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As the United States and its European allies consider the modalities of possible future NATO expansion, the issue of conditions for membership has come to the forefront. In early 1995, Washington articulated two broad standards for membership: "first, an unshakable commitment to the democratic process, including a commitment for civilian control over the military; and secondly, an ability to contribute to collective defense and security."(FN1) This statement raises two questions about central Europe's post-communist democracies: First, whether and to what extent they have met the membership requirements; and second, where they have not, what actions they must take to remedy the existing deficiencies.

No other country among the prospective candidates for membership in NATO matches the potential strategic significance of Poland in terms of geo-strategic location, population, and size. The collapse of the Soviet empire and Germany's reunification have placed Poland along the strategic periphery of western Europe and between Europe's two giants, Russia and Germany. With a population of nearly forty million and a size roughly equal to that of Spain, Poland is the linchpin state of central Europe. If the continued revolutionary upheaval in Russia results in a democratic government in Moscow, Poland will become a bridge between the West and the East. If Russia repeats the cycle of authoritarianism and repression, Poland will become the critical buffer state for Germany and the West against the unstable East. In sum, if NATO is to expand in the future, it will have to include Poland in the first batch of its new members.

Poland, like the other countries of the central European region, has made considerable progress reforming its political, economic, and national security institutions of the communist era. The very scope and magnitude of the task make the Polish accomplishments to date impressive. Still, as a precondition for entry into NATO, Poland should introduce further reforms in three areas, particularly: (1) unresolved constitutional issues, (2) the question of civil-military relations, and (3) the ability of the Polish armed forces to contribute to NATO's common defense.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION, STABILITY, AND THE CONSTITUTION

Polish urgency to join NATO and other Western institutions stems from Poland's historical legacy. Devastated during World War II and recently freed from a half-century of Russian domination, Poles are anxious about ensuring that history should not repeat itself. Over the last six years, Warsaw has pursued a steady course in foreign policy aimed at building new and friendly relations with Germany and, to the extent that it would not compromise its aspirations to join the European Union and NATO, with Russia.

Poland hopes to enter NATO as a full member, with all the rights and responsibilities of membership. It should be a matter of concern to the West, therefore, that the country's domestic political scene remains volatile, with important systemic issues still unresolved. Six years into the post-communist era, Poland has had seven governments. It is unclear whether the current post-communist coalition government of Jozef Oleksy will serve through the end of this year. The latest crisis, in February-March 1995 when the cabinet of Waldemar Pawlak had collapsed, came dangerously close to a constitutional crisis, as President Lech Walesa threatened to dissolve the parliament.

Poland still lacks a constitution that clearly defines its political system in terms of either presidential or parliamentary preeminence. The so-called "Little Constitution," adopted in August 1992, was conceived as an interim compromise solution. It established in Poland a hybrid "presidential-parliamentary" system in an ultimately futile attempt to accommodate the competing demands for power among the country's charismatic president and the now fully legitimate parliament.(FN2) By not resolving this dispute for preeminence, the "Little Constitution"—particularly with regard to civil-military relations, security policy, and foreign policy making—has exacerbated the squabbling over prerogative at the top of the Polish power structure.

If the "Little Constitution" is tendentious, it leans toward ceding power to the presidency. The constitution, in an implicit victory for Walesa, reaffirms the president's leading role on foreign policy and national security matters (Articles 32 and 34). It also specifies that the president remains the head of state and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Article 35). As such, upon consultation with the minister of defense, the president appoints the armed forces chief of the general staff, the chiefs of the different services, the commanders of the military districts, and the chief commander of the armed forces. In previous practice, the minister of defense nominated the chief of the general staff while the president made the actual appointment, but the procedure was not outlined in the constitution. In another crucial parliamentary concession within the "Little Constitution," the Sejm is no longer deemed the supreme authority in the country.

