

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND: COMPARISON OF PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES

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INTRODUCTION

Extensive changes in our information space represent one of the key challenges facing society in the early 21st century. Specifically, the emergence of social networks, combined with the decline of traditional media and a 24-hour news-cycle present significant obstacles for state institutions which, often conservative and slow, have difficulty adapting to this new environment. Their lack of orientation in this new information environment represents a potential risk since long-term, consistent and targeted communication are necessary tools which simultaneously build trust between citizens and the state, and increase resilience against information from foreign countries with hostile intentions. For these reasons, this study aims to map and compare strategic communication capabilities and practices in the Czech Republic and Poland and consequently suggest measures which could improve both systems.

As the theoretical research and practical implementation of strategic communication is relatively new, a number of definitions have been suggested to delineate this field. While these definitions may differ only slightly, a discussion on strategic communication is necessary before presenting the results of this study. One of the most influential definitions

comes from 2007 which sees strategic communication as a process during which organizations effectively use communication skills and capabilities to fulfil particular missions.¹ Communication should not be seen merely as a distribution of information on the activities of a given institution, but as an integral part of the management and organization system. Strategic communication can therefore be understood as an umbrella term for the internal communication processes among various branches of a given organization and communication with external entities.²

Utilizing this theoretical notion this study will present the strategic communication of the Czech Republic and Poland in three chapters. First, the strategic communication capacities of the Czech and Polish state will be mapped to introduce institutions, campaigns and initiatives. Next, how these aspects function in practice will be discussed, followed by an evaluation of state communication surrounding the 20th anniversary of NATO accession. The concluding section will compare the situation in both countries, identify common strengths and weakness, and introduce areas where both countries could potentially learn from each other.

DEVELOPMENT OF (STRATEGIC) COMMUNICATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

An awareness of the importance that state communication plays for its citizens has developed slowly in the Czech Republic. In the first decade of the state's existence, coordinated communication explaining the importance of major political reforms or decisions on the highest level was rather rare. Instead, the activity of the state administration focused mainly on the advocacy of decisions which had already been taken. The accession of the Czech Republic to NATO in 1999 serves as a primary example of this, as it was not preceded by any major communication campaign or discussion with the general public. A milestone in process however, was the campaign preceding the 2003 referendum on entry into the EU which saw coordinated efforts between elements

of Czech state administration and actors from the private sector, such as the insurance company ČP Financial Group, Czech Telecom and T-Mobile. The main goal of this campaign were to increase public knowledge of potential benefits that EU membership could bring.³ The state institutions evaluated the campaign as successful, illustrated by a statement of then-spokesman of the Czech Government Office, who stated *"there is no doubt, that the communication strategy has significantly contributed to the outcome of the referendum."*⁴

Between the EU referendum in 2003 and 2017, there were around 30 communication campaigns launched by the state institutions, mostly concerning topics linked to agriculture, transport and

¹ „Defining Strategic Communication”, International Journal of Strategic Communication (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15531180701285244>)

² „Strategic Communication: Defining the Field and its Contribution to Research and Practice”, International Journal of Strategic Communication (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1493485>)

³ „V ČR ZAČÍNÁ KAMPAŇ K EU,” Český rozhlas (<https://www.radio.cz/cz/rubrika/udalosti/v-cr-zacina-kampan-k-eu>)

⁴ „ČESKÁ VLÁDA: KAMPAŇ PŘED REFERENDEM O VSTUPU DO EU VÝZNAMNĚ PŘÍSPĚLA K POZITIVNÍMU VÝSLEDKU,” Český rozhlas (<https://www.radio.cz/cz/rubrika/udalosti/ceska-vlada-kampan-pred-referendem-o-vstupu-do-eu-vyznamne-prispela-k-pozitivnimu-vysledku>)

healthcare. For example, the campaign “Nemyslíš, zaplatíš” led by the Ministry of Transport in 2008, aimed to reduce fatal accidents on Czech roads. The most prominent campaign concerning security issues was the “Against Rockets”, which aimed to increase support for the US anti-missile radar, and involved not only state institutions but also communication experts.⁵ Currently, the ongoing campaign “WeAreNATO” aims to increase trust in the Alliance, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. The aforementioned cases encompass single actions and were organized in reaction to specific events. They were not part of a comprehensive communication strategy which would have incorporated all elements of the state administration, hence it cannot be argued that they present an example of state strategic communication. However, it should be acknowledged that there are multiple government institutions trying to utilize communication campaigns.

