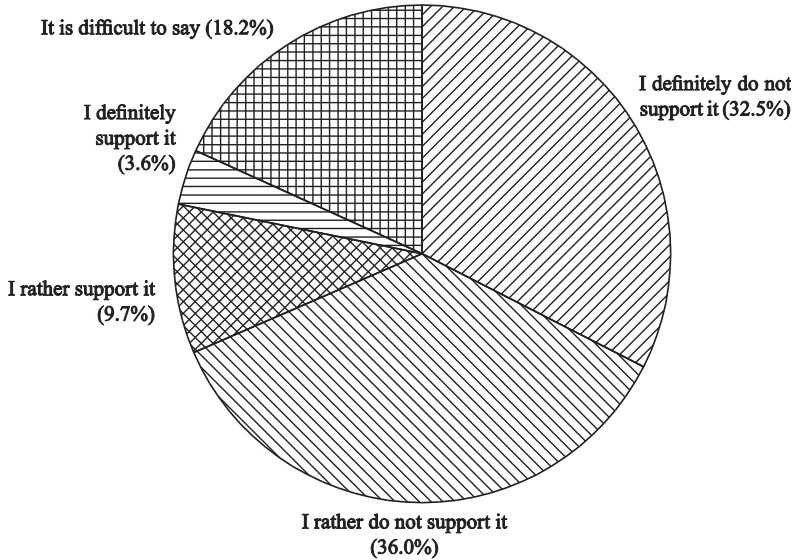
Today, after the fact, both Poland's participation in the war in Iraq and the engagement of Polish troops in Afghanistan have been assessed negatively. In contrast to the political elites who were seeking to strengthen alliances with the United States and NATO, the vast majority of Poles took a critical view of the participation of Polish troops in these conflicts, even while these military actions were in progress (Figure 1).

Figure 1. How do you assess the deployment of Polish troops in Iraq?



Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

Figure 2. How do you assess the deployment of Polish troops in Afghanistan?



Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

There is an interesting correlation between the statement that Poland's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan was excessive in view of the potential economic and financial capabilities of the country, and the levels of education and economic standing of the respondents. People with a higher education, 30.4%, demonstrated the most critical attitude towards Polish involvement in military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; the least critical opinions were expressed by people who had only received primary and junior secondary education, 17.4%, and their criticism generally grew in line with the level of their education. The largest number, more than 41%, of those who accepted all governmental spending on military missions was among persons with a senior secondary and higher education.

Respondents' ages made little difference to their answers to the same question, but their economic standing had a considerable impact. Indeed, the worse the economic standing of respondents, the more they were forthcoming on excessive public spending on military missions. As for the poorest people, up to 40% of them believed that spending was excessive when taking into consideration Poland's financial capabilities (see Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents' age, education, and economic standing in relation to opinions on involvement of Polish armed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan (in %)

Do you think that the participation of the Polish armed forces in international military missions such as Iraq or Afghanistan was:					
	too much in relation to the economic potential and financial capacity of our country	appropriate in relation to the economic potential and financial capacity of our country	too little in relation to the economic potential and financial capacity of our country	it is difficult to say	
Age [in years]					
18–24		26.5	41.4	14.1	18.0
25–34		30.0	40.7	13.6	15.7
35–44		28.6	41.1	16.3	14.0
45–54		28.8	38.4	17.6	15.2
55–64		30.4	37.6	16.0	16.0
65 or more		19.1	40.9	20.9	19.1
Education					
Primary, junior secondary		17.5	21.7	13.0	47.8
Vocational		23.1	36.9	13.8	26.2
Senior secondary		27.7	41.4	17.6	13.3
Higher		30.4	41.4	15.9	12.3
Economic Standing					
We live very modestly; at times we lack money for our basic needs		40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
We live economically in order to meet our basic needs		33.4	31.7	15.9	19.0
We live on an average level; we meet our day-to-day needs but we must save to meet higher expenses		30.3	39.9	11.0	18.8

We live at a good level; we meet our day-to-day needs and we are able to save some money	18.4	45.4	25.1	11.1
We live at a very good level; we can afford some luxury	40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

Despite these differing opinions within individual social categories, Polish society is generally supportive of record levels of military spending to increase Poland's defensive capabilities in the very near future. Furthermore, within all age categories, most people support government decisions on the purchase of military equipment and the modernization of the armed forces (see Table 3).