The Parliament exercises oversight on national security policy matters principally through the Sejm Commission on National Defense, which is empowered to hold hearings and to call upon the military and the defense ministry officials, including the minister of defense, to testify. Likewise, the Commission on Foreign Affairs oversees the country's foreign policy. However, the ability of the commissions to exercise their prerogatives is hampered by the relative weakness of their staffs and the changing composition of the parliament—Poland has had three parliaments since the 1989 collapse of communism.

Six years into independence, Poland today still lacks a clear constitutional division of authority between the president and the government on matters of national security policy and control over the military in peacetime. Likewise, the "Little Constitution" provides no clear outline of the procedures for transition from peacetime to war. This constitutional ambiguity remains a fundamental systemic problem that the Poles have to address to meet the standard for NATO membership.

CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY

Another potentially explosive issue relating to Poland's application for NATO membership is the question of civil-military relations, in particular the issue of civilian oversight and control over the military. In this area, the civilian side of the defense ministry must exercise control over the itemized defense budget, intelligence operations, strategic planning, arms acquisition, force structure development, and military promotions.(FN3) The first warning sign that something was awry in Poland's civil-military relations came in 1992 during the so-called "Parys affair."

No other experience has weighed as heavily on the Polish officer corps's perception of civilian control over the armed forces as the tenure of Jan Parys as defense minister in the Olszewski government of 1991–92. The crisis came to a head after Defense Minister Parys objected to an April 1992 meeting between the Bureau for National Security Director Jerzy Milewski, an individual closely associated with President Walesa, and Gen. Tadeusz Wilecki. Reportedly, Wilecki was told during the meeting that he would be the president's choice as the new Chief of the General Staff. Upon

learning of the meeting, Parys accused the General Staff of allowing the army to be used in political games and warned of an imminent threat to Polish democracy if such developments were to continue.

In Parys's words, there was a "political struggle going on in Poland, a struggle over the future of the political system in Poland: whether the system will be democratic or whether dictatorship will prevail." (FN4) The Parys controversy resulted in an official inquiry into the affair by an extraordinary parliamentary commission before which Parys, Wilecki, and Mieczyslaw Wachowski, a minister in Walesa's chancellery, testified. In May, the commission issued a finding that declared Parys's charges to be baseless and even harmless to the interests of the state. In August, President Walesa dismissed the sitting chief of the general staff and put in his place Gen. Wilecki. Shortly thereafter, Wilecki was promoted to three-star general.

The "Parys affair" created a considerable stir on the Polish domestic political scene, leading to charges from President Walesa (and unofficially from the within the senior military) that Parys's civilian leadership was erratic and in the final analysis detrimental to the interest of national security. More importantly, the confrontation fostered the belief among senior Polish officers that civilian oversight equaled political infighting and was a damaging intrusion into their area of professional competence. As a result, after 1992 the Polish General Staff under Gen. Wilecki's leadership has acted to increase its autonomy vis-à-vis the civilian structures of the Ministry of Defense. President Walesa has supported the General Staff's position that in order to remain professional, the army must be left to the military professionals alone. With this, the allegiance of the military has become a factor in Polish domestic politics.

The September 1993 parliamentary elections, which brought to power the left-wing coalition of post-communist and peasant parties (SLD and PSL), resulted in further erosion of civilian oversight of the armed forces. Soon after his appointment as defense minister in November 1993, Adm. Piotr Kolodziejczyk suspended the 1993 Organizational Regulations of the Ministry of Defense in Peacetime (Regulamin Organizacyjny Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej w Czasie Pokoju) approved earlier in the year that would have placed the general staff squarely under the authority of the minister of defense. Hence, the Polish army and the Ministry of Defense still operate today under the modified 1967 Law on National Defense, under which the minister of defense commands the armed forces through the chief of the general staff, the commanders of the military districts, and service commanders. However, implicit in the 1967 law was the standard practice of the communist era that a high-ranking military officer was appointed the minister of defense, while the question of parliamentary oversight was simply not an issue. (FN5) In addition, Defense Minister Kolodziejczyk reduced the number of civilian personnel in the Ministry and moved intelligence and education from the civilian side of the Ministry back into the General Staff.

