

# SELECTED PROBLEMS RELATED TO USING LAND FORCES IN THE FUTURE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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## Abstract

*Conclusions from past armed conflicts indicate that in basic military operations, especially when the military objective is to capture or maintain a specific area, terrestrial troops will play a decisive role, although their success will largely depend on the tasks carried out by other types of armed forces. Individual types of armed forces operate in a different environment and have different characteristics, but each of them performs a unique function, which it implements to achieve a common goal. It is basically a means to achieve the expected final state by achieving the synergy effect of all types of armed forces. The evolutionary nature of the security environment puts significant demands on land forces in terms of their ability to conduct operations in complex technical, meteorological and combat conditions. In view of the above, modern terrestrial forces are distinguished by their full motorisation, their ability to function in a network-centric environment and multi-faceted cooperation with other types of armed forces. The article attempts to locate the above attributes of land forces in the hypothetical operating environment of the future.*

**Keywords:** land forces, operational environment, security threats, modern war studies

## Introduction

It is to be assumed that a future war will not be a mass war in which multi-million armies will be involved. This is due to the fact that the era of such armies finished at the end of the 20th century. Combat strength ceases to be measured

by the mass of involved troops. Nowadays, much more important than creating a material advantage, expressed in the number of soldiers, tanks or guns, are: access to current and reliable information, maneuvering and efficient command, recognition and destruction systems. It should therefore be assumed that future action will be conducted by independent battle groups (task forces), capable of maneuverable operations, both defensive and offensive. Their composition will be closely adapted to the situation and the specific task. These forces will be few but active, mobile, flexible, well adapted to changing environmental conditions, coupled with fast and secure information networks ensuring efficient command and a high level of knowledge about the battlefield. In view of the above, it seems reasonable to seek answers to a number of research problems expressed in the form of questions: *How is Polish defence policy and strategy prepared for possibly resisting this relatively new form of military threat? What protection, defence and protection measures have already been taken as part of the development of the security system, and which are yet to be implemented in order to successfully counteract the potential threat in the future operational environment of the Land Forces?* These will form the content of this article.

## **Land Forces in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland**

The main task of the Polish Armed Forces is to immediately resist any military aggression. Armed forces carry out this task in cooperation with other structures of the defence system. In the event of attempts to violate state borders with the intention of depriving Poland of its sovereignty or territorial integrity, the armed forces will apply the necessary force and response to the attacker. If regular activities are impossible to conduct, the armed forces will switch to other forms of combat, including guerrilla warfare. In addition, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are prepared to carry out tasks resulting from international obligations and agreements binding Poland at the time of the conflict. Armed forces can also be used to eliminate the consequences of accidents, disasters and natural disasters.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are based on the system of professional service. The equipment with basic weaponry is maintained at a level not exceeding

the limits set in the disarmament treaties. The composition, equipment and deployment of troops in the territory of the country are to ensure: the armed forces are ready for immediate action and there is efficient implementation of mobilisational development of combat potential and transition of the state to the system of war management and supply. In the next few years, it will be necessary to transfer troops so that they correspond to the new geostrategic situation.

The main task of the Armed Forces is to defend the integrity and inviolability of the Republic, the lives of citizens and their security. All efforts and tasks are subordinated to this. It is absolutely obvious that Poland will keep alliance commitments, and there is no doubt that the primary goal, duty and task of the Polish army is to defend the integrity and inviolability of Polish territory and the life and security of citizens.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, and the Land Forces as the main core of the Armed Forces, are an important instrument for building the credibility and international position of Poland, both in the European Union and NATO. They are an integral part of the European defence system and will be able to act jointly in the event of an immediate threat.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland serve to protect the independence of the state and the indivisibility of its territory. They ensure the security and inviolability of its borders. As a basic element of the defence system, the states participate in the implementation of security and defence policies ([www.dgrsz.mon.gov.pl](http://www.dgrsz.mon.gov.pl)). The Polish Armed Forces include the following: Land Forces, Air Forces, Polish Navy, Special Forces and Territorial Defence.

