

# Emerging Varieties of Resilience

Experiences from Germany,  
Poland and Ukraine

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## **4 Polish trajectories of resilience**

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crisis response

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# 4 Polish trajectories of resilience

## Exploring discourses on security and crisis response\*

*Agata Mazurkiewicz*

### 4.1 Introduction

In recent years, security strategies of states and international organisations have been increasingly emphasising the unpredictability and volatility of their environments. The catalogues of risks and threats included in security concepts range from traditional state-centred and military threats, through hybrid warfare and terrorism, to more dispersed threats such as pandemics and the negative effects of climate change (Mazurkiewicz 2024). As the crises multiply and become impossible to evade and difficult to manage effectively, the security discourse has been slowly infused with the concept of resilience. The roots of the concept are multi-disciplinary, as it has been used in studies as “diverse as economics, mathematics, engineering, medicine, urban studies, environmental sciences, psychology, pedagogy, geography, management sciences, sociology, philosophy, security studies” (Gruszczak 2016:8). This has resulted in multiple understandings of resilience, rendering it “an essentially contested concept” (Gruszczak 2016:8). In the context of security studies, it can be defined as the development of capabilities which make it possible to absorb shocks caused by crises, as well as to adapt, rebuild, and constantly strengthen the weakest links in order to increase the ability of the entire system to survive (Stęпка 2021a:27). Yet, the understanding of resilience, its expression, and tools vary, depending on the context and time (see Bourbeau 2013), as well as “the various cultural, psychological, and physical characteristics that can enforce or prevent the institution of resilience” (Palma-Oliveira and Trump 2016:174). That is why this chapter will focus on the interpretation of resilience set out in the strategic discourse of the Republic of Poland.

In Poland, the general approach to security has traditionally been driven by geopolitical and historical factors and heavily influenced by the events of the Second World War and (post-) communism. It has been deeply rooted in a sense of insecurity stemming from the East, especially the Russian Federation, and a pursuit of security and stability from the West, particularly NATO and the EU (see more:

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Stolarczyk 2019). In a sense, there is an orthodoxy written into Polish security strategies with a relatively stable set of allies and traditional and asymmetrical threats (including terrorism) but with little innovation in regard to identifying and dealing with complex non-military crises. This conservative attitude is reflected in the cautious and minimalistic way of including resilience in the national security discourse and in its particular characteristics.

This chapter focuses on the identification of traces of resilience thinking and its evolution in Polish strategic security discourse and national security and crisis-response policies. By applying policy frame analysis, the chapter looks into the resilience-centred rhetorical frame embedded in Polish security and strategic discourse and investigates how it corresponds with Bourbeau's concept of "resiliencism" (Bourbeau 2013). This approach allows for the identification of the types of resilience that have been displayed in the Polish understanding of resilience and the ways in which it has changed over time. The chapter is structured as follows. The first section of the chapter is devoted to an overview of the theoretical and methodological assumptions behind the analysis. Next, the chapter proceeds to investigate the general rhetorical frame of resilience as set out in three consecutive iterations of the National Security Strategy. Following that, the frame of resilience is traced in two main documents regulating the current security policy of Poland, that is Acts on Crisis Response and on the Defence of the Homeland. The chapter ends with concluding remarks in which the Polish rhetorical frame and its evolution are outlined and discussed in the context of the assumptions of the Civil Protection and Civil Defence Bill proposed by the Polish government in March 2024.

## **4.2 Theoretical and methodological assumptions**

After several decades of studies across multiple disciplines, the concept of resilience has gained numerous understandings (Hosseini, Barker, and Ramirez-Marquez 2016). Its origins are grounded in psychological and ecological research, focusing on the abilities of, respectively, individuals and systems, to manage shocks and adversity. Psychological studies interpret the concept of resilience as the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium in the face of adversity, trauma, and highly disruptive events (Bonanno 2004:20). Thus, the early research on psychological resilience "was the search for factors that protect an individual from the stressors they encounter, and distinguish between those who adapt to the circumstances and those who yield to the demands" (Fletcher and Sarkar 2013:12–13). The ecological approach to resilience started with Holling's seminal study on the survival of ecological systems, which suggested shifting the focus "from the equilibrium states to the conditions for persistence" (Holling 1973:2). In other words, Holling encouraged looking at resilience as a property which "is a measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables" (Holling 1973:14). These initial strands of literature provided a strong basis for research on resilience across multiple disciplines, with its recent application in studies as diverse as supply chain management and operations

(Pires Ribeiro and Barbosa-Povoia 2018), neuroscience (Feldman 2020), and disaster response (Krüger and Albris 2021). Bourbeau used this wealth of literature to show how the various understandings of resilience have found their expression in world politics (Bourbeau 2018).