In September 1994 another crisis, the so-called "Drawsko affair," exposed the weakness of civilian control over the military. The issue was joined at an informal meeting in Drawsko of senior army generals, including Chief of the General Staff Gen. Wilecki, with Defense Minister Kolodziejczyk and President Walesa. Reportedly, at the meeting the officers took a vote of no-confidence in Defense Minister Kolodziejczyk's continued stewardship of military affairs. As was the case in the "Parys affair," after the news of the meeting had leaked to the press, the parliament established a special commission to investigate the matter. In contrast to the Parys case, however, this time the commission sided with the defense minister against the generals. The recommendations made public by the commission called for disciplining the officers involved in the incident, the reassertion of civilian control over military structures, and re-establishing direct control by the defense minister of the intelligence and counterintelligence services. Despite

these recommendations, Defense Minister Kolodziejczyk was fired by President Walesa (with the prime minister's concurrence) while reportedly some of the generals present at Drawsko even received monetary awards from the president. In addition, a list of officers submitted by Kolodziejczyk for promotion to general officer ranks was rejected by Walesa.

The "Drawsko affair" remains a focal point of Western assertions that Poland lacks effective civilian oversight over the military. Considered from the vantage point of the United States or Western Europe, the behavior of Gen. Wilecki and his senior officers should have resulted in severe discipline and possible dismissal. More significantly, considered in the context of post-communist Europe, the "Drawsko affair" is poignant not so much in that it violated the principles of civilian oversight over the nonpartisan military—that principle had never been established in Polish history anyway and is only now being initiated—but rather that it exposed a profound institutional weakness of Polish democracy.

The problem of weak civilian control over the military goes back to the early decisions on the restructuring of Poland's national security institutions, taken in July 1991 upon the recommendation of the Commission for Reforming the Organization of National Defense—the so-called Zabinski Commission Report. It introduced for the first time in Polish history the institution of the civilian defense minister and divided up the Ministry of Defense into civilian and military components.(FN6) In the turbulent years of the post-1989 transition to democracy in Poland, the frequent changes on the civilian side of the defense ministry have encouraged the military in Poland to regard the General Staff as the only institution stable enough to engage in long-term strategic planning and to protect their interests. The rapid succession of civilian defense ministers in Poland (Poland has had four defense ministers to date since the election of its first fully legitimate parliament in 1991), compared to the continuity of leadership provided by Gen. Wilecki at the General Staff since 1992 weakened the principle of civilian oversight over the military.

The lack of historical experience of civilian democratic control over the armed forces and the difficult choices imposed upon the military by the imperative of reform, including a fifty percent reduction in the size of the armed forces and the shrinking of military budgets, reinforced the perception among the Polish officer corps that the politicians cared little for the real problems confronting the army. Conversely, the rise of political influence of Gen. Wilecki has been regarded by the civilians in the government and in the parliament as an attempt by the military to establish complete autonomy vis-à-vis the government, to build a "state within the state."(FN7) The Zabinski Commission recommendation to separate the civilian from the military components within the defense ministry, instead of relying on interlocking institutions within one consolidated structure, has inadvertently contributed to the greater political role of the senior military in Poland.

The issue of who controls the Polish army came to a head in January 1995 during the parliamentary debate over two competing programs of military control and subordination. Arguing that the "army ought to be led by the military men, who know the problems and are experts on the subject"(FN8) President Walesa delivered an impassioned appeal to the Sejm on January 19, 1995, asking for the adoption of his draft legislation that would make the Polish General Staff directly subordinate to the president, thereby bypassing the Ministry of Defense and the parliament altogether. The alternative proposal, submitted by the Sejm Commission on National Defense and supported by the ruling SLD/PSL post-communist coalition, would retain and strengthen the existing structure of ministerial control over the General Staff and would reaffirm the subordination of the chief of the General Staff to the defense minister.