Contemporary Land Forces can boast total motorisation, extensive use of modern fighting techniques and multifaceted cooperation with other types of Armed Forces. In assessing the nature of the threats to national sovereignty and security in this respect, it must be concluded that the Land Forces will play a fundamental role in resisting the aggression of a potential opponent. The wide range of challenges indicates that the role, tasks and organisational structures of the Land Forces should ensure that the requirements set for them are met.

Land Forces are a basic part of the Polish Armed Forces intended to provide defence against land and air attacks in any region of the country, in every direction, in the face of any type of military threat. The Land Forces constitute an essential

component of the Polish Armed Forces, possess great efficiency of command, significant firepower, mobility, and resistance to enemy hits (Wojska lądowe 2017). The main battle and security components that serve outside the state in the Polish Military Contingents are derived from the structures of the Land Forces.

The basic determinant of the capabilities of ground troops to meet the task areas outlined above is to have operational capabilities, key to the effectiveness of these types of armed forces. During peacetime, these capabilities should ensure the territorial integrity of the country, fulfill international obligations in accordance with the arrangements made, and a smooth transition (if necessary) to carrying out tasks arising from participation in an armed conflict. In the event of a small-scale conflict, land forces must have the capacity to defend the country in one operational direction. In the event of an escalation of the conflict (after the development of all forces), the strategic areas of the state must be maintained and participation in a strategic alliance defence operation in order to ensure conflict resolution on the political path, according to the Polish *raison d'état* (Wolejszo and Jakubczak 2013, p. 260).

As part of the military tasks carried out by land forces, we can distinguish a number of types of tactical activities, such as position and maneuver defence, delay, attack, anti-diversion, irregular, stabilisation, anti-terrorism and peace. The main fire potential of the Land Forces is composed of mechanised and motorised units and subunits. Land Forces are a basic part of the Polish Armed Forces intended to provide defence against land and air attacks in any region of the country, in every direction, in the face of any type of military threat.

## **Hypothetical shape of the operating environment of the future**

Permanent development of military technology based on the latest technologies means that future interstate wars will be characterised by the complexity of operations of various types of armed forces and forces not only in the three existing traditional environments: air, land and sea. The fight will also take place in such areas as space: cybernetic, electromagnetic or space. We also note

reevaluation of the applied rules of martial arts, which are currently considered to be: an advantage in the air, space and cyberspace, national security, unity of command, integration, connectivity, recognition, network-centricity, mobility, purposefulness, precision and awareness of media influence and initiative in contacts with it (Meilinger 2009, pp. 187-189). That is why the operational environment, due to its multidimensionality, is more and more often referred to by military specialists as battlespace (fighting space).

An important place among possible battle environments is the information sphere. It should therefore be assumed that the information fight will be a permanent element of future warfare (Olszewski 2006, p. 39). The aim is to gain an informational advantage, and thus a decisive advantage over the opponent, through accelerating and increasing the quality of decision-making processes. The increasing use of automation systems means that the duration of the process of acquiring, processing and using information is shorter than the response time of the opponent to the existing situation (Ostaszewski 2010, p. 392).

According to theoreticians and practitioners dealing with military issues, future military operations between countries will cover more and more space, with a significant reduction in the number of soldiers involved. The pace of driving them will also increase. An example is the Desert Storm operation in 1991, where due to the large area of operation of the troops, the number of soldiers per 1 km<sup>2</sup> of the operation area was almost fifteen times smaller than during the Second World War. In turn, in the Iraqi Freedom operation in 2003, the pace and scale of operations were almost seven times greater than in Desert Storm. The dynamism and effectiveness of the operation was achieved thanks to the broad application of the new doctrine, known as the Rumsfeld doctrine, which was based on the broad use of information networks, speed of troops and the widespread use of precision weapons (Rattaray 2004, p. 31).

The pace of action, according to military theorists, is now more important than the number of soldiers involved. The maximum reduction of the duration of military operations is also of particular importance. This is mainly due to economic reasons, because they contribute to lower losses and reducing the costs of operations. Therefore, short-term will be one of the determinants of the modernity of future wars.