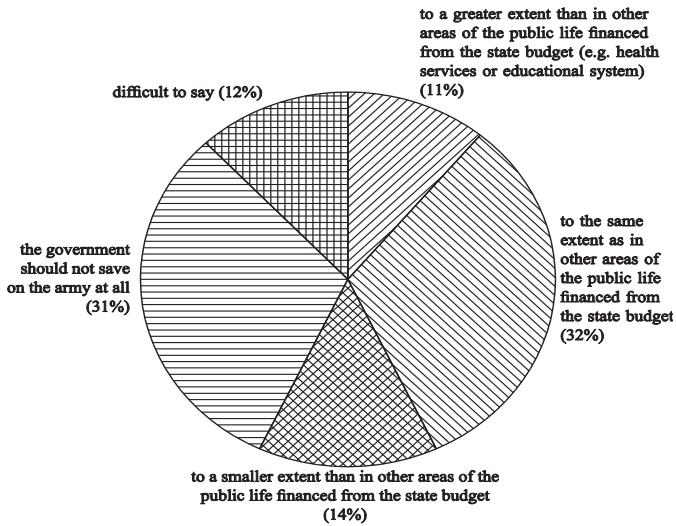
Table 3. Respondents' age and education in relation to their opinions on spending on armaments (in %)

Do you think that the Polish government should spend about PLN 130 milliard on armaments in the forthcoming years?			
	Yes	No	I do not know
Age in years			
18-24	59.4	28.1	12.5
25-34	61.4	25.7	12.9
35-44	54.3	31.0	14.7
45-54	60.8	27.2	12.0
55-64	56.8	22.4	20.8
65 or more	63.7	21.8	14.5
Education			
Primary, junior secondary	52.2	21.7	26.1
Vocational	60.0	26.9	13.1
Senior secondary	60.1	25.3	14.6
Higher	58.6	27.3	14.1

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

The above collected data confirm the results obtained in the survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) in 2009, in which respondents were asked whether the government should reduce military spending in times of economic crisis.⁸ Up to 31% said that it is not appropriate to reduce military spending at all, and 14% claimed that spending cuts in the armed forces should be lower when taking other areas of life into consideration. Only 11% declared that cuts should be higher in the armed forces than in other public areas such as the health service or education (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Due to the economic crisis, the state budget is in trouble. Do you think that the government—seeking savings—should reduce spending on the armed forces?



Source: Information from surveys made by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS): *Polacy o siłach zbrojnych* [Poles on the Armed Forces], Warszawa (Warsaw), October 2009.

The trends observed within Polish society may be partly explained by its complexity, a sense of inferiority, and a wish to play the role of at least a regional superpower. It is unsurprising, then, that the ruling elites in Poland regard purchasing modern military equipment as part of the modernization of the country, which should lead to further investments in the Polish economy and opportunities to create new jobs. Spending on armaments

is often presented as a form of investing in new technologies and modern technical thinking. Also at a psychosocial level, spending on armaments may be considered by the people as a way to become part of a better, richer, and more modern Western world, especially if they support the government's decisions to be more like the affluent NATO countries led by the United States, which are represented in the mass media as having the most modern armies.

A large number of Polish politicians share this notion, as illustrated by Professor Andrzej Walicki: "A few years ago I heard one of the outstanding and respected theorists of Polish politics; he said that Poland needs to become a leader in Eastern European policy, because only then will it strengthen its position and prestige, and release itself from becoming a vassal of Germany."⁹ In his view, the conflict in the Ukraine and the dominance of anti-Russian opinion in Polish politics are good reasons to demand the highest possible levels of military spending in Poland and, in turn, make it a regional superpower. Such arguments were uttered when F16 jets were purchased. Now, similar voices can be heard when talking about plans to purchase US Tomahawk missiles. As explained in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, "according to their supporters, this project is crucial for the modernization of the Polish armed forces. This is to be the Polish system of deterrence. Their critics believe, however, that this is just a whim provoked by the situation in the East and fantasies about Polish military power."¹⁰

According to Immanuel Wallerstein's categorization of the world's nations, Polish society and its neighbours in the region are typical peripherals and semi-peripherals of the world-system. The reason for these countries' current situation can be found in the distant past when the foundations of early capitalism began to be formulated in Europe. As Jan Sowa correctly observes, considering the enormous amount of historical evidence, we should not "negate the fact that a sort of inequality of exchange took place, which got consolidated and caused chronic underdevelopment in Central and Eastern Europe. And the countries from within the region have made their attempts to get out of it—so far with no overall success."¹¹