President Walesa's draft proposal would limit the role the defense minister to political and administrative matters, while the chief of the General Staff would command the

army and control military intelligence, counter-intelligence services, and military education. Most importantly, the chief of the General Staff would be directly subordinate to the president of the republic.(FN9) In contrast, the Sejm proposal would return control over the military intelligence services, personnel, finances, and military education back to the defense ministry. It would restore the chief of the General Staff to his primary role as the commander of the armed forces subordinated to the civilian defense minister.

The debate over the structure of civilian control over the Polish armed forces is yet to be decided. Since 1992 the Polish General Staff has acted on the premise that, considering the degree of turmoil in Polish politics, the far-reaching autonomy of the armed forces would be the best formula for modernizing the military, meeting the security needs of the country, and protecting the army's institutional interests. As structured today, civil-military relations in Poland fall short of the standard required for NATO membership.

THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES

The size of the Polish armed forces has fallen dramatically since 1989, in line with the country's tumbling defense budgets and its faltering economy. From a peak size of 400,000 in 1989, the Polish army has been reduced to a current strength of some 250,000. While the General Staff has made a concerted effort to maintain the high standards of training, the army's equipment and readiness are inferior to the Cold War levels. In part, the current difficult conditions within the Polish armed forces are the price of reform, whereby the radical restructuring of the last five years has led to inevitable strains in the system. In part, they stem from the protracted crisis in the Polish economy during the first two years of the decade. When defense spending fell below two percent of GDP by 1993, Warsaw realized that military spending in the future would have to rise to at least three percent of GDP if the army were to remain a viable force.(FN10) In February 1995, the parliament passed a bill promising to fulfill that commitment by 1997.

In November 1992 President Walesa signed a government white paper outlining the country's security policy from 1993–2000. The new military doctrine was drafted by a committee set up by Walesa within the Bureau for National Security, led by Director Jerzy Milewski.(FN11) The Polish military doctrine is strictly defensive in nature, with a principal goal of defending the security and territorial integrity of the Polish state. It has three other general objectives: (1) to maintain and expand the country's existing defense infrastructure; (2) to ensure the defense readiness of society; and (3) to prepare the armed forces for defensive operations in case of aggression against Polish territory.(FN12)

The doctrine identifies no specific threat to the country and therefore calls for the re-deployment of units to provide for a balanced coverage of the country's territory. In place of the three communist-era military districts (Pomeranian, Silesian, and Warsaw), Poland today deploys its forces in four military districts: (1) the Pomeranian (north-west), with headquarters in Bydgoszcz; (2) the Silesian (southwest), with headquarters in Wroclaw; (3) the Warsaw (northeast); and (4) the Cracow (southeast), with headquarters in Cracow.

The Polish armed forces still rely on the draft for their principal manpower needs, and they are likely to do so for the foreseeable future. The officer corps and a portion of the non-commissioned officer corps are staffed with professional military. The small NCO corps does not perform the critical training function played by its counterpart in Western armies; instead, that role in the Polish armed forces is relegated to junior-rank officers. The reform program now underway assumes a reduction in the officer corps to thirty percent of the total and an increase in the NCO corps to forty percent.

Military reform in Poland began in 1990 and it should be completed in 2002. It sets three broadly conceived criteria for the new armed forces: (1) a defensive-offensive capability to conduct combined air-land operations, (2) a balanced distribution of the combat potential throughout the country, and (3) an army with fifty-percent professional personnel.(FN13) Among the most urgent tasks facing Polish military planners is the development of a new air defense system, consisting of two air defense corps covering the northern and southern parts of the country. An equally high priority is given to the acquisition of modern military hardware compatible with NATO standards, especially communications equipment and multipurpose aircraft.

The reform program assumes that the restructuring of the operational army will be completed by 1997; the air defense system (two corps) and the territorial defense system (four brigades) should be in place by the year 2000. Logistics, education and training should be reformed by the year 2000. The large-scale equipment modernization program has yet to begin; it is scheduled for 1996.