As noted by Stępką, the two types of resilience most often utilised in national security strategies refer to the system and the community (Stępką 2021b:29). The former is focused on the development of mechanisms aimed at enhancing the broadly understood resistance and flexibility of systems critical from a security standpoint. Systemic resilience is therefore reflected in the continuous functioning of the state, that is the ability of the government to make decisions, communicate, and execute them in a crisis situation, as well as the maintenance of stable delivery of essential services. The focus of community resilience is placed on citizens and communities and the enhancement of their adaptive capabilities paired with their active engagement in crisis-response and recovery efforts. It relies on the culture of preparedness and the diffusion of responsibility for crisis response. As resilience essentially “places a focus on processes of dealing with disruption and of enacting security practices” (Dunn Cavelty, Kaufmann, and Soby Kristensen 2015:4), it is also necessarily context- and time-dependent. Therefore, security strategies may focus on both systemic and community resilience or prioritise or even omit one of them, and the state’s approach to one or both of them may change over time.

Building on the assumption of the contextuality of resilience, Bourbeau suggests distinguishing three types of resilience – based on Maintenance, Marginality, and Renewal – also known as the MMR typology (Bourbeau 2013; see also: Handmer and Dovers 1996). Within this framework, resilience based on maintenance is primarily focused on preserving the status quo and pursuing stability and steadfastness despite crises and disturbances (Bourbeau 2013). It is epitomised in the “bouncing back” strategy, which, as suggested by Handmer and Dovers, constitutes a reactive approach to resilience with a focus on constancy, stability, and “strengthening the status quo and making the present system resistant to change” (Handmer and Dovers 1996:494). In order to achieve that, it is necessary to identify and consistently reinforce the weakest elements of the system. Therefore, from this perspective, shocks and disturbances are understood negatively. Their existence needs to be treated as a threat to security and emphasised “in order to better justify the necessity to implement measures to uphold the status quo against changes provoked by the events” (Bourbeau 2013:11). Resilience by maintenance is therefore rather rigid and conservative, focused on preservation, regaining the equilibrium, and resisting any changes brought about by disturbances.

The second type of resilience, as conceptualised by Bourbeau, relies on introducing marginal adjustment into the system, without challenging any of its core elements or operations. Thus, “Resilience as marginality implies responding within the boundaries of the current policy, norm and/or social structure” (Bourbeau 2013:14). This strategy requires more flexibility than resilience by maintenance and opens up the possibility of either incremental or quick adaptation to changing circumstances based on lessons learnt from previous crises (Chandler 2019; Handmer and Dovers

1996). In this perspective, the disturbance is presented as a challenge which can be dealt with using existing tools and requiring only some slight adjustments. It is still a negative occurrence, though less salient than in the case of the previous type of resilience, and therefore requires adaptation rather than resistance.

The third type of resilience is based on renewal or transformation and – in terms used by Handmer and Dovers – is proactive (Handmer and Dovers 1996:494). As written by Bourbeau, “Resilience as renewal implies introducing novel vectors of response that will (in an implicit or explicit way) fundamentally change existing policies and set new directions for governance in this field” (Bourbeau 2013:16). The transformation of the system, resulting from a disturbance, is also context-dependent as it is based on past experiences, culture, and collective memory. At the same time, it is subjective to a particular political decision and dependent on the dominant interpretation of the disturbance and the desired method of dealing with its consequences. In this sense, the importance of the disturbance will be emphasised (as in the case of resilience by maintenance) but with the goal of highlighting the need for change. “The disturbance has such profound ramifications that substantial reorganisation of the policy is strongly desired” (Bourbeau 2013:16).

The utility of this framework lies in the assumption that resilience, as a process of patterned adjustments in the face of crises, may essentially take the form of different strategies aimed at obtaining different outcomes (e.g. return to status quo or a total transformation) and resulting from different perception of disturbances (e.g. as purely negative or as an opportunity). As such, resilience by maintenance, marginal adaptation, and renewal can be applied in both the systemic and community dimensions. That can take a coherent and synchronised form, where the same types of strategies are envisioned as desirable and practised at both the systemic and community level. It is also possible that different strategies are deemed appropriate for these two dimensions, or that a discrepancy between them is observed at the level of practice. As resilience is highly contextual, the types of resilience strategies at systemic and community levels may also evolve and change in response to disturbances.

Given this context-dependence of resilience, policy frame analysis becomes a useful tool in its analysis as it assumes the availability of multiple interpretations of reality. Following Goffman, frames can be understood as schemata of interpretation that guide perception and the representation of reality (Goffman 1986) and, as noted by Schön and Rein, are applied by policymakers to make sense of socially relevant issues and mobilise others into action (Schön and Rein 1994). Thus, frames are used in policy texts to indicate a certain perception of the situation by emphasising some elements and hiding others and guiding towards the future response. In this sense, policy frames have two dimensions – diagnostic and prognostic. Within the diagnostic dimension, they help to define problems, focusing attention on some aspects and not on others, which then allows for blame to be assigned. The prognostic dimension of policy frames involves proposing solutions by setting out particular goals and suggesting tactics for achieving them. “Diagnostic and prognostic framing are often closely intertwined, in that prognostic framing often rests implicitly on the problem definition and attribution that is part of diagnostic framing” (Coburn 2006:347).