Much of Poland wants to be seen as equipped with considerable military potential. This is deceptive because military equipment held by a country is not enough to prove its power status at present. Innovation in its local economy, along with the cultural and social capital of its citizens, are increasingly significant factors. As Hannah Arendt prophetically wrote,

The amount of violence at the disposal of any given country may soon not be a reliable indication of the country's strength or a reliable guarantee against destruction by a substantially smaller and weaker power. And this bears an ominous similarity to one of political science's oldest insights, namely, that power cannot be measured in terms of wealth, that an abundance of wealth may erode power, that riches are particularly dangerous to the power and well-being of republics—an insight that does not lose its validity because it has been forgotten, especially at a time when its truth has acquired a new dimension of validity by becoming applicable to the arsenal of violence as well.¹²

In Central and Eastern European countries, as in many other peripheral and semi-peripheral areas, there remains one, quite often forgotten, economic issue. Tadeusz Kowalik notes, "After the Second World War, this posture of militarization as a manner to boost the economy and ensure employment has been included in numerous social right-wing programmes and this positive approach towards armaments as a factor of economic growth in capitalism has become one of the theses (and characteristics) of the so-called Keynesian right-wing."¹³ In modern Poland, this argument is often repeated in the context of military spending. Propagandists emphasize investments made by Western corporations in Polish military plants and national technology via the so-called "offset"—investments made in Poland by a successful seller of military equipment. For example, when Poland purchased American F-16 aircraft in 2003 for US\$3.5 billion, the United States was obliged to invest about \$6 billion in the Polish economy. However, no one has verified whether this obligation became a reality. In practice, then, Poland does not verify the fulfilment of obligations arising from the offset, the so-called compensatory contract.

FROM A WELFARE STATE TO A STATE OF EMERGENCY

If the state under globalization resigns from its social obligations towards its citizens, as well as from its significant role in the reduction of conflicts and tensions in the social and economic sphere, it is committed to find another form of legitimacy with which it can build its authority and enforce obedience. If the state cannot and does not want to provide all people with work or social security, and it is not in a position to reduce the threat of social exclusion, what can it promise in return? According to Bauman, in

such circumstances, “beefing up the fears about personal safety threatened by similarly free-floating terrorist conspirators and then promising more security guards, a denser net of X-ray machines and wider scope of close circuit television, more frequent checks and more pre-emptive strikes and precautionary arrests to protect that safety, look like a feasible and expedient alternative.”¹⁴ These types of actions undertaken by the state administration and mass media have raised a sense of fear and, at the same time, have led people to accept more stringent rules in criminal law, increasingly repressive state actions, and growing expenditure on the provision of security.

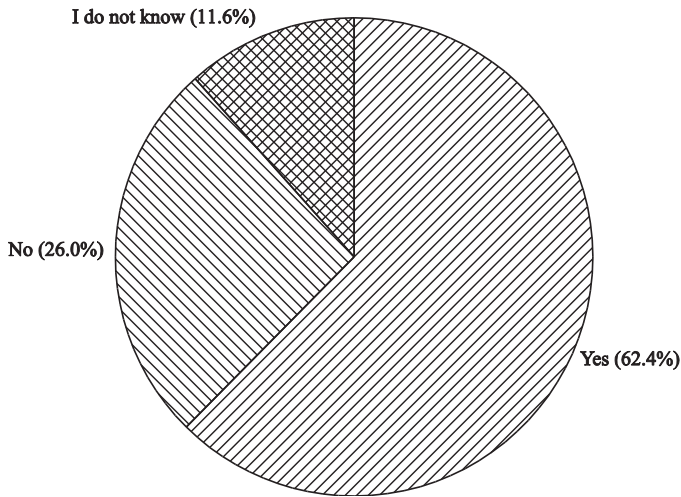
Under these circumstances, social problems such as poverty are moved to the margins, employment issues cease to bother politicians, and economic crises disappear from the headlines of television news. The ruling elites and governments can sigh with relief because, as Bauman notes, very few put pressure on them to deal with issues they are not able to handle. At the same time, those who watch daily special reports, documentaries, and drama-documentaries depicting new types of weapons commissioned by the police, computerized locks in prisons, burglar intrusion alarms, valiant special service officers, and detectives risking their lives so that we can sleep peacefully cannot accuse the government of inaction and indifference.¹⁵

