

# DEFENCE DIPLOMACY – AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY OF THE STATE

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## Abstract

*“Defence diplomacy” is a relatively new term, created in response to post-Cold War needs to name new tasks and international functions completed by the armed forces and the leadership of the Ministries of National Defence. However, it should not be understood as a kind of traditional “military plus diplomacy”. The lack of a universally recognised definition of “defence diplomacy” means that states try to adapt its content to the needs of their own security policy. In Poland, the term “defence diplomacy” appears in journalism, but there is no precise reference to it in the documents concerning foreign and security policy. The main goal of defence diplomacy is the co-formation and implementation of the state security policy, and its task - to create stable, long-term international relations in the field of defence. Conceptualisation of the concept is a starting point for understanding its role as one of the most important instruments of foreign policy and the security of contemporary states.*

**Keywords:** foreign policy, military diplomacy, defence diplomacy

## Introduction

Contemporary diplomacy surveys are notable for the complexity of the definitional approaches and the width of the analytical field. Beata Surmacz, a Polish researcher, aptly notices that the concept of “diplomacy” in the public discourse is generally



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understood in an intuitive way, while the attempt at analytical conceptualisation shows its complexity (Surmacz 2015, p. 25). Paul Sharp claims that it is “an ambiguous term that can be the carrier of many different meanings”. The matter is further complicated by the modern ‘so-called’ paradigmatic debates in the science of international relations. Generally speaking, they relate to an extended circle of these relations and the scope of their subjectivity, understood primarily as awareness of their own interests, the ability to act on behalf of their collectiveness and the effects of this measure in scale in relations with other international actors. Within this process, these changes must also affect diplomacy as a (foreign) policy tool of countries and its related instruments developed - with specific consequences - by other “international” players (See more: Gałganek 2013, pp. 13–48).

According to Peter Marshall, at least some basic meanings can be distinguished in which the concept of diplomacy is used. First, as a synonym of foreign policy or the manner of conducting this (instrumental) policy. Secondly, as a regulatory process in international relations through negotiations or other measures of a peaceful nature. Thirdly, as a team of people employed in foreign services. Finally, the term specifies the talent or skills of professional diplomats (Nicolson 1988, pp. 4-5, Berridge 1995, p. 1 and McInnes 1998, p. 823).

The area of diplomacy is systematically expanding. Apart from strictly political issues, contemporary diplomacy concentrates on the problems of trade, economic, scientific or military contacts. The main objective of the analysis is to focus on the role of defence diplomacy in shaping and implementing security policy. I have addressed this problem in two aspects - the first is the evolution of defence diplomacy as a tool and, the second, its role in the process of shaping and implementing security policy.

The genesis of the term “defence diplomacy” is closely related to the post-Cold War change in understanding international security and related national security policies. The demilitarisation of this sphere of international relations on the one hand was characteristic of it, and on the other, a broader perception of the roles of the armed forces, going beyond their offensive, defensive or deterrent roles (See

more: Kupiecki 2017). In the British reality<sup>1</sup> (Labor's Strategic Defence Review 1998, p. 823) from the end of the twentieth century, military strength guaranteed the achievement of immediate military goals, or "winning battles". However, it showed weakness as a policy tool. After the end of the Cold War, its role had to be extended to secure peace, using various instruments related to the operation of the army, its command structures, or the civilian political factor that could oversee them. This was also connected with the prospect of strengthening the role of diplomacy and its specialisation as a mechanism of international prevention and shaping international security. Within this framework, defence diplomacy was recognised as an effective crisis prevention instrument.

"Defence diplomacy" is a relatively new term with its roots strongly associated with the needs of a new political language describing the cooperation of states and international organisations after the end of the Cold War. Although it is quite widely used in political debate and science, it lacks a universally-recognised definition. Different countries try to give it content, usually strictly adapted to the needs of their own security policy. The growing role of defence diplomacy, as a tool for the implementation of the foreign policy of the state, also results in displacing and replacing the hitherto widely used term "military diplomacy" as a term inherently narrow in meaning and in no way either in the objectives or the potential of the former.