The operating environment has been the subject of numerous analyses, forecasts and studies presented by scientists and futurologists for many years. The forecast of the operating environment indicates that the world is at the threshold of an era of new threats and conflicts resulting from them, in which the armed forces will play an important role, and in them the Land Forces. Thus, the world becomes a world of antagonisms that already present a big challenge for politicians and military people. Conflicts proceed according to inhumane scenarios which undermine the sense of existence of heavy, complex military structures, burdened with high operational inertia and unable to react in various operational environments. These qualitatively new conflicts, in contrast to the large-scale and long-lasting wars known in the past, change the nature of the operational environment of the Land Forces.

In the new disputes, aside from state entities, will be international corporations, transnational groups influencing the behaviour of governments or illegal groups, including organised criminal groups and terrorist organisations changing the operational environment and operational-tactical conditions of the Land Forces.

The prognostic future operational environment of the Land Forces operation will be a combination of environments, conditions and factors having and interpenetrating space-time dimensions, i.e. land, sea, air, time and electromagnetic space, as well as cyberspace. What's more, the geographical boundaries in the traditional concept, as well as the lines of separation and contact between the fighting parties will similarly disappear.

The changing operational environment, therefore, means it is necessary to adapt the Land Forces to new challenges. This is possible only by making a thorough change as part of the transformation of the Armed Forces. The starting point and, at the same time, a prerequisite for successful transformation of the Land Forces is the implementation of a coherent concept, supported by deep analyses, which would gain the popular support of political, social and scientific and military environments.

The future operational environment is an attempt to determine the shape and nature of future Land Forces. It is also an attempt to reorient the current philosophy of the operation of Land Forces from a static model, focused mainly on the defence of Polish territory against conventional forces attack, to a flexible

and modern one, corresponding to the realities of the 21st century, as a security policy instrument. One of the determinants of the expected dynamic nature of the future operational environment of the Land Forces operation will be the need to make quick and accurate decisions based on precise information. It is estimated that this will be implemented in the conditions of having almost full knowledge of the situation in near real time. This will involve the need for soldiers to be able to use modern technologies, their potential and function in a complex information environment characterised by network connections and dependencies.

Forecasting the future of the operating environment is a highly complex undertaking and inherently burdened with the risk of failure due to the variability of the environment and the impact of new external conditions. Similarly, the attempt to determine the character, shape and capabilities of the Land Forces is burdened with such a risk. Therefore, the indicated research results constitute a set of open and possible to be used in the long-term planning of the development of the armed forces.

## **A potential opponent of the Land Forces**

All premises indicate that the modern world does not harmonise at all. On the contrary, the differences are increasing more and more due to the deepening technological divides. Regardless of the level of technological development of countries, conflicts caused by less developed countries will force the more developed countries to take very conventional measures.

Armed conflicts make us return to solutions that we reject in times of peace as incompatible with our values. Modern states in their security strategies still assume maintaining an army capable of fighting in a pre-modern manner. These armies will be equipped with newer technical discoveries, but most of the soldiers are trained in accordance with the rules of martial arts known from past centuries. Over 100 years have passed since the outbreak of the First World War. Much has changed since then, not only in terms of technology. Today, it may seem that the boundaries of what war is and what peace is, the war on terror, economic wars and hacker attacks on government parties, may be imperceptible to the citizens of countries that are involved in them.

The category of “opponents” is similarly problematic in times when the enemy is terrorism, not a specific state, and intelligence agencies employees look for threats everywhere, even among their own citizens. These premises prompt us to reflect on whether we live in war or peace today. How does the opponent change?

Denationalisation, ideologisation and commercialisation of sources of future conflicts and crises will result in the emergence of new state and non-state actors in the security environment in the next decades. As you can see, the reasons why wars can break out in the 21st century can be attributed to a whole lot of oil, gas, water, ideology, religion, independence and a desire to show dominance in global politics. Modern armed conflicts are characterised by asymmetry. Opposite a country with a regular army, it becomes informal and difficult to define an opponent. Warfare takes place without a front line and without battlefields, most often in urbanised areas. The population and the civilian infrastructure have become the basic resource of war. At present, the rich cities of the north are seen as targets for terrorist attacks, while the over-crowded, poor and run-down cities of the south are seen as the main area of military action. Wars of the future will also take place in cities.