In this way, election campaigns may focus on combating organized crime and terrorism and strengthening national security instead of addressing growing inequalities and social exclusion problems. Under such conditions, popularity is gained by politicians and groups known for their “hardness” and offering simple solutions. Social criticism, in the form of highlighting threats to the physical safety of individuals, can be sidelined, while public discourse is dominated by various kinds of populists and demagogues promising “100% safety.” As Loic Waquancant states, “the state gets out of the economic arena and announces a reduction in its social functions on behalf of broadening and strengthening penal operations.”¹⁶ Combating crime and activities undertaken for “global peace” at a time of flexible capitalism is more politically viable than unemotional and non-spectacular actions undertaken to reduce poverty and decrease social inequalities.

Polish society is not particularly ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse. Hence, it is difficult to arouse fear based on racial or religious prejudices about Muslim or Arab minorities because very few live in Poland. An external enemy, however, can be an equally effective “source” of anxieties. In the mass media, as well as the respectable “centrist” press, passionate and

bellicose voices about the impending threat from Russia have recently prevailed. There are persistent comments in the media that Poland is threatened with a war on its eastern border; and, instead of yielding to Russia, Poles should approve increased spending on armaments. This atmosphere not only effectively shifts public attention away from poverty and social problems such as unemployment, lack of social security, or social inequalities, but also leads to popular consent for any political and military actions intended to further strengthen Poland's security. For example, it causes almost universal acceptance of the stationing of American troops in Poland (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Do you support the stationing of American troops in Poland?



Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

In Poland, where Soviet troops had military bases during the Cold War, the “no foreign troops in Poland” slogan was popular in early 1990s. It went hand-in-hand with the widely popular belief that neutrality was the best option for the country. As Jerzy Wiatr notes, “the concept of neutrality . . . as a result of mistrust for the Western guarantees of security and fears of German domination, was also favoured by politicians in charge of the post-communist countries.”¹⁷ At present, however, there is no trace of this sentiment because, according to the mass media and politicians in general, it is believed that only strong ties with NATO and close cooperation with the

United States, preferably combined with the presence of American military bases, can guarantee security in Poland.

However, as Table 4 shows, opinions on Poland's neutrality are quite firmly differentiated by respondents' education and economic situation: the lower the level of education, the wider the acceptance for Polish neutrality at about 35%. As the level of education increases, the popularity of neutrality decreases, down to 14% of people with a higher education. Even wider differences appear in terms of economic standing: while 40% of the poorest support Polish neutrality, more than 90% of people with the best economic standing insist that Poland should stay within NATO.

Table 4. Opinions on the Poland's neutrality (in %)

Would it be good, bad, or irrelevant for Poland to stay beyond the NATO structures and retain its neutrality?			
	Good	Irrelevant	Bad
Education			
Primary, junior secondary	34.8	21.7	43.5
Vocational	17.7	23.1	59.2
Senior secondary	13.0	13.0	74.0
Higher	14.1	14.1	71.8
Economic standing			
We live very modestly; at times we lack money for our basic needs	40.0	6.7	53.3
We live economically in order to meet our basic needs	19.0	27.0	54.0
We live on an average level; we meet our day-to-day needs but we must save to meet higher expenses	18.3	18.8	62.9
We live at a good level; we meet our day-to-day needs and we are able to save some money	5.3	4.3	90.4
We live at a very good level; we can afford some luxury	7.7	0.0	92.3

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

Although largely forgotten today, an opinion expressed by Rosa Luxemburg in 1916 on the relationship of capitalism and militarism comes to mind when looking at these results. Protesting against the deployment of workers to the front line of the First World War, she proclaimed that militarism was the most important and the most specific expression of a capitalist class state; if they did not fight militarism, their struggle against a capitalist state would be just an empty phrase.¹⁸ According to this paper's research, these class determinants of acceptance for military actions still apply.