The application of policy framing in security studies has led to a realisation that security could be considered a “master frame,” that is a system of meanings or a repertoire of interpretations of security (see e.g. Benford 2013; Gahan and Pekarek 2013). Stęпка suggests that the security master frame comprises intertwining and multiple security logics, including among others “exceptionalist” (or traditional) security, human security, risk management, and indeed resilience (Stęпка 2022:42–43). The configuration and makeup of these security logics may differ with respect to the specific policy and even on a case-by-case basis. However, some of the foundational elements of the resilience logic include the inevitability of shocks and disturbances and general uncertainty of the environment; a distributed referent object actively involved in security and decentralised and devolved security measures; and the general objective of security viewed in terms of building up the ability to withstand crises and elimination of extreme vulnerabilities with the system (Stęпка 2022:42–43). Thus, the diagnostic and prognostic frames of the logic of security understood as resilience represent first the perception of the shocks and disturbances and the level of concern they cause, and, second, the desired strategies of dealing with these shocks, through maintenance, marginal adaptation, or renewal.

Building on that, the investigation of the way Poland framed resilience over time relies on policy analysis of two types of security-related documents. First, the analysis is based on the three most recent iterations of the Polish National Security Strategy adopted in 2007, 2014, and 2020. National security strategies represent the most fundamental assumptions that a state holds with regard to its security, indicating its national interests, describing the security environment, defining the catalogue of threats, and pointing towards the desired ways of strengthening security. In this sense, they reflect the dominant security logics and include the diagnostic and prognostic frames. As they are adopted at regular intervals, they make it possible to grasp the change of the interpretation of resilience over time. Second, in order to supplement the data retrieved from National Security Strategies, the analysis incorporates two main acts adopted by the Polish Parliament that regulate security-related matters, that is the Act on Crisis Response adopted in 2007 and the Act on the Defence of the Homeland adopted in 2022. These two acts build on the broader security assumptions presented in the strategies and help to interpret and specify the most recent elements in the Polish resilience frame. At the time of this chapter’s writing, the Polish government is working on regulations regarding civil defence and civil protection which will constitute the third element of the Polish security system. However, as the exact provisions of the bill are not yet public, and the text itself is not part of the Polish legal acquis, it will not be included in the analysis. Instead, the assumptions of the bill announced by the government will constitute a basis for the discussion on the potential directions of the evolution of the Polish resilience frame.

### **4.3 Resilience in Polish strategic security discourse**

One of the first indications of resilience in Polish strategic documents dates back to the 2007 National Security Strategy. In the introduction, the document diagnoses the security environment as dynamic and variable, challenging states and nations

to make constant efforts to increase their own security (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 3). The 2007 Strategy then emphasises the importance of stability of the immediate environment of Poland as well as of “permanent global security” (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 6). Still, throughout the text, the rhetoric of resilience is rather parsimonious, and most of its instances indicate the interpretation of resilience as maintenance. On several occasions, the document directly refers to the necessity of maintaining the capabilities of the state and its subsystems in the event of a crisis. It notes that

The overarching objective of state actions in the field of internal security is to maintain the capability to respond – appropriately to the prevailing situation – in the event of threats to public security and common security, related to the protection of legal order, the lives and health of citizens, and national assets from unlawful activities, as well as the consequences of natural disasters, calamities, and technical failures.

(President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 58)

Indications of this type of frame can also be found in references to “the stability of basic natural processes in the biosystem” (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 77); the responsibility of the executive subsystems of the state for mitigation of negative consequences of threats (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 92); the maintenance of financial balance, energy, and raw material stability (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 119), as well as development and maintenance of an effective pension system (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 133). The resilience rhetoric becomes more salient in the discussion on ICT infrastructure. The 2007 Strategy places an emphasis on the reduction of its susceptibility to disruptions, minimisation of the effects of potential attacks, and quick restoration of its full functionality (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 78). It also indicates a certain distribution of responsibility reflected in the coordination of actions between the government, other states, and “with manufacturers and suppliers of IT equipment and software, national telecommunications operators, internet service providers, research and training centres” (President of the Republic of Poland 2007: art. 81).