The new Polish armed forces will be dominated by the ground forces and the air defense forces, with the navy playing a support role. Among the 250,000 military personnel in peacetime, 161,000 will constitute the ground forces, 52,000 the air defense forces, 17,000 the navy, and 20,000 will be devoted to education and training tasks. Sixty-six percent of the new army will have a combat role, with thirty-four percent performing support functions; in contrast, in 1992, only fifty-five percent of the personnel had a direct combat role. The Polish General Staff assumes that in peacetime the army will be kept at thirty percent of its total potential strength, relying to an ever-greater degree on professional personnel. In addition, the armed forces are being reorganized into brigades and corps. Two new units, the Air Cavalry Division (Dywizja Kawalerii Powietrznej) and the Armored Cavalry Division (Dywizja Kawalerii Pancernej) have been formed to meet the needs of the new defense doctrine.

For Poland, creating a military force whose primary objective is to defend the country's territory is in itself a new task, because during the Cold War the primary role of the Polish General Staff was to mobilize the operational forces and to release control over them to the Warsaw Pact command. The subordination of the Polish armed forces to Moscow's security policy objective was also reflected in the pattern of Polish troop deployment on the country's territory: sixty percent were deployed in the western, thirty percent in the central, and only ten percent in the eastern part of the country. By the end of 1995, Poland will have a more balanced troop deployment of forty percent in the west, thirty percent in the center, and thirty percent in the east.

According to the Polish General Staff assessment, the military reform is roughly seventy-five percent complete. Overall, the emerging new structure of the Polish armed forces should have a high degree of interoperability with NATO armies, provided the equipment modernization program gets underway as scheduled.

THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY

Like the rest of the Polish economy, the Polish defense industry has undergone painful reductions and restructuring, as orders from the army dried up after 1989. The Ministry of Defense estimates that the percentage of the defense budget allocated for new military hardware fell from twenty-three percent in 1989 to three percent in 1993.(FN14) The primary task facing the Polish defense sector today is not only to sustain its capacity to supply the Polish armed forces with basic weapons systems and munitions, but more importantly to modernize in a way that would allow for subsequent long-term improvements in R&D and production capacity. The current limited cooperation with Western defense industries, such as the coproduction venture with Sweden to modernize Polish armor or the onetime German transfer of MiG-23 engines from

East German air force stocks, are not long-term solutions to the crisis. The defense industry's survival and its long-term ability to supply the Polish armed forces with required quantities of modern weapons are far from assured. This has direct implications for the Polish army's ability to contribute to the overall defense effort of the alliance.

Co-production and the granting of licenses of Western weapon systems designs to Poland can clearly help modernize the Polish armed forces and its defense industry. Poland's prospective NATO partners, especially the U.S. and Germany, anticipate that the gradual transfer of technology to Poland, including licensing agreements, would allow Poland to produce components, subassemblies, and eventually complete weapon systems. Combining licensing with joint R&D projects is a politically palatable way to facilitate the modernization of Polish defense industry production and therefore enhance Poland's potential to make a real contribution to NATO security.

Warsaw has made an effort to sustain domestic R&D and in order to shepherd the country's defense industry through the country's difficult economic transition. The development of the PT-91, a modernized version of the Soviet T-series main battle tank equipped with a Western fire control system and reactive armor, exemplifies that policy, although the efficacy of Poland developing its own tank remains open to question. Another example is the 1995 "Loara" program to build a self-propelled air defense system based on the modified chassis of the T-72 tank, undertaken jointly by a consortium of eight Polish companies with government support. The "Loara" program sets the year 2000 as the target for the delivery of the system to the armed forces.(FN15)

These government efforts notwithstanding, the indigenous resources available to the Polish defense industry are limited. The only long-term solution to its problems would be the ability to increase substantially its exports while developing a cooperative arrangement with the defense industries of Western Europe and the United States.(FN16)

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

NATO's expectation that expansion should enhance the security of all members is the starting point for discussion of alliance expansion. At this stage, NATO members believe that they would import some level of instability were they to accept post-communist democracies as members. They are justified in their concerns that prospective members strive to meet basic standards, especially the clear constitutional division of power on matters of security policy and democratic civilian control over the military. In the final analysis, the decision whether or not to expand NATO will be based on a cost-benefit assessment. If NATO expands it will do so on the premise that new members will bring more assets than liabilities to the security equation.