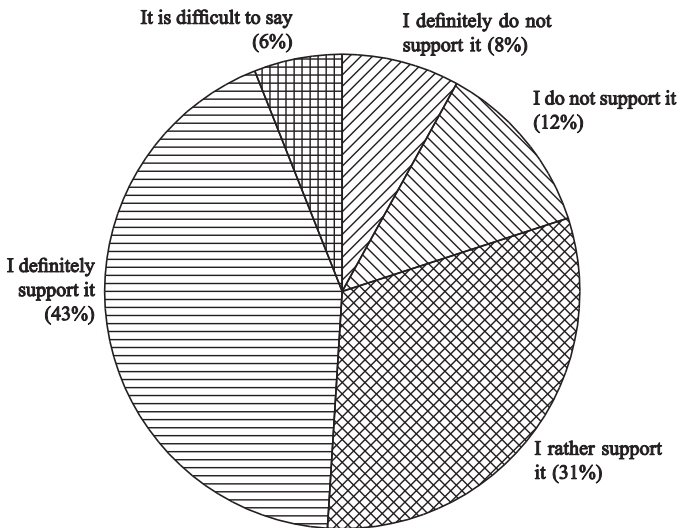
Although the purpose of wars waged in the present world is not ordinarily to gain territories and impose administrations onto conquered societies, economic issues are very much at stake in these conflicts. Currently, access to natural resources and establishing areas that will not interfere with world trade and the global flow of finance are of the utmost relevance. For Bauman, the aim of this new type of war is "throwing any remaining closed door wide open for the free flow of global capital."¹⁹ Paraphrasing Clausewitz, these wars are about "running free global trade through other means." For this reason, it is difficult to expect that old-fashioned means, such as nationalistic confrontation, engagement, and fighting, would fulfil the objectives of such wars. In this view, computers and intelligent homing missiles select targets so that the wars of the new global era may be run "at a distance." For Bauman, these are "hit-and-run wars: the bombers leave the scene before the enemy can manage any response and before the carnage can be seen."²⁰ There is no place for conscripted military service personnel in such conflicts; these are wars run by professionals, not in the name of whole nations but as a result of decisions and representations made by government-corporate coalitions. Wojciech Modzelewski concurs: "traditional militaristic colonialism belongs to the past. Only when economic or strategic interests of the central-system countries are severely affected within a given area, especially by a small country, do they resort to military force."²¹ In this regard, the armies of the rich central countries within a world system fulfil a role of regulatory police for transnational business and global trade. These armies must consist of well-trained professionals equipped with technologically advanced weapons.

In Poland, the military service obligation—conscription—was in force throughout the period of communism and in the new political system up to 2008. Poland's armed forces are now fully professional. Before conscription was abolished, the right to carry out some kind of alternative service

was fought for over many years by those who, for ideological reasons, did not want to serve in the armed forces. As a result of protests and active anti-military movements of the 1980s, the communist authorities agreed to introduce the right to participate in a civilian alternative service instead. The right became fully operational after the system change. Lately, as a result of the conflict in the Ukraine and military fever in Poland, some politicians have suggested or even called for a return to conscription.

As shown in Figure 5, just after the change in regulations and the abolition of conscription, 74% of the respondents of a 2009 survey supported the elimination of compulsory military service. We may assume that the percentage of opponents would be even higher at present as the younger generations of men, who do not remember that military service was once compulsory, consider the lack of conscription “natural”; its reintroduction would give rise to considerable resistance.

Figure 5. Conscription has been abandoned recently and soon the army will be made of professional soldiers only. Do you support this or not?



Source: Information from surveys made by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS): Polacy o siłach zbrojnych [Poles on the Armed Forces], Warszawa (Warsaw), October 2009.

The transition to professional troops has led to the “privatization” of armed conflicts; in other words, decisions on military actions are left to specialists

while “ordinary” people are deprived of their right to participate in a broader debate and assessment of military proposals. Further, people are less interested in wars that pursue only “strategic objectives” than in multi-nation wars of the past that attack all people in hostile countries. Now war is left to technocrats and professionals in uniforms. Military and strategic losses are the only important losses in war, and civilian fatalities are only “incidental.” Bauman writes:

“Collateral casualties” lose their lives because the damage done to them counts less in the total balance of the action’s effects. They are disposable, “a price worth paying,” and not because of what they have done or are expected to do, but because they happened to stand in the way of the bombers or lived, shopped or strolled, imprudently, in the vicinity of the professional armies’ playground.²²

In such circumstances, the moral conscience can sleep easily because killed civilians were not targeted but rather were technically “incidental victims”; it is not impossible to foresee or avoid such losses, even when using the “smartest” missiles. In contrast to the military victims of today’s wars, “technical losses” are anonymous. Says Bauman, “The ejection of war and the ‘killing business’ in general . . . are perhaps the most seminal of the attributes of the new professional army.”²³ More and more technologically advanced techniques of killing contribute to this worldview: a drone used today is more like a computer game and, when the shooter is physically far from their target, sometimes thousands of kilometres away, moral responsibility is completely disabled.