The resilience rhetoric in the 2007 Security Strategy is rather limited and often mixed with elements of risk management. It not only focuses on risk-management strategies such as early warning and prevention of threats but also implies that the most desirable way of dealing with crises that have occurred is through the maintenance of the existing subsystems and communities, minimising negative consequences, and bouncing back to the state from before the crisis. The 2007 Strategy does not include another aspect of resilience by maintenance – a call for the implementation of security measures through an emphasis on risks and threats. Meanwhile, the other types of resilience, that is, by marginality and by transformation, have not significantly saturated the rhetorical framing. Modest as it is, this introduction of maintenance-driven framing has become the leitmotif of Polish rhetoric on resilience and has been elaborated upon in further iterations of the national security doctrine.

The next iteration of the Polish National Security Strategy, published in 2014, not only confirms this take on resilience but also, in several instances, directly uses the term. It notes the unpredictability of security challenges (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 24) indicating the need of “an increase in the strategic resilience of the country to various threats” (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 64), as well as to the necessity of the “development of capabilities for the elimination of consequences of crises” (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 108). The emphasis on maintenance and resistance accentuates the outlook on systemic resilience. This particularly applies to ICT systems and cyber incidents, and the use of ICT infrastructure for early warning purposes remains one of the most prominent elements of the Polish resilience discourse (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 112, 129, 132). This is followed by a commitment towards the maintenance of strategic reserves, vital to the “reconstruction of critical infrastructure, mitigation of disruptions in the continuity of supplies necessary for the functioning of the economy and meeting basic needs of the citizens, saving their lives and health” (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 103).

Since 2014, Polish strategic thought has not only reaffirmed its previous stance but has also started widening and deepening its take on resilience. For instance it recognises the need to decrease the vulnerabilities of non-military sectors of security such as food and energy, indicating the need to prepare for unfavourable phenomena disturbing the supply of these key resources (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 104). In a similar vein, it not only speaks of the preservation of biodiversity and maintenance of water security but also begins to promote adaptability in the face of climate change (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 105). Still, even in this context, a strong reference to the maintenance frame persists, as the aim of the adjustments in the system is to minimise the negative consequences of natural disasters and weather-related extreme phenomena (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 105).

Furthermore, the 2014 Strategy contains traces of community resilience, which can be found in the framing of security education, emphasising a culture of preparedness and “social awareness in terms of the understanding of threats to security” and shaping “competences allowing to respond to such threats in a deliberate and rational manner” (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 96). This is supplemented with a call for increasing the efficiency of public administration, as well as continuous upskilling and improvement of its capacity to effectively respond to a variety of threats (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 96). In this context, the document also emphasises the role of the media, whose task is to build and deepen public awareness of identifying and appropriately responding to emerging threats (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 97). Resilience-related thinking can be also traced in the framing of connectivity between all rescue services and entities (including non-governmental organisations or voluntary firefighting and rescue units), creating a system of civil defence and protection. This is supposed to support and contribute to the development of a community capable of managing extreme events (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 88). It could be argued that in this context, the 2014 Strategy

also contains a slight indication of (at least an awareness of the existence of the strategy of) resilience by transformation, noting that “the area of civil defence, related to the issues of civil protection, requires comprehensive transformation and adaptation to the current socio-economic situation, including international obligations” (President of the Republic of Poland 2014: art. 134). Still, for the most part, the document relies on the notion of using the existing capabilities in dealing with crises and strengthening them to increase their efficiency. The rhetorical framing used in the 2014 Strategy not only continues the maintenance frame set out in its previous iteration but also fits its rhetoric into the assumptions of resilience by marginal adaptation.

Even though between 2007 and 2020, the Polish strategic security discourse more or less directly referred to the concept of resilience, it has not explicitly recognised it as an official approach to Polish security. This changed with the 2020 iteration of the National Security Strategy, which incorporates a chapter on “State resilience and common civic defence”<sup>1</sup> (President of the Republic of Poland 2020). To a large extent, the document keeps utilising the resilience frames contained in previous editions, confirming the uncertain and unpredictable nature of the security environment and the need to build the state’s resilience and adaptive capacity in relation to emerging challenges and threats (President of the Republic of Poland 2020:5–6, art. 1.1). In the context of systemic resilience, the 2020 Strategy continues to focus on the maintenance and protection of the state and critical infrastructure, as well as on recovery capabilities (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.2, 2.8, 2.18, 2.20). As the document was published during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, it puts emphasis on the capabilities of the healthcare system and public administration to fight against epidemic threats and on the enhancement of the strategic reserve programme (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.3).

It could be argued that the strengthening of the resilience frame visible in the 2020 Strategy is influenced by NATO guidelines, in particular, those accepted at the 2016 Warsaw Summit. The Strategy announces the establishment of an integrated crisis management system and its adjustment to the Alliance’s requirements, “allowing for smooth transition from the state of peace to the state of crisis and war, as well as ensuring that it provides effective tools to prevent and combat threats, including hybrid ones” (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 1.5). It also directly incorporates NATO’s Baseline Requirements for national resilience (NATO 2023) by pledging to

Increase resilience to threats, predominantly in the scope of: the continuity of government and the functioning of the state, resilient energy supplies, uncontrolled movement of people and relocation of the population, collection, protection and management of food and water resources, ability to deal with mass casualties, resilient telecommunication networks and Information and Communications Technology systems, population information and alert systems and resilient transport system.