## **First attempts to define the concept of defence diplomacy**

British political scientists, Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, rightly believe, however, that sources of defence diplomacy should be sought in military diplomacy (Cottey and Forster 2004, pp.7-15). Following the definition of Berndt von Staden, the former foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, the military

<sup>1</sup> After the victorious parliamentary elections in 1997 in Great Britain, the Labor Party wrote a Strategic Defence Review. The review, initiated on May 28, 1997 by then defence minister George Robertson, ended with the publication in July 1998 of a White Paper (The Strategic Defense Review - White Paper). The purpose of the review was to be found in the answer to the question of how the foreign policy assumptions affect defence in the context of the mission and structure of the armed forces.

diplomacy “relates to the issues of military missions, as well as the participation of military representatives in disarmament negotiations and arms control.” Military diplomacy could therefore be understood as a specific set of tasks only for military representatives, defence attachés, or other military representatives in the course of their peace missions and operations and for international military cooperation. In contrast, in the opinion of the British, military diplomacy referred only to the tasks and role of military attaché (United Kingdom Ministry of Defence 2000, p. 2). Also, from the traditional perspective represented in Poland by Julian Sutor, military diplomacy is the activity of the Ministry of National Defence in the sphere of security and defence of the state in the international arena (Sutor 2005, p. 105), that is the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Defence only outside the state, not taking into account, for example, the role of armed forces, military education or the cooperation of defence industries. Therefore, it implies the existence of wider tasks carried out for the security and defence of states by its specialist foreign apparatus. The concept of military diplomacy (maintaining its integrity within the above-mentioned area of issues and types of work) had to become part of a more capacious concept - defence diplomacy. In fact, it is easier to say today which areas of cooperation cannot be included in defence diplomacy, rather than to calculate them precisely. Defence diplomacy is in fact susceptible to adaptation to the conditions of action, expanding in a way, along with the change of the paradigm of contemporary international relations, its range of impacts and their necessary forms. It is focused on minimising hostility and building trust between states. However, in contrast to classical military diplomacy, it defines as many needs as possible opportunities, supported by the achievements of civilisations that make exchange of information and interpersonal contacts possible.

As I mentioned earlier, the first attempts to define the concept of defence diplomacy were taken by the British, introducing this concept to the “Strategic Defence Review” (SPO), announced by the Defense Ministry in 1998. Britain defines defence diplomacy as a peaceful use of defences in order to achieve positive results in the development of bilateral and multilateral relations with a given country / countries (Dodd and Oakes 1998, p. 22). In their opinion, defence diplomacy does not include military operations, but promotes forms of cooperation such as: exchange of personnel, ships and aircraft, high-level visits and senior commanders, bilateral meetings and dialogue, training and exercises,

regional defence forums, military assistance, confidence-building measures and non-proliferation. Its main purpose is to build and maintain trust and help in the development of democratic armed forces. It makes a significant contribution to the prevention and resolution of conflicts (Ministry of Defence, London 2011, p. 7).

Martin Edmonds and Greg Mills, researchers from South Africa, described it very broadly as “any use of armed forces (except warfare) to achieve national goals” (Edmonds and Mills 1998, p. 106). This characteristic corresponds to a narrower definition of defence diplomacy, proposed by Anton du Plessis (director of the South African Institute for Security Research) pointing to “peaceful use of military personnel, including military attachés, to prevent conflicts” (Plessis 2008, p. 75). The South African “school of defence diplomacy” narrows the meaning of this concept in its deliberations. Edmonds and Mills consider the role of armed forces as their “centre of gravity”, while du Plessis points to the involvement of military personnel, including military attachés. These differences may indicate a strictly utilitarian approach to defence diplomacy or the lack of a broader view of its role and importance as an instrument of state security policy. The latter could provide a general character of the definition.

A. Cottey and A. Forster, Irish and British researchers, proposed an expanding definition of defence diplomacy in 2004 as “peaceful (non-confrontational) use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a foreign policy and security tool” (Cottey and Forster 2004, p. 6). This approach to the matter thus extends its scope of meaning, taking into account both the peaceful use of armed forces, the role of the Ministry of Defence, and the use of defence attachés to prevent conflicts. Tan See Seng and Bhuhindar Singh from Singapore went much further on this issue, pointing to the leading role of the managerial staff of the defence department and the armed forces. They defined defence diplomacy as “joint and coordinated application of peaceful initiatives of cooperation between the defence and armed forces’ leadership to build trust, counteract crises and resolve conflicts” (Seng Tan and Singh 2012, pp. 221-231). They also distinguished two functions of defence diplomacy: pragmatic and transformational. The first, in their opinion, focuses on maintaining the existing state of cooperation and security, between two or more countries in the selected region. The second is focused on the implementation of tasks related to solving the crisis and returning to balance, security and cooperation. In Tan See Seng’s

opinion, defence diplomacy should be conducted on many levels (Singh and Seng Tan 2011, p. 2). The first one is the involvement and personal actions of political leaders, ministers, heads of defence / heads of general staffs, and headquarters and strategic staffs. The second level is military academies, educational, analytical and R & D centres as well as those associated with the Ministry of Defence think tank. Level three is representatives of civil non-governmental organisations (civil society) (Seng Tan 2005, p. 41-55). The Singaporean authors, in contrast to the South African and Irish researchers cited above, focused on the role of the head staff of the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces, without indicating tasks for the armed forces, international organisations and defence attachés in this area.