The operational dimension of future conflicts will relate to fighting an opponent on a multidimensional battlefield. Formerly, the method for fighting an opponent was influenced mainly by physical conditions: physical strength and its appropriate use in relation to the existing operating environment. Today, new technologies, overlapping space-time dimensions and psychological aspects of the operation of troops influence the way of counteracting the opponent.

Therefore, by attempting to identify a potential enemy of the Land Forces with a high degree of probability, it can be said that it will operate in various operational environments, acting to the disadvantage of existing governments and military structures. It will probably also have the ability to provoke internal crises and conflicts of international character. In the future, the regular opponents of the Land Forces will be regular armed forces with comprehensive weapon systems and appropriate logistics facilities. Their place may be occupied by local partisan and paramilitary units, mercenaries and rebel troops without any relevance to nationality. The distinguishing feature of these branches will probably be the particular determination of their members and the high dynamics of changes in tactics of activities. It is likely that the opponent, using asymmetric forms of

combat, will attack people and objects protected by international law and use civilians to cover its own activities. He will not use uniforms or identification insignia of military formations.

There are reasons to believe that the methods of attack and the means used for this will be diverse. Attacks will be carried out using explosives, portable means of destruction, remotely detonated explosive charges and traps, as well as previously abducted civil and military aircraft, motor vehicles and vessels.

In conclusion, the research results presented in this article authorise us to state that a significant group of opponents will be new qualitatively terrorist groups and criminal organisations. Thanks to advances in information technology, the opening of borders, the free movement of capital and progress in the field of communication and transport, these groups will gain completely new opportunities for action and international significance. It is likely that an opponent will conduct operations in a different manner in various operational environments, including often outside its territory. It will enter almost every area of human activity and will cover areas different from the classic battlefield distinguished by width and height.

Therefore, the potential new opponents of the Land Forces may turn out to be new state and non-state actors in the operational environment. The Russian annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea (18 March 2014) and the explosion of the Kremlin-inspired rebellion in the south-east of Ukraine, actively supported by raids of regular and irregular Russian troops and supplies of heavy military equipment to pro-Russian separatists striving for the secession of these countries, is an example of such an opponent and a way of acting on the one hand, and on the other, a demonstration of the Russian military force along the border with Ukraine (Fryc 2015, p. 61).

## **Land Forces in a prospective operating environment**

The beginning of the 21st century has been a period of dynamic changes in the field of martial arts and intense discussions and creating visions of future activities, when often practice is ahead of the theory of the problem. The reason for this is the dynamics of changes in the area of security, which is becoming more and

more complex. Among the factors that have a particular impact on these changes, there are: globalisation, information revolution, political geography, demographic changes and environmental changes, the different character of the opponent and smaller military forces but with large technical capabilities. The conceptual apparatus describing the phenomena of this area is also changing. The concept of “battlefield” commonly used until the end of the twentieth century, evolved into “battle space” and recently became an “operating environment”. The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are also changing - they are adapting to realities and the need to defend the territory, as well as to protect the interests of the state in the face of emerging new threats. Their unique role remains unchanged, ensuring a strategic projection, increasing national security, preventing and stopping potential threats, and supporting diplomatic efforts.

In order to fulfil the above role, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland must continuously draw conclusions from recent experiences, but also look for new, optimal concepts that can meet potential challenges.

A reflection of the complexity of the future struggle will probably be the nature of the space in which it will be conducted. The battlefield will not have a classic, linear character, a line of battle contact between troops, or lines of demarcations.

In contrast to the discovered area, urban areas will very probably be an ideal place to organise ambushes and set traps, and at the same time limit the reconnaissance, maneuverability, coverage and accuracy of the fire brigade. The enemy may also have weapons of enormous efficiency and firepower comparable to chemical or biological weapons (Dęga 1995, p. 284). The opponent will operate in a convenient environment, using the masking properties of the area and its natural cover to hide their activities. In order to overcome the technological advantage of international troops in terms of reconnaissance and precise destruction, the opponent will use a variable combat tactic. He will seek to transfer activities to the populated zone.

The opponent will also conduct military operations outside his territory, wherever he finds hostile installations and military equipment. He will also carry out operations in the territories of enemy countries. The aim of the activities will be to destroy selected key elements of their defense infrastructure and infrastructure elements necessary for the proper functioning of the economy. The method of attack and the means used for this purpose will be varied. In addition to the

traditional physical geospaces, such as: land, sea, air space (air - space), it will probably be used spheres without geographic parameters, immeasurable and unlimited such as virtual cyber space and the information sphere (Lach, Skrzyp and Łaszczuk 2010, p. 168).