(President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.7)

This NATO-driven approach further reinforces the maintenance frame of Polish resilience, with a focus on prevention, resistance, and bouncing back.<sup>2</sup>

The 2020 Strategy assumes that the responsibility for national security should be dispersed and proposes increasing the “state’s resilience to threats by creating a system of common civic defence, based on the efforts of the entire nation, and building an understanding for the development of the Republic of Poland’s resilience and defence capabilities” (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2). Thus, the announced system of common civil defence is supposed to incorporate a broad array of actors, starting from state and local administration, through the private and non-governmental sectors, to educational institutions, local communities, and citizens (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.1). The aspect of community resilience can also be noticed in the declaration to build social capital based on social networks, common values, and cooperation skills (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.5).

The Strategy also announces a redefinition of “the civil defence system and the population protection system by making it universal . . . , focusing on building the capacity of the system to constantly adapt and respond to the changing challenges and threats” (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2.6). At the same time, it announces that the development of common civil defence readiness across the country will be carried out through the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF)<sup>3</sup> (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 3.13). In this way, it sets up the conditions for militarisation of this aspect of Polish resilience, replacing civilian-led civil defence with the dissolution of civilian engagement in military training and preparedness.

The growing incorporation of resilience into Polish strategic discourse can be viewed as a response to the increasing unpredictability and uncertainty of its security environment. Indeed, while the 2007 and 2014 iterations of the National Security Strategy pointed out numerous threats and challenges, the most recent edition emphasises both more dispersed and distant, as well as immediate and direct, threats to Polish security. Still, the overall interpretation of resilience seems to be rather stable with the predominance of the maintenance frame mixed with marginal adaptation. The next section focuses on the investigation of resilience framing in the two security-oriented policies: crisis response and national security.

#### **4.4 Resilience within the broader security and crisis-response policy framework**

The Act on Crisis Management, adopted by the Polish Parliament in 2007 with later amendments, is by definition focused on detection, preparation for, and governance during crisis situations (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007). As shown in the earlier discussion, it was initially prepared in the context of a limited focus on resilience at the strategic level. While it does not contain any direct references to the concept, it does provide insights into some elements of resilience thinking, including the way Poland views crises, the desired modes of preparedness and reaction, as well as the assignment of responsibility for action.

From the beginning, it becomes apparent that the interpretation of resilience proposed in the document is strongly reliant on the notions of maintenance of capabilities and bouncing back from a crisis. A crisis situation is defined as an unambiguously negative occurrence, detrimental to the security of people, property, or the environment and limiting the functioning of public administration (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 3.1). In this light, the desired strategies for dealing with crisis focus on prevention, taking control, limiting negative consequences, and recovery. In terms of priorities, the Act focuses on the continuity of the functioning of public administration, ensuring the functioning and restoration of critical infrastructure, monitoring threats, rational management of capabilities and resources, and finally supporting the population by providing conditions for survival (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 4.2). Indeed, the Act devotes significant attention to the protection of national and European critical infrastructure, maintenance of its continuous operations, limitation and neutralisation of the effects of crises, and quick restoration of its proper functioning following any disruptive events (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 3.3, 5b–6d).

In terms of responsibility for security, the Act provides a clearly set-out structure comprising multiple levels of state and local administration and precisely defined teams and centres of crisis management. It also precisely delineates tasks and responsibilities assigned to these entities at various levels. As a result, there is not only a clear line of command in the event of a crisis situation, providing optimal grounds for regaining control and bouncing back, but also a rather rigid structure offering limited space for flexibility and adaptation. The primary responsibility for security rests on state administration, institutions, and bodies (including national security services and the healthcare system), but the Act also lists owners of facilities, installations, devices, and critical infrastructure services (see e.g. Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 5b), as well as assuming cooperation with “entities, cells and organizational units of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union and other international organizations responsible for crisis management and protection of critical infrastructure” (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 11.2.6). The local population is framed solely as a passive referent object which requires protection and assistance and is in no way involved in crisis response (Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 21b). As such, responsibility for the provision of security is on the one hand quite broad as it involves multiple levels of national (and international) governance structures but on the other also very limited in terms of the involvement of non-state actors.