The debate among departments involved in security policies concerning strategic communication has noticeably developed in response to the deterioration of the European security environment in 2014, particularly in the information environment which has been significantly impacted by disinformation and propaganda. In 2016 for example, the National Security Audit undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior highlighted the need for effective strategic communication as a means of defense against these information threats. The audit also identified strategic communication as a tool of defense against the “*subversive pressure against the cohesion and ideological grounding of the society*”. The emphasis was also put on the need for the state to strategically communicate inwards as well as outwards to deter potential adversaries and strengthen civil society.⁶ Yet this declared effort to increase the implementation of strategic communication in the state administration has been so far unfulfilled. Although the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats was found within the Ministry of Interior in 2017 to tackle disinformation and propaganda⁷, there have been no

similar centers in the departments of other ministries.⁸

On the other hand, other state institution supervising security policies have started to put more emphasis on communication. Arguably, the most prominent of these actors is the Army of the Czech Republic. This institution has managed to inform the general public about its everyday activities, needs, and goals, through its relatively influential accounts on social media (122k followers on Facebook, almost 5400 on Twitter). Other positive examples can be found in the communication activities of the Czech counter-intelligence service BIS (which has started to be active on Twitter) or the National Cyber and Information Security Agency (which for example issued public warnings regarding Huawei and ZTE products⁹).

Even though these examples are clearly positive, it is important to realise that the efforts of certain state branches to communicate more actively does not automatically lead to the improvement of the strategic communication of the state as a whole. Indeed, they might even harm the state’s interests if institutions contradict each other which, in the current Czech context conditions, is not an unimaginable scenario. This situation is caused first by an absence of a coordinating body which would set a long-term communication agenda and be obligatory for all state institutions. Second, this is compounded by the fact that the communication capacities of the ministries are subordinate to the communication goals of the politicians leading them. These two factors help to explain why there is currently no state-based strategic communication in the Czech Republic.

⁵ „Government Communication in the Czech Republic: Organisation, Perception, and New Theoretical Model,” Univerzita Karlova (<https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/detail/169698/>)

⁶ „Audit národní bezpečnosti,” Ministerstvo vnitra ČR (<https://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/Audit-narodni-bezpecnosti-20161201.pdf>)

⁷ „Centrum proti terorismu a hybridním hrozbám,” Ministerstvo vnitra ČR (<https://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/clanek/centrum-proti-terorismu-a-hybridnim-hrozbam.aspx>)

⁸ „Česku chybí strategie boje s dezinformacemi, míní expert,” Novinky (<https://www.novinky.cz/internet-a-pc/clanek/cesku-chybi-strategie-boje-s-dezinformacemi-mini-expert-40299357>)

⁹ „SOFTWARE I HARDWARE SPOLEČNOSTÍ HUAWEI A ZTE JE BEZPEČNOSTNÍ HROZBOU,” Národní úřadu pro kybernetickou a informační bezpečnost (<https://www.govcert.cz/cs/informacni-servis/hrozby/2680-software-i-hardware-spolecnosti-huawei-a-zte-je-bezpecnostni-hrozbou/>)

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN POLAND

In Poland, tasks in the field of strategic communication (including public diplomacy, social communication, information operations and psychological operations) are carried out by various units working independently within specific departments, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense. However, there is no joint action plan at the general level, and as a result, there are problems with cooperating efficiently and achieving synergies. Currently, there are no structural solutions at the inter-ministerial level that would allow for effective coordination of activities in the area of strategic communication for the entire state. But not only individual sections of its activity such as defense policy or foreign policy. It should also be emphasized that in Poland, the concept of strategic communication does not have a general strategy of action at the political level, nor a commonly accepted definition which could be adapted to either the national context or the current situation in the information space. Due to the lack of a nationwide plan and unclear division of competencies, ad hoc actions are taken by various entities.

Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces

The Operational Center of the Ministry of National Defense is responsible for *“defining challenges and coordinating strategic communication activities.”*¹⁰ Strategic communication in this department is understood as *“intentional and coordinated communication activities implemented at all levels of management and command, both in political and military dimensions, directed to the inside and outside of the Ministry of National Defense, serving the implementation of the strategic goals of the Ministry of National Defense on the national, allied and coalition levels.”*¹¹ It should be noted that this approach which is to present its own policy and the ongoing activities of a single entity, in this case a specific ministry. The quoted perspective however, does not take into

account the perspective of the state (and its strategic interests) as a whole.

It is worth emphasizing that the Ministry of National Defense undertakes actions to coordinate the strategic communication system within the structures of the ministry. Such areas as public diplomacy, social communication as well as information and psychological activities, which were previously dispersed within the department, currently are considered together according to information obtained from representatives of the Ministry of National Defense. What is more, the Ministry of National Defense refers to the current definition of strategic communication proposed by NATO, which extends this concept beyond the governmental and military sphere, to include business and non-governmental organizations, and areas such as marketing or public relations.¹² As a result, the Ministry of National Defense uses various tools in the modern information space (not only traditional media, but also, among others, social media, event marketing, and branding). The ministry also incorporates the use of new technologies to conduct full-scale communication processes, which include analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation. Activities in the field of strategic communication are also carried out by the Polish Army. The army conducts its own institutional communication, which aims to build the image of the Polish armed forces and develop citizens' awareness in the area of defense, through the use of both traditional and social media. Cells that are part of the military structure are also involved in psychological (PSYOPS) and information (INFOOPS) activities. It is also worth noting that in Poland, there are currently Cyberspace Defense Forces whose tasks include the *“detection, recognition and prevention of cyber threats, protection of ICT networks and support of military operations conducted by the Polish Armed Forces within cyberspace.”*¹³ According to current reports, the formation of these troops is expected to end in 2024.¹⁴

¹⁰ „Zarządzenie nr 5/MON Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 9 kwietnia 2018 r. zmieniające zarządzenie w sprawie regulaminu organizacyjnego Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej”, Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej (http://www.dz.urz.mon.gov.pl/zasoby/dziennik/pozycje/tresc-aktow/pdf/2018/04/Poz_38_zarz._Nr_5.pdf)

¹¹ Source: information obtained from representatives of the ministry

¹² „Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology”, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (<https://www.stratcomcoe.org/improving-nato-strategic-communications-terminology>)

¹³ „Wojska Obrony Cyberprzestrzeni”, CYBER.MIL.PL (<https://www.cyber.mil.pl/wojska-obrony-cyberprzestrzeni>)

¹⁴ „Tworzymy wojska obrony cyberprzestrzeni”, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej (<https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/tworzymy-wojska-obrony-cyberprzestrzeni>)

The role of Territorial Defense Forces (WOT) created in 2015, a voluntary and territorial type of the armed forces, also deserves a mention. The Territorial Communication Department of WOT operates within the Territorials. As Remigiusz Żuchowski (Forces of the Polish Armor) says: *“Territorial Defense Forces since the appearance of the first decisions regarding their formation, have begun active anti-disinformation activities.”*¹⁵ Additionally in June 2019, the Cyberspace Operations Team was created within the WOT structure.¹⁶

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Strategic communication is also implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the ministry, the issue of strategic communication and disinformation is treated comprehensively. In the *Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland about the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2019*, Minister Jacek Czaputowicz declared that Poland was responsible for a decisive reaction in the context of Russia's information and propaganda activities.¹⁷ The perception of counteracting foreign misinformation as one of the priorities of Polish foreign policy has led to the creation of the Strategic Communication Department. This unit operates as part of the European Rapid Alert System network – an EU project that aims to *“facilitate EU bodies and Member States to exchange information on a number of misinformation cases and related trends on a daily basis.”*¹⁸ This initiative was undertaken in accordance with the Action Plan against Disinformation in December 2018 to protect citizens of European Union Member States against false information in the context of the 2019 European Parliament elections. It should be noted however, that there is a lack of information on the objectives, methods and, above all, the effects of the Polish cell.