One of the latest proposals for the definition of defence diplomacy can be found in the Spanish Ministry of Defence's documents, which describes it as "a diverse international activity based on dialogue and cooperation, implemented bilaterally by the defence ministry with allies, partners and other friendly countries to support the achievement of goals of defence policy and Spanish foreign policy" (Ministerio de Defensa, Madrid 2012, p. 18). This understanding of the role and function of defence diplomacy, however, excludes the importance of multilateral relations or the joint implementation of tasks within international organisations. Thus, it eliminates an important area of international cooperation, limiting itself only to the efforts made by its own defence department.

Defence diplomacy plays an important role in shaping and implementing security policy in many countries. It is a specialised instrument of their foreign policy and occupies a permanent place in the system of cooperation between states and international organisations. In Poland, however, the term "defence diplomacy" appears mainly in journalism. As a subject of scientific research, it occurs to a limited extent. There is also no direct and precise reference to defence diplomacy in foreign and security policy documents. Often, this term is used interchangeably with the concept of "military diplomacy", referring mainly to the military sphere and military personnel serving the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Poland, Permanent Representations of the Republic of Poland in international organisations, Polish Military Representations on NATO and EU Military Committees and delegations at the strategic commands of these organisations.

Critical evaluation of the definition of defence diplomacy presented by other countries and the analysis of tasks performed within this framework may suggest to native researchers a search for the concept of defence diplomacy. Its starting point must be the assessment of defence potential, budgetary capacity, participation and implementation of tasks in international organisations (especially NATO and the EU), the ambitions of the state and its strategic objectives, but also the state of the international environment, relations with allies and other neighbours. Currently, however, this is not only a “military diplomacy plus”, but also other goals, a wider spectrum of activities, constant adaptation to new conditions and the historical continuity of some tasks do not change the idea of the continuous expansion of the concept of defence diplomacy.

In this perspective, a working definition of Polish defence diplomacy useful for Poland could be proposed as: *diverse international peaceful activity based on dialogue and cooperation, implemented in bilateral, multilateral and international security organisations by the national defence ministry and institutions and forces subordinate to it. Armed forces with allies, partners and other friendly countries to support the achievement of the objectives of Polish foreign and security policy.*

The suggested (proprietary) proposal also includes the possibility of peaceful use of the armed forces of the Republic of Poland, use of civil and military personnel of the Ministry of National Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland<sup>2</sup> and joint implementation of tasks under multilateral cooperation<sup>3</sup>. It also takes into account the possibility of engaging other institutions subordinate to the Ministry of National Defence, including military education and think-tanks, research and R & D centres related to the Ministry of Defence. It does not exclude the cooperation of defence industries and the transfer of knowledge, skills, equipment and military equipment in the framework of cooperation between states. However, the definition given above should only be treated as an initial proposal in the ongoing debate. This is not only determined by the need to examine in detail its constituent elements in terms of usefulness as a tool of

<sup>2</sup> There are no references to this kind of activities in the definition of defense diplomacy presented by researchers from South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> This area of cooperation was neglected by the Spaniards in their definition.

diplomacy, but also the necessity to maintain openness, taking into account the matter of continually expanding and updating potentially half of the impacts of defence diplomacy.

## **The role, goals and tasks of defence diplomacy**

The term “defence diplomacy”, shaped after the end of the Cold War, was motivated by the political need to name the expanding roles of structures subject to the jurisdiction of the ministries of national defence and to point out their goals in the new “demilitarised” international environment. Its pedigree comes from the world of politics, not science. However, there have been attempts to scientifically recognise this terminology proposal, which, however, did not bring a universally recognised definition of defence diplomacy, although the concept is quite commonly used in the “scientific circuit” and diplomatic practice. Researchers from the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Indonesia, South Africa and other countries are trying to define defence diplomacy considering the specific conditions or the security situation of their countries. Such definitions - they directly reflect national needs - do not cover all areas of defence diplomacy, or even without such ambitions. Therefore, excessive utilitarianism and the emergence of new areas of cooperation within defence diplomacy, a complicated and diverse security situation in different regions, implementation of tasks within regional organisations and cultural considerations are just some of the problems that further complicate the development and reconciliation of the general definition of defence diplomacy. In literature on the subject, there is also no attempt to agree such a definition. On the other hand, there is a general understanding that defence diplomacy directly contributes to strengthening confidence and understanding in international relations. There is, however, far-reaching agreement on the general objective of defence diplomacy<sup>4</sup> as an instrument of support for the implementation of national interests and for its foreign and security policy. It is generally accepted that defence diplomacy:

4 More on the goals of defense diplomacy see: Winger (2014), Fris (2013).

- is focused on minimising hostility and building trust between states (in this sense, it is "anchored" in the general tasks of diplomacy);
- in the context of regional and global involvement of states, with the help of "peaceful use of military personnel to prevent conflicts" it is to create stable and long-lasting cooperation and to promote transparency in the field of defence;
- can serve the implementation of common supranational goals;
- is designed to influence the change of the position of partners;
- should support the implementation of legal regulations on broad security issues;
- maintains a dialogue with partners, which may be the goal of state actions, as well as an instrument leading to the implementation of its specific interests. As a result, it directly contributes to strengthening trust and understanding in international relations.

Defence diplomacy operates within the framework of international law<sup>5</sup>, regulations and customs in force, in diplomacy as well as national law (List of valid documents for defence attaché, Drab and Sochan 2016). The latter shapes specific structural solutions, defines the principles of cooperation with other state institutions, especially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and sets goals and tasks. The activities of defence diplomacy, as an instrument of foreign policy and state security, contribute to the development of military cooperation and building correct relations between states. In this area, in particular, it activates the resources of the Ministry of National Defence, including the armed forces. However, it does not independently create an external defence policy, but is only the defence minister's tool for achieving its political goals. The detailed tasks of defence diplomacy, as an instrument of foreign policy and state security, can include:

- promoting bilateral or multilateral cooperation in the field of military relations, security and defence. This is implemented through appointing and accepting defence attachés in the capitals of states, military and civilian representatives

<sup>5</sup> The basic act of international law regulating this area of law is the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* of 1961. It covers the issues of establishing diplomatic relations, diplomatic functions, the rank of heads of diplomatic missions, as well as diplomatic privileges and immunities. Apart from the *Vienna Convention*, which is a multilateral international agreement, states sometimes contain bilateral diplomatic conventions that develop, supplement or modify the legal norms contained in the *Vienna Convention* of 1961.

in the armed forces and defence ministries, the "personal diplomacy" of commanders, managers of defence departments, as well as various ad hoc missions;

- preparation, negotiation and signing of contracts and agreements in the field of defence;
- "handling" bilateral and multilateral meetings at various levels, including substantive military advice;
- supporting partners in reforming the security sector and developing their capacity to participate in military operations;
- conducting training and education in schools and military academies for military and civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence;
- supplying military equipment and materials;
- military counselling for international needs;
- planning, organisation and implementation of bilateral and multilateral military exercises;
- organising visits, aircraft, ships and other military equipment in friendly countries;
- logistic assistance in crisis and humanitarian operations caused by natural phenomena and catastrophes;
- supporting efforts to build the military infrastructure necessary for the organisation of cooperation and mutual defence;
- promoting democratic civilian control over the armed forces;
- support for compliance with agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament, confidence building measures and control of special facilities.

Defence diplomacy has a permanent place in the system of cooperation between countries and international organisations, and its functional scope is not limited to the "niche" areas of diplomacy or the narrow "industry" specialisation of people performing tasks related to it. It may be applied in a coordinated manner in crisis situations and peaceful cooperation with other states, in order to shape and implement state policy. It is the field of diplomacy which, in the sphere of tangible and intangible assets, also includes support for the armed forces of other countries through consultancy, training or transfer of military equipment and weapons, technical cooperation and defence industries, conducting so-called defence and strategic dialogue, cooperation within military education, exercises involving military resources, as well as peace and humanitarian missions and operations. It

is difficult, therefore, to disagree with the assessment of the Australian, Nicholas Floyd, that “*defence diplomacy should be closely integrated with the planning and implementation of international policy*” (Floyd 2010, p. 7).