Thus, the definition of a crisis as a negative occurrence, the clearly defined goals of crisis management, and the rigid structure of responsible entities indicate that the dominant interpretation of resilience represented in the Act on Crisis Management relies on the strategies of maintenance and bouncing back. A slight departure from this frame could be seen in the provision allowing for the involvement of the Armed Forces in crisis response. The Act states that

in the event of a crisis situation when the use of other means is not possible or may prove insufficient . . . , the Minister of National Defence, at the request of

the voivode,<sup>4</sup> may place at his disposal subunits or units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, . . . together with directing them to perform crisis management tasks.

(Chancellery of the Sejm 2007: art. 25)

This provision allows for the creation of (at least on paper) some level of flexibility and a redundancy that can be utilised in the event of a crisis that overwhelms other subsystems.<sup>5</sup> Still, as it implies the involvement of the military, that is, an actor traditionally associated with security and crisis response, this example of resilience by adaptation is indeed very marginal.

The second act – the Act on the Defence of the Homeland – was adopted in 2022 just days after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and replaced the previous Act on the Universal Obligation to Defend the Republic of Poland from 1967 (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022). Similar to the previous document, the Act on the Defence of the Homeland does not directly refer to the concept of resilience. Instead, it mostly invokes the more traditional logic of security with a focus on external threats that need to be repelled using the Armed Forces and contains regulation of the military service. Still, the Act contains some elements of resilience framing reflected in the provisions on the activities in preparation for and under the conditions of an external threat to Polish security and in the event of war, as well as in the references to non-military crises.

These sparse elements of the resilience rhetoric present in the Act fit well in the direction formulated at the strategic level, primarily indicating the understanding of resilience as maintenance. The Act frames the planning and defence of the state in terms of ensuring its functioning in the event of an external security threat and during war (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 27.1.2), including in such aspects as securing airspace and territorial waters (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 27.1.8), as well as “combating natural disasters and eliminating their effects” (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 11.3). It also refers to the need to maintain and protect critical infrastructure, both physical and in cyberspace (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 23, 27.2.5). Resistance to shocks and disturbances, continuous functioning during crises, bouncing back, and the elimination of negative consequences of emergencies are the preferred strategies implied in the Act.

Given this conservative framing of resilience and the main focus of the Act on deterrence and defence, the conceptualisation of responsibility for security and resilience may initially seem surprisingly broad. As explicitly stated in the Act, “The implementation of tasks in the field of state defence is the responsibility of all government authorities and administration bodies and other state bodies and institutions, local government, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and other entities, as well as every citizen” (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 7).

This provision clearly refers to the concepts of whole-of-government and even whole-of-society, which assume a broad and comprehensive involvement of diverse actors in the provision of security. Indeed, next to governmental bodies at state and local levels, the Act regulates the involvement of other actors in

strengthening security and national defence capabilities. Voluntary aid organisations can sign partnership agreements with the Ministry of National Defence, which makes them eligible for direct financial assistance and permission to utilise military facilities and infrastructure (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 114,116). Students and university graduates are encouraged to participate in military training through so-called Academic Legion Schools co-organised by the Armed Forces and universities (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 108). In a slight nod towards the idea of community resilience, the Act assigns responsibility to multiple state and non-state actors for shaping patriotic and defensive attitudes within society, as well as education for security and the development of social capital (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 25, 30,117).

However, it could be argued that this broad participation in security is oriented mainly towards the resilience of the Armed Forces, conceptualised as the main actor responsible for deterrence and defence. Society, non-governmental organisations, and business enterprises are presented as support subsystems, rather than equal contributors to security. Thus, the military bodies are authorised to “demand necessary support from state institutions, government administration bodies and local government, entrepreneurs and other entities,” and these actors are obliged to provide assistance (Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 9). The Act also assumes the possibility of imposing an obligation on state and non-state bodies, including individual citizens, of performing ad hoc work and granting access and permission to use “any real estate and movable property for the purposes of preparing state defence or combating natural disasters, eliminating their effects and crisis management” (see e.g. Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 618, 628). These provisions, which can also be activated during peacetime, contribute to resilience as they increase the availability of human and physical resources for crisis response. However, they also reinforce the position of the Armed Forces as the central actor in the Polish resilience scheme. The Act further strengthens this primacy by confirming the active role of the military in non-military crisis response.

The Armed Forces can participate in combating natural disasters and eliminating their effects, anti-terrorist activities, property protection activities, search operations, rescue operations or protection of human health and life, protection and defence of cyberspace, clearing areas of explosives and dangerous materials of military origin, and their disposal, as well as in the implementation of crisis management tasks.

(Chancellery of the Sejm 2022: art. 11.3)

The limited resilience rhetoric of the Act on the Defence of the Homeland clearly frames resilience in terms of resistance and bouncing back. While it does include more references to community resilience than the Act on Crisis Response by involving society, business enterprises, and even educational institutions in the security framework, it also subordinates it to the resilience of the state and the Armed Forces. In doing so, it further contributes to the militarisation of Polish resilience.