The Ministry undertakes a number of activities that fall under the area of strategic communication and currently includes nearly 170 Polish diplomatic missions and the Hybrid Threat Working Group in the Government Crisis Management Team. According to the information obtained for the purposes of this study, the tasks carried out by the ministry include: 1) raising officials' awareness of disinformation threats; 2) building the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to combat disinformation; 3) cooperating with strategic communication units in EU and NATO countries and institutions; 4) designing and implementing projects and conducting information campaigns; 5) cooperating and supporting Polish non-governmental organizations.¹⁹

Other entities

In addition to the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the National Security Bureau and the Ministry of the Interior and Administration also participate in strategic communication activities. This is demonstrated through the participation of representatives from these entities in thematic events and discussion formats regarding both disinformation issues and contemporary threats in the information space. The Ministry of Digitization is also active in this field, an example of which is the promotion of the European Month of Cybersecurity as well as the educational portal bezpieczenyborby.pl.²⁰ Particularly noteworthy are the communication activities of the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland. As the main representatives of the executive in Poland, they play a significant role in shaping views, assessments and opinions about the state, as well as presenting its strategic interests, not only in national but in international areas.

¹⁵ „Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej w działaniach antydezinformacyjnych”, Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka (http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmetal.element.desklight-79975794-af6e-4d8e-a5dd-6ec0c15e7790/c/BTiP_2017_3_15_Zuchowski.pdf)

¹⁶ „WOT zaczyna budowę komponentu CYBER”, WOJSKO-POLSKIE.PL (<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/articles/tym-zyjemy-v/2019-06-102-wot-zaczyna-budowe-komponentu-cyber/>)

¹⁷ „Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2019 roku”, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (<https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/informacja-ministra-spraw-zagranicznych-o-zadaniach-polskiej-polityki-zagranicznej-w-2019-roku>)

¹⁸ „Wspólny komunikat do Parlamentu Europejskiego, Rady, Europejskiego Komitetu Ekonomiczno-Społecznego, Komitetu Regionów. Sprawozdanie z realizacji planu działania przeciwko dezinformacji”, Komisja Europejska (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52019JC0012&from=EN>)

¹⁹ An example of these activities is the CAPD project “Analysis and prevention of negative and false narratives about Poland and Poles in the Russian information space” co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland under the programme “Public Diplomacy 2019”. See: <https://capd.pl/pl/aktualnosci/212-projekt-analiza-i-przeciwdzialanie-negatywnym-i-falszywym-narracjom-na-temat-polski-i-polakow-w-rosyjskiej-przestrzeni-informacyjnej?fbclid=IwAR0RkvP-YqZMp4k3FFIm-Co2S6o-lzNT0JqU6H8rIAaSGbAwETEB-q9IKHM>.

²⁰ „Dezinformacja i BezpieczneWybory.pl – zaproszenie na konferencję prasową ministra cyfryzacji”, Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji (<https://www.gov.pl/web/cyfryzacja/dezinformacja-i-bezpieczenyborbypl-zaproszenie-na-konferencje-prasowa-ministra-cyfryzacji>)

CZECH VERSION OF THE CAMPAIGN #WEARENATO

The communication campaign #WeAreNATO was established in 2017 by the NATO department for public diplomacy in cooperation with the PR agencies MHP Communications and Agenda. The main goal of the campaign is to reinforce to the public that NATO represents not only a guarantee of security, but is also a positive force which creates a sphere of peace, cooperation and safety.²¹

The campaign is not realised only by NATO institutions but mainly by its member states. It was designed as a sort of blueprint which can be customized by member states to fit their particular needs. It utilizes a wide range of the communication channels in state institutions and elements of civil society. As of now, the campaign has been launched in six “pilot” countries, one of which was Slovakia.²² There, it was very successful on social media reaching almost 300 thousand users, but was also held back by a lack of coordination and the limited strategic communication capacities of the government.²³