The professionalization of troops in Poland not only entails higher spending but also involves many other social phenomena. For example, in Polish institutions of higher learning, “National Security,” “International Security,” or “Internal Security” are the only new degree courses being developed in the social sciences. One reason is that in this era of demographic decline in Polish society, both public and private universities try to attract candidates by creating new degree programmes. The boom in militarization has also reached universities.²⁴

POLISH AND GERMAN PRIORITIES IN FOREIGN POLICIES

The conflict between Poland and Germany started the Second World War. Today, both countries enjoy very good relations, especially in economic

terms. According to public opinion in both societies, what are today's priorities regarding Poland's and Germany's involvement in the international arena? Promotion of humanitarian aid has the largest number of supporters in Poland with more than 78%. Military missions beyond Poland receive the least support with 54% support and more than 31% opposed. A relatively high level of support for helping refugees and asylum seekers in Polish society is a positive surprise (see Table 5).

Table 5. Opinions on the Polish government foreign policy (in %)

Say if the Polish government in foreign policy should	Say if the Polish government in foreign policy should		
	Yes	No	Difficult to say
Support humanitarian aid in other parts of the world	78.8	18.1	3.2
Promote disarmament and control of armies	67.4	20.3	12.3
Support poor regions of the world financially	68.8	19.9	11.3
Accept refugees and asylum seekers	65.9	20.6	13.5
Organise military missions beyond the country	54.2	31.4	14.4
Provide the allied countries with troops	59.2	26.7	14.1

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

How do opinions in Germany compare to the above? Although German President Joachim Gauck stated in 2014 that the pacifism of the past had often been "a shield for laziness or a desire to withdraw from world affairs," Germany, still traumatized by its experience of Nazism and World War II, is consistently reluctant to get involved in any military actions. Approximately 80% of respondents support actions for disarmament or monitoring armies. Similarly, 82% oppose organizing military missions beyond the country and providing troops to allies. Against this background, calls by Polish politicians for Germany to manufacture more armaments, and complaints by the Polish mass media about the allegedly poor condition

of German armed forces and German passivity in the Ukrainian conflict, look unrealistic. German public opinion about spending public funds on the armed forces does not appear to support Polish calls to send tanks to the East. In the German debate, a problem that divides its society almost in half concerns its treatment of refugees and asylum seekers (see Table 6).

Table 6. Germans' opinions on international involvement (in %)

Where should Germany be involved more or less?			
	More involvement	Less involvement	Involvement at the existing level
Support humanitarian aid in other parts of the world	86	9	4
Promote disarmament and control of armies	80	16	3
Support poor regions of the world financially	51	39	6
Accept refugees and asylum seekers	47	45	6
Organise military missions beyond the country	13	82	2
Provide the allied countries with troops	13	82	2

Percentage values do not add up to 100 as the "no answer" category was not considered.

Source: Studies conducted by TNS Infratest in late April and early May 2014 based on a representative sample of 1000 Germans published by the Körber Foundation

What spheres of life require financial aid in Poland? Widespread public awareness is shaped both by social needs and the impacts of public relations, advertising, politicians' statements, and universal conformism. These impacts manifest themselves, for example, in repeated claims that are often made in the mass media and gain universal recognition. This explains why so many Poles support spending on the armed forces. Recently, Polish society has been bombarded with threats of military actions and war lurking along

Poland's borders. It must have an impact on emotions. At the same time, silence and passive attitudes within academic circles suggest that spending on science and innovation may not be particularly relevant to public opinion. This may suggest that the Polish economy is facing problems relating to innovation. However, this is probably part of a larger problem, namely, difficult relations between the governing elites and Polish academics and intellectuals. Since the Communist era, ruling elites treated academics in Poland with suspicion as a source of potential social criticism. Therefore, the ruling class often criticizes academics for having low "productivity" and exports such assessments to public opinion. This allows them to neglect the financial needs of Polish science and, at the same time, increase military spending without offering any justification.

The proportions of spending on the armed forces and on science are unbalanced: according to the Ministry of Finance, the former receive 1.95% of GDP, although, starting in 2016, this will increase to 2%, while the latter must be satisfied with 0.41% of GDP, based on funding in 2015. Increased spending on health services, unemployment programmes, or public transport is not surprising and results from the experience of everyday life which shapes the awareness of Poles (see Table 7).