#### 4.5 Conclusions: moving forward with the Polish resilience scheme

Poland was a relative latecomer to resilience thinking, but within the last 17 years, it has developed a distinctive approach with a relatively stable set of characteristics. Here, the general frame of resilience has been gradually constructed in three iterations of National Security Strategy, reflecting a characteristic point of view on resilience, deeply rooted in the Polish system of beliefs and style of argument and action (Schön and Rein 1994:33). On the one hand, this evolution has been propelled by an increasing awareness of the volatility, unpredictability, and uncertainty of security environment. On the other, it is also driven by the desire to become very closely interconnected with Western security frameworks on a systemic (i.e. as a recognised member of NATO) and intellectual level (i.e. through the incorporation of new perspectives on security). This general frame developed at the strategic level was further clarified and refined at the level of policies regulating different aspects of Polish security.

From the start, the Polish approach to resilience has displayed a strong preference towards strategies based on maintenance. Thus, the activities of security providers are to be focused on preserving the status quo, resistance to shocks, regaining the equilibrium, and quick elimination of any negative effects of disturbances. Within this reactive approach to resilience, much emphasis is placed on the continuous functioning of the state, security of critical infrastructure both physical and in cyberspace, and the maintenance of appropriate levels of strategic reserves. Probably the most visible expression of this type of resilience framing is the verbatim incorporation of NATO's Baseline Requirements for national resilience in the latest edition of the National Security Strategy, highlighting such aspects as stability in the provision of governmental services and in energy supply, food and water reserves, as well as resilient healthcare, communication, and transportation systems. These strategic assumptions on resilience are reflected at the policy level. Both the Act on Crisis Response and the Act on the Defence of the Homeland, while not referring to the concept directly, emphasise systemic resilience achieved through resistance to any shocks and disturbances and bouncing back to the previous state.

Next to this steady focus on systemic resilience, Polish national security discourse slowly started to recognise the notion of community resilience and to develop a particular outlook on this topic. Initially, this aspect of resilience was hardly visible, with the responsibility for security assigned to governmental institutions and bodies at various levels and the society framed primarily as a passive referent object requiring protection and assistance. Since 2014, this particular frame has evolved and started to incorporate such elements as education for security, a culture of preparedness, and increasingly broad connections between various actors, such as state institutions and local governmental bodies, state and voluntary rescue services, media, and even citizens.

Here, the 2020 National Security Strategy contains probably one of the most telling expressions of the Polish "twist" on community resilience, proclaiming the development of "a system of common civic defence, based on the efforts of the

entire nation” and then assigning responsibility for its establishment to one of the branches of the Armed Forces (President of the Republic of Poland 2020: art. 2, 3.13). On the one hand, this militarisation of the Polish resilience scheme can be interpreted as a result of the dominant – at that point in time – crisis, that is the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time in Poland, as in many other states (Braun and Stelzner-Doğan 2022), the military was indeed used as a well-equipped, easily available, and quickly mobilised tool to strengthen overburdened healthcare and social support systems (see the chapter by Maciej Stępka and Agata Mazurkiewicz in this volume). On the other hand, the involvement of the Armed Forces is a stable and rarely contested fact of Polish crisis response. This approach is confirmed and legalised in the Acts on Crisis Response and the Defence of the Homeland, which grant the Armed Forces a role and place in combating natural disasters, search and rescue operations, and protection of human health and life, to name a few. To some extent, the militarisation of Polish community resilience can be viewed as an element of resilience by marginal adaptation. It does create a certain level of redundancy, using the existing capabilities to strengthen the weakest subsystems, and doing so within the boundaries of existing policies and social norms. However, the framing of resilience reflected in the Act on the Defence of the Homeland clearly points towards the subordinate and supportive role of society, the third sector, and non-governmental actors towards the Armed Forces. As such, the existing Polish resilience scheme seems to be inherently militarised.

However, as a result of Russia’s war on Ukraine, this direction of the development of Polish resilience may undergo some adjustment, at least at the level of legislation. In March 2024, the Polish government led by Donald Tusk presented the assumptions of a new bill on civil protection and civil defence. The bill is intended to directly address multiple aspects of societal resilience, in particular developing and strengthening its civilian and community dimensions. As disclosed by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration and the Minister of Defence, the new law is set to regulate seven areas: systems of early warning and information; evacuation and reception of the population; shelters and hiding places for the population; development of resources and structures for civil protection and civil defence; functioning of civil protection during war; strengthening societal resilience; and finally funding (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration 2024).