## **Areas and instruments of defence diplomacy**

Defence diplomacy is a broader concept than military diplomacy because it incorporates the objectives and tasks of the latter, extending them to issues related to building trust, preventing crises and conflict resolution, defence dialogue, developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation (within international organisations), and also the use of armed forces in international missions and operations. Contemporary understanding of the concept of defence diplomacy is therefore characterised by a multitude of meanings and related international activity, based on dialogue and cooperation, implemented by defence ministries. Its main goal is to shape and implement the state security policy, and the task, to create stable, long-term relations and cooperation that foster transparency in the field of defence, strengthen trust and achieve common goals. One of the most important instruments of defence diplomacy is to maintain a dialogue with partners as a communication tool and confidence-building measure.

The implementation of tasks within the framework of defence diplomacy covers a wide range of activities of both the civilian and military staff of the Ministry of Defence. It is implemented at various levels, and each operation of the subordinated entity is closely related and depends on the results of the arrangements at a higher level. The main areas of defence diplomacy are:

- bilateral and multilateral cooperation - established and maintained at a high level by both civilian and military representatives;
- education and military training;
- military exercises;
- military missions and operations;
- intelligence cooperation and exchange of information on the military-political situation and other events related to the issues of security and the state of the armed forces of other states;
- cooperation within international security organisations and alliances;

- activities related to arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures;
- legal and legislative cooperation;
- cooperation in the field of defence industries;
- military assistance and support for the armed forces of other countries;
- historical military cooperation and patriotic education.

These are currently the main areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation implemented as part of defence diplomacy. Some of them, depending on the security situation and the development of the international situation, take on special importance in crisis situations (e.g. ad hoc organised disarmament conferences), missions and military operations and assistance in liquidating the consequences of disasters. Areas of cooperation within the framework of defence diplomacy are not a closed collection; new initiatives are constantly emerging, in which the role and tasks of diplomats in uniform are constantly growing.

One of the most important instruments of defence diplomacy is the armed forces as a policy instrument with broad applications that go beyond their fighting and deterrent roles. They play an important role in direct international cooperation carried out between countries, as part of international alliances and specialist organizations operating in the field of security. Diplomacy has taken on growing significance for the personal commanders at the strategic level. The changing security situation in the world as well as the multiplicity and dynamics of threats additionally reinforces the role and importance of the armed forces as an instrument of defence diplomacy. A. Cottey and A. Forster (2004, p. 27), as cited earlier, believe that apart from the armed forces, the most important instruments of defence diplomacy include:

- bilateral and multilateral contacts between the highest civilian and military representatives of defence ministries;
- appointing and maintaining defence attachés in other countries;
- developing and agreeing bilateral international agreements in the field of military cooperation;
- training and education of soldiers and civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence;
- transfer of expertise and consultancy in the field of democratic and civilian control over the armed forces;

- maintaining regular contacts between military personnel, military units and warships visiting ports;
- the location of military and civilian personnel in partner countries, both at defence ministries and in military units;
- deployment of training teams;
- supplying equipment, armaments and other military materials;
- participation in bilateral and multilateral military exercises and training.

This multitude of fields of activity and instruments of defence diplomacy makes it difficult to talk about a universal defence model that is compatible with every contemporary state. Their specific conditions, financial capabilities, defence and scientific potential, the size of the armed forces, security situation, location, size, ambitions, participation in international security organisations, relations with neighbours and many other factors make each of them operate in priority areas for themselves, flexibly and rationally, using the available tools.

The effective defence system in the sense of the system, which functionally serves to strengthen the international position of the state, is an instrument of its foreign and security policy and an element of the anti-crisis system. It stabilises international relations, increases their transparency, and thus reduces the risk of an armed conflict. The contemporary "diplomat in uniform" is not only a contractor of tasks. The essence of his contemporary mission is to expand the state's knowledge of the international situation, as well as to participate in the creation of its security policy. There is, however, no contradiction between these roles - that is, the executive and co-creator of this policy. The importance of the latter is also growing systematically.

## Conclusions

Contemporary defence diplomacy is art and craft shaped by tradition and the current needs of foreign and security policy. It is described as a practice of conducting negotiations, requiring the use of such means, methods and instruments that do not increase hostility and, at the same time, is implemented under international law. The main task of defence diplomacy is to shape military relations between states. Contemporary defence diplomacy is undergoing a continuous adaptive

evolution to the changing conditions of operation and broadening its scope of meaning. Therefore, conceptual arrangement must be a “boundary condition” of understanding its contemporary roles and the possibilities of creative support of the state’s foreign policy by structures subordinate to the Ministry of National Defence. In this task, an important role is played by scientific research.

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