Table 7. Opinions on increased spending on social issues (in %)

In your opinion, which of the social issues in Poland mentioned below require increased spending?			
	Yes	No	It is difficult to say
Health care	69.7	26.6	3.6
Social assistance	56.4	38.7	7.9
Science	59.7	28.1	12.1
Environmental protection	76.3	16.9	6.7
Combating unemployment	86.8	9.8	3.3
Police	69.3	25.0	5.5
Army	74.7	21.0	4.2
Public transport (roads, trains, etc.)	84.0	12.8	3.0

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

GERMAN PRAGMATISM AND POLISH EMOTIONS

According to German public opinion, Germany should first and foremost strengthen cooperation with its neighbours, France and Poland; this is the view of 79% and 71% of respondents, respectively. This is followed by the United Kingdom and China. The United States, South Africa, Russia, and Brazil are also at the forefront. Only Turkey is identified as a country with whom German cooperation should be weaker. It is difficult to say to what extent this results from everyday problems of integration by Turkish minorities within German society, as well as German hostility toward the increasingly complicated and authoritarian policies of the Turkish state. Certainly, relations between Germany and Turkey are not easy, with the competition between Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines in the European skies just the tip of the iceberg. For example, German people do not hide their opposition to the full accession of Turkey into the European Union (see Table 8).

Table 8. Germans' opinions on cooperation with other countries (in %)

	What countries should Germany cooperate with more or less?		
	More cooperation	Less cooperation	At the same level
France	79	12	8
Poland	71	22	4
Great Britain	63	27	7
China	61	32	5
USA	56	33	9
South Africa	55	32	5
Russia	53	41	3
Brazil	51	35	5
Turkey	40	53	4

Percentage values do not add up to 100 as the "no answer" category was not considered.

Source: Studies conducted by TNS Infratest in late April and early May 2014 based on a representative sample of 1000 Germans published by the Körber Foundation

The survey results gathered in Poland clearly show the impact of the atmosphere built up by the mass media. Russia arouses mistrust at the

highest level, and since the 1989 change of the political system in Central and Eastern Europe, the media in Poland have promoted primarily negative opinions about Russia. Some even consider this a sign of Russophobia on the part of the media and political elites in Poland, and to some extent this is true. At the same time, over the past two decades, the media and the elites have been creating an idealistic image of the United States as a symbol of democracy and prosperity. This has had a real impact on public opinion in Poland, and accordingly, Poles consider the United States to be their country's key ally.

Regarding other countries, the fact that more than 25% of Poles consider the Israeli state as an enemy deserves attention; is this a sign of Polish anti-Semitism or just a lack of approval for the Israeli state's policies? More research is needed here. Regarding countries that are rarely mentioned in the mass media and in public discourse, Poles appear to be indifferent. For example, there is 77.4% indifference towards Brazil and nearly 57% towards Venezuela. It cannot be expected to be otherwise as Polish public television is one of the few European public television stations without a permanent correspondent in South America. While a lack of knowledge and information about South America can be explained to an extent, Poles' indifference towards Sweden should be surprising: nearly 63% of Polish respondents are indifferent to its sea-bound neighbour. The results of these studies show how strongly the way a country is portrayed in the mass media can affect attitudes and perceptions in the public domain (see Table 9).

Table 9. Opinions on the Poland's allies (in %)

In your opinion, what countries are Poland's enemies or allies?			
	Enemy	Ally	Indifferent towards Poland
United States	1.3	79.5	19.2
Germany	4.9	74.2	20.9
Czech Republic	2.8	50.6	46.6
France	2.4	48.7	48.9
Russia	85.7	3.8	10.4
Venezuela	16.8	26.4	56.8
Israel	25.2	22.6	52.2

Ukraine	5.4	49.8	44.8
Sweden	1.2	36.1	62.7
Brazil	2.0	20.6	77.4

Source: Author's study of a nationwide representative sample of 758 persons in late October and early November 2014.

If creating an atmosphere of security in Europe is seriously desirable, it cannot be done without economic, political, and cultural cooperation between Poland and Russia. Indeed, the atmosphere of distance and coldness that has built up recently will have to be radically amended and thawed. It will require a lot of effort, but good Polish relations with its powerful neighbour are worth it. Given Poland's current positive attitude towards Germany—three-quarters of Poles consider its Western neighbour as an ally—which is not distorted by the difficult history these countries share, building good relations with Russia ought to be achievable as well. Politics is the art of solving difficult problems. To achieve resolution, good will, social imagination, and responsibility, which transcend the current “fireworks” and political sentiments, are needed.