During the press conference presenting the general assumptions of the new legislation, the Minister of Defence Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz noted that the defence of the Homeland needs not only a strong army and a strong Alliance but also the engagement from the entire society and that “stopping the attack on Kyiv would not have been possible if not for the resistance of the civilian population in the first days and weeks” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration 2024). These comments indicate – at least at the level of political declarations – that the dispersion of responsibility for, and wide involvement in, protection and security, inherent in resilience thinking have been fully embraced. Indeed, the published assumptions of the bill include a strong focus on the population, rather than the resilience of state and critical infrastructure. Next to information campaigns directed at raising awareness and preparedness of the general population, the bill is intended to

regulate education (including in schools) and training and involve citizens, NGOs, and professional rescue services. A new Civil Defence Corps is to be established, which, during peacetime, is to serve as a Civil Protection Corps. It is to incorporate not only employed individuals, those serving, running businesses, associated with, or being members of various civil protection entities, such as the Police, but also companies responsible for city sanitation or powerplants (Horbaczewski 2024). However, some media report that the Corps will also accept volunteers, who will be exempt from military mobilisation in the event of war (Horbaczewski 2024). This would not only provide a platform for a closer engagement of citizens in civil protection and defence, but also, more importantly, it would do so through a civilian alternative to the currently only available military option.

The bill also announces the development of civil protection and defence capabilities and structures, for the most part based on the existing governmental bodies at state and local levels. In this sense, it continues the existing trend of reliance of the current capabilities. However, the assumptions of the bill contain two elements significant in light of the aforementioned discussion on the militarisation of Polish resilience. First, it designates the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration (rather than the Minister of Defence) as the main party responsible for civil protection and defence. Second, it announces the establishment of a Governmental Committee on Civil Protection not only led by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration but also incorporating representatives of the ministries of defence, state assets, digitalisation, communications, health, finance, culture and national heritage, infrastructure, education, transport, and agriculture. This very broad participation indicates a much more comprehensive outlook on civil protection, civil defence, and indeed resilience.

As of the writing of this text, the bill is not yet being processed by the Polish Parliament; yet, it can be viewed as an indication of a wind of change in Polish resilience thinking. In comparison to the existing strategic and policy discourse, it does display elements of a different type of resilience, based on adaptation on the margins. Its provisions are based on lessons learnt from the war in Ukraine, and they introduce a change in thinking about resilience by incorporating a broader array of actors and topics and by embracing community resilience. Still, they largely rely on the existing structures and capabilities, and the leadership of – and involvement in – civil protection and defence is still led by state institutions, and so the changes are made at the margins of the system.

This might lead to the question of the future of Polish resilience. While the proposed bill, if adopted and signed into law, does suggest a greater readiness for flexibility and adjustment from the hitherto rather rigid and militarised vision of resilience, it might be challenging to exert a real impact on the practices of resilience. Two potential obstacles can be distinguished. The first is financial. Various reports suggest that the budget allocated for civil protection and defence will amount to between 0.1 and 0.5% of GDP (see e.g. Horbaczewski 2024; Karwowski 2024; Mikołajczyk and Bartłomiej Figaj 2024). While setting out a certain percentage of the state's annual budget to civil protection and defence is a sign of commitment, it also does not even come close to the nearly 4% of GDP

spent on military defence in 2023 (Hawkins 2024). The limited financial pledge to civil protection and defence is coupled with the second potential obstacle – the general outlook on crisis response and responsibility for security. This includes Polish customary reliance on the Armed Forces in any type of crisis response, low levels of social cohesion and trust (CBOS 2022; Marczewski 2020), as well as a propensity for an intense but short-lived mobilisation in the event of a crisis (see the chapter by Maciej Stępką in the same volume). Thus, while a change of resilience rhetoric in security strategies and policies may be underway, it might take a long time to reshape practice. For now, the Polish approach to resilience is primarily based on the maintenance of functioning and capabilities at the systemic level, resistance to shocks and disturbances, and bouncing back with the aid of the Armed Forces.

## Notes

- 1 Wording according to the official translation of the 2020 National Security Strategy available at: [https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_of\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Poland\\_2020.pdf](https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Republic_of_Poland_2020.pdf). Hereafter, the author uses the more commonly applied term “civil defence,” unless directly quoting from the Strategy.
- 2 In NATO’s terms, “Resilience is the individual and collective capacity to prepare for, resist, respond to and quickly recover from shocks and disruptions, and to ensure the continuity of the Alliance’s activities” (NATO 2023; see also: NATO 2022:26).
- 3 The Territorial Defence Forces are the fifth branch of Polish Armed Forces (alongside Land, Navy, Air, and Special Operations Forces). Established in 2017, the TDF comprise professional and part-time soldiers.
- 4 A voivode is a representative of the central government in a region.
- 5 As shown by the recent non-military crises in Poland (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic or instances of natural disasters caused by extreme weather phenomena), the Polish Armed Forces are often treated not as a tool of last resort but rather the only available option for crisis response, due to the practically non-existent Civil Defence (see e.g. Supreme Audit Office 2018).

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