One can hope that by bringing Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the alliance, the West will accelerate political, economic, and military reforms in those countries. All prospective entrants, however, should demonstrate unequivocally that they are making concerted efforts to meet the basic NATO standards and to correct problems. And yet, it is unrealistic to expect that countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, or Hungary apply sufficient economic resources to modernize and re-equip their armies to meet such standards. The military hardware modernization programs will require assistance from the West.

Therefore, NATO should first and foremost focus on the political requirements for membership. The United States and its allies have every right to demand that the principal political reforms, especially the constitutional question and the mechanism for effective civilian oversight of the military, be the sine qua non for membership in NATO. In the case of Poland, at the core of the current political strife over control of

the military is the absence of consensus on the division of power between the president, the government, and the parliament. In that sense, the alleged politicization of the Polish General Staff is a secondary issue to the question of who controls the levers of political power in the country. This key issue by far outweighs the importance of the actual material condition of the Polish army or its present ability to contribute to common defense.

The current discussion of issues involved in NATO expansion to the east constitutes an historic opportunity for new democracies like Poland to integrate into the alliance.(FN17) It is therefore imperative that prospective entrants have a clear appreciation of what is expected of them as the minimum standard to meet. The problems encountered by Poland after 1989 are symptomatic of the region as whole. While Poland has accomplished much in terms of economic, political, and military transformation, it must complete the reform process if it is to become a member of NATO.

Added material

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FOOTNOTES

1 John Pomfret, "NATO Worries About East European Armies Meeting Standards," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1995.

2 *Mala Konstytucja z komentarzem* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AWA, 1993). For additional analysis, see Louisa Vinton, "Poland's "Little Constitution" Clarifies Walesa's Powers," RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 1, no. 35, September 4, 1992.

3 These criteria have been outlined by Dr. Jeffrey Simon of the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

4 "Kariera szefa sztabu," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 6, 1995.

5 See: "Ustawa z dnia 21 listopada 1967 o powszechnym obowiązku obrony Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," *Dziennik Ustaw* z 1992, no. 4, poz. 16, especially Articles 13 and 14.

6 "Wezyki demokracji," *Polityka*, June 24, 1995.

7 "Panstwo w panstwie: O co gra Sztab Generalny WP," *Wprost*, June 11, 1995.

8 "Czyje wojsko," *Zycie Warszawy*, January 20, 1995.

9 "Komu bliżej do NATO," *Zycie Warszawy*, January 20, 1995.

10 Col. Stanislaw Lukaszewski and Maj. Mariusz Jędrzejko, "Obrona i bezpieczeństwo kraju nie są wyłącznie sprawą armii: Odprawa kierowniczej kadry Sił Zbrojnych RP," *Polska Zbrojna*, November 9, 1993.

11 *Sily zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 1992 (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, Biuro Rzecznika Prasowego, December 1992), 8.

12 *Ibid*, 8. See also: *Tenets of Polish Security Policy and Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland*, Warsaw: MON, 1995.

13 The following section is based in part on sources released by the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, Spring 1995.

14 *Sily zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 1992 (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, Biuro Rzecznika Prasowego, December 1992), 30.

15 Igor T. Miecik, "Przeciw atakom z powietrza," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 9, 1995.

16 For a good discussion of the problems facing the Polish defense industry in transition, see: Pawl Wieczorek, *Polski przemysl obronny w knotekscie nowego modelu sil zbrojnych* (Warsaw: PISM, 1993).

17 German Defense Minister Volker Ruhe repeatedly asserted that NATO will expand to include Poland by the year 2000, and it will do so regardless of Russia's objections. Polish TV1 News, March 8, 1995, 19:30.

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