PATH TO PEACE

To eliminate the risk of military conflicts in Europe, there is need to release political and social analyses from within the framework of nationalistic restrictions and prejudices. A cosmopolitan perspective, about which Ulrich Beck writes, allows us finally to neutralize divisions of “our” and “their” territories, interests, or diversities. When ethnic divisions recede into the background, giving rise to “unity in diversity” instead of competing ethnically homogeneous “closed fortresses,” the level of conflict becomes lower, both between traditional nation-states and between various groups and individuals. As Beck states, “the cosmopolitan principle of regarding others as both equal and different admits of two interpretations: the recognition of the distinctiveness of others may refer to *collectives* or to *individuals*.”²⁵ If nationalistic methodology is rejected and replaced with cosmopolitan methodology, European policies and sociological analyses can be released from false alternatives, national catechisms, and ongoing social processes emanating from narrow national particularism. From this perspective, differences in the levels of democracy and lifestyles, along with cultural, linguistic, and economic diversities, form the basis for mutual cooperation and the creation

of a source of self-knowledge instead of conflicts and tensions.

That said, Beck asks a series of questions and leaves them unanswered:

Has the peace mission of cosmopolitan Europe been exhausted by its own successes? Hasn't the peace, which has become a matter of course over half a century, become a comfortable reality to which Europe has become accustomed, which it does not want to relinquish, and which condemns it to inactivity and passivity when the values for which it stands actually call for active engagement? Wasn't the peace mission the driving force behind the birth of the new Europe, whereas today it has turned into its opposite, namely, the defence of the status quo which justifies European self-indulgence while horror is festering at its boundaries and in other parts of the world?²⁶

The above questions point to real challenges and problems that require the involvement of international civil society. This is because, structurally or politically, national governments are not able to deal with these issues. As Noam Chomsky notes, "Over the course of modern history, there have been significant gains in human rights and democratic control of some sectors of life. These have rarely been the gift of enlightened leaders. They have typically been imposed on states and other power centres by popular struggle."²⁷

In various parts of the world, there have been alliances emerging across international borders. One example is a new type of trans-national unionism, such as the Eurostrike of Renault workers in 1997, which took place in several countries at the same time. Another example is the cooperation of antifascist movements in various countries of Europe against the upsurge of the extreme right. These alliances call for more just, peaceful, and sustainable worlds, and where the key criterion of social development does not refer to their economic growth but to citizens' health, peace and self-fulfilment. While the potential of these movements has not yet been fully realized, Chomsky notes that "they have had effects, in rhetorical and sometimes policy changes. There has been at least a restraining influence on state violence, though nothing like the 'human rights revolution' in state practice that has been proclaimed by intellectual opinion in the West."²⁸

Moreover, the map of social movements and protests shows that they are not evenly spread. Over twenty-five years after systemic change in Europe and the end of the Cold War, the countries within Central and Eastern Europe remain a "black hole" in terms of rank-and-file initiatives and

activities. This scenario also applies to Polish society where the level of social trust is very low and Poles' membership in social organizations remains very weak. For example, the level of trade unionism is one of the lowest in the European Union and it has nothing to do with the Solidarity mass movement of the early 1980s. While further research is needed to explain this state of affairs and its reasons, it seems clear that the present social vacuum in Poland makes civic control and supervision over state policies, including vast spending on armaments and creating an atmosphere of military threats, almost impossible.

The upsurge of nationalism that is currently sweeping through Eastern Europe has been primarily caused by two factors: social inequalities in the economic sphere and incomplete modernization in the cultural sphere. To effectively solve the problems of military threats, these two fundamental challenges cannot be ignored. This is a task for civil society organizations, social movements, and a new generation of the political class. Fortunately, there are new movements on the horizon, such as the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD). It was created at the end of 2015 as a counterweight to the nationalism and authoritarian rule of the Law and Justice (PiS) party in Poland, and grew almost spontaneously from the grass roots in response to the threat to civil rights and democracy in Poland. Hopefully, such movements will also arise in other Eastern European countries, giving European integration and international cooperation a more social nature.

ENDNOTES

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