In the Czech Republic, #WeAreNATO began in the spring of 2019 and was closely connected to the celebrations of the anniversary of the Czech accession to NATO. Multiple ministries took part in the campaign, but its coordination is primarily in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This ministry officially leads the working group which consists of representatives from the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and the Government Office. Representatives of several NGOs were also invited to join the debates concerning the form of the campaign. The main goal of #WeAreNATO in the Czech Republic was to introduce NATO as an internally democratic organization which makes decisions based on mutual consensus to guarantee our security. There was also an emphasis put on the commitments of the Czech Republic to the Alliance. In the first phase of the campaign, several major projects were realised. Notable examples include the “20 years in NATO” campaign which

mapped the history of Czech membership in the Alliance²⁴, the celebrations of the anniversary itself which included many international guests²⁵, and the participation of Tomáš Petříček, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, in member states’ ministers of foreign affairs meetings to celebrate NATO’s 70th anniversary.²⁶ Considering the activities of NGOs, the project “Máme NATO!” (We can do it!), conceived by the Association for International Questions should also be mentioned, which aims to improve the awareness of NATO amongst the high school teachers.²⁷

This case study aims to assess the ability of state institutions to propagate campaign-related materials on their accounts on social networks and to provide a reflection of the campaign in the Czech media. The analysis focuses on the beginning of the campaign – March and April 2019. The reason for this specific time period is due to the fact that it covers two key dates related to the campaign – namely the 20th anniversary of Czech membership in NATO (12. 3.) and the 70th anniversary of NATO as an organization (4. 4.). Within the content analysis, the intensity, forms, and themes of posts published on Facebook and Twitter by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the Office of the Government, and the Army of the Czech Republic were at the core of this focus. For the media analysis, the information regarding NATO was monitored on six of the most frequently visited news websites, specifically: Aktuálně, Deník, iDNES, Novniky, Parlamentní listy, and Blesk.

As was already emphasized, the communication on social networks presents one segment of the Czech campaign #WeAreNATO. Consequently, this chapter does not aim to evaluate the overall success and effectiveness of the campaign, but rather offers on a description of one particular aspect. While the campaign will extend to March 2020, the authors assume that the collected data presents an illustrative insight into the ability of Czech state institutions to

²¹ „WEARENATO: Defence and Security Campaign Toolkit“ NATO (<https://www.act.nato.int/application/files/7415/6529/0612/nato-dsct.pdf>)

²² Those were Montenegro, Canada, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and the Great Britain. For more see „#WeAreNATO: Strategic Communications, Engagement and Lessons Learnt“, RUSI (<https://rusi.org/publication/rusi-newsbrief/wearenato-strategic-communications-engagement-and-lessons-learnt>)

²³ „Strategická komunikácia v podmienkach Slovenskej republiky“, Globsec (<https://www.globsec.org/publications/strategicka-komunikacia-v-podmienkach-slovenskej-republiky/>)

²⁴ „20 let v NATO“, Ministerstvo obrany České republiky (<http://www.mocr.army.cz/informacni-servis/video/20-let-v-nato-208048/>)

²⁵ „Osławy 20. výročí vstupu do NATO“, Pražský hrad, 12.03.2019, <https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/oslavy-20.-vyroci-vstupu-do-nato-14521>

²⁶ „Ministr Petříček navštívil USA v rámci oslav 70. výročí NATO“, Velvyslanectví České republiky ve Washingtonu (https://www.mzv.cz/washington/cz/kultura/novinky/ministr_petricek_navstivil_usa_v_ramci.html)

²⁷ „AMO spouští nový web pro učitele zaměřený na bezpečnost a členství v NATO“, Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky (<http://www.amo.cz/cs/nato/amo-spousti-novy-web-pro-ucitele-zamereny-na-bezpecnost-a-clenstvi-v-nato/>)