As a consequence, synchronised activities of the Land Forces with other types of Armed Forces and governmental organisations will be an important element of the operational environment. An example of the future operational environment of the Land Forces may be a vague armed conflict that is taking place below the threshold of regular war in Ukraine. The continuation of confrontational diplomacy by the Russian Federation, the reaction of political and economic counter agencies to Western activities supporting Ukraine, intensified fighting and information manipulation, combined with military intimidation in the form of field training (2014) on a scale comparable to the largest maneuvers of the Soviet Army during the Cold War, more and more unannounced ostentatious military combat readiness checks, as well as increasingly aggressive and provocative actions of Russian aviation in European airspace, have permanently undermined the foundations of the post-Cold War order, in particular agreements and arrangements regulating security relations between countries in Europe (Wilk 2014, [www.tvn24.pl](http://www.tvn24.pl), 2017).

## Conclusions

The research results presented in this article do not pretend to unambiguously close the content under consideration. However, they point to the fact that the role and tasks implemented by the Land Forces should translate into their composition, organisational structure, armaments and equipment as well as specific dislocation of units, which will directly affect the maintenance of their specific operational capabilities.

The new dimension of internal security lies in the fact that most threats are common to many countries. This is the result of the development of globalisation processes that are even more important than in the 20th century. This also applies to Poland, which is an active member of international organisations. Terrorism, financial crises and ecological disasters are threats that affect Poland and other democratic countries equally. An interesting phenomenon is the issue

of strengthening state institutions for the internal security of the state, which may lead to a reduction of the individual's role in the political system.

Unquestionably, the issue of security collides with the issues of the freedom of individuals and societies. Democratic countries face a dilemma as well as ensuring security and freedom for their citizens. It seems, however, that the issue of security becomes a matter of priority and the authorities wanting to make the state safe acquire the legitimacy of citizens for the strengthening of public institutions.

It should be assumed that Poland also faces such challenges and dilemmas. Our country is subject to globalisation processes that imply many threats. New challenges require the state's activity, which is the most important guarantee of citizens' security. The state acts through its institutions, which in order to act effectively must have broad powers. Social legitimacy for strong state institutions may encourage governments to create instruments of social control. The dilemma of how strong a state is to be to guarantee security and, at the same time, not unduly limit the individual's freedoms remains unresolved.

The results of the research indicate that the opponent of the Land Forces as an essential component of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland will probably be less and less regular armed forces. Their place will probably be occupied by local partisan and paramilitary units, mercenaries and rebel troops without identification badges of military formations. One of the basic tasks faced by the Land Forces is not to be taken by surprise, to prevent intrusion into their own territory and to respond effectively in the face of such an attempt. The duty of the Land Forces is to fulfil the function of a strategic guard, by training and practicing demonstrating combat readiness to defend in times of peace and readiness to mobilise them in the event of war. In a prospective operating environment, the Land Forces should play the role of reliable, military deterrent (discouragement) of the potential opponent, with the result that the risk of aggression in the perception of the opponent is so high that it becomes unprofitable.

Regardless of the new political and military conditions in Europe, it is still the main function of the Armed Forces, including the Land Forces, to ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. For these reasons, the military tasks related to direct protection and defence of the territory of the country should be considered the main tasks of the Land Forces. Land Forces prepared for such

tasks will be able to take action, depending on the type and scale of a possible armed conflict within national forces or in allied structures.

The basic form of activity of the Land Forces in the prospective operational environment will be the anticipation of threats and counteracting them during peace, crisis and war using different methods of operation. The Land Forces will take part in activities within the framework of the strategic shield element within the country or abroad. These tasks will consist in diplomatic activities, training, demonstration of military strength, participation in peace and stabilisation missions and achieving combat readiness, covering the threatened areas, creating appropriate conditions for allied operations. The conclusions and proposals presented in this article were based on theoretical foundations, taking into account the conclusions from many training courses and exercises with the participation of the Land Forces.

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