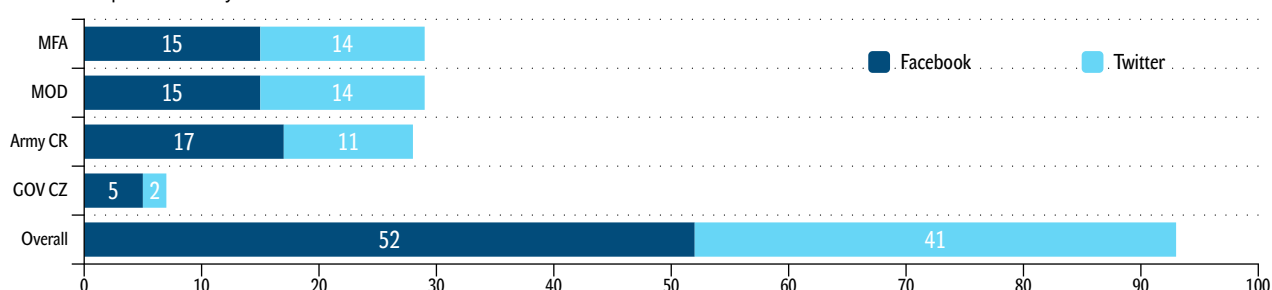
lead coordinated communication on social networks and gain space and attention in the media.

The Campaign #WeAreNATO on social networks

During the period under examination, of the 591 total posts on the respective Facebook accounts, 52 were

related to the #WeAreNATO campaign. Additionally, state institutions published 41 tweets related to the campaign during this period.²⁸ The activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (29 posts), the Ministry of Defense (29 posts), and the Army of the Czech Republic (28 posts) were more-or-less balanced. In contrast, the Office of the Government was the least active (7 posts).

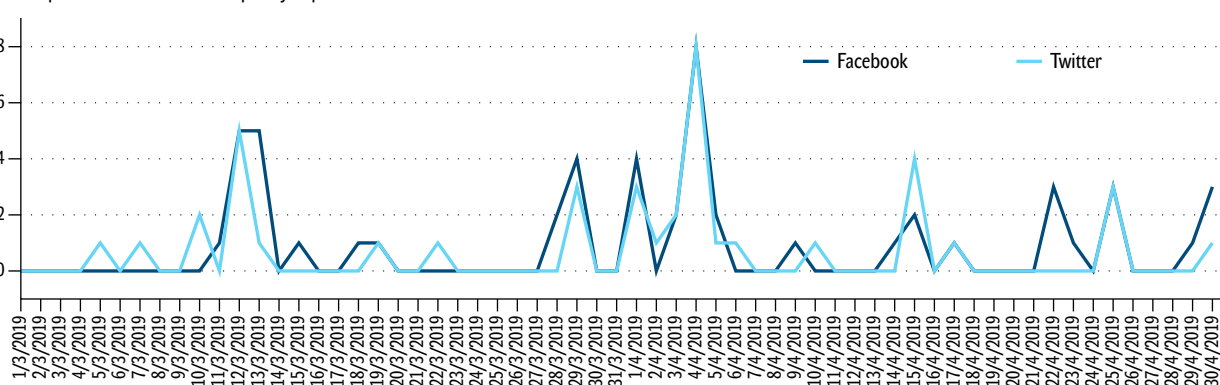
Graph no. 1: Activity of the state institutions on social networks



The number of posts devoted to the campaign increased throughout the time period. In March, 35 posts were published, which increased to 58 posts in April. The increased activity of the Ministry of Defense and the Army of the Czech Republic may explain the upwards trend. At the same time, the number of posts peaked twice, namely on the dates

of the official anniversaries – first on the 20th anniversary of Czech membership in NATO (12 March 2019), and then again on the 70th anniversary of the Alliance (4 April 2019).²⁹ The most frequently employed formats of posts included a video (in 41 cases) or images (37 cases).

Graph no. 2: Timeline and frequency of posts



The most popular posts (concerning the feedback of followers) were those published on the Army of the Czech Republic's Facebook account. However, the number of followers should also be considered as this influences the results. The Facebook profile of the army is followed by almost 122 000 users, which is nearly ten times higher than the other accounts in this study. The most popular post on Facebook was

a video about the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade which was shared by the Ministry of Defense as well as the Army of the Czech Republic.³⁰ On Twitter, the most popular video was regarding the 70th anniversary of the Alliance foundation, published by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³¹ The posts were thematically tailored to the work of the respective departments, except for the anniversaries which

²⁸ The overall numbers include only posts directly containing hashtag "WeAreNATO".

²⁹ During the 12 – 13th March, 16 posts were published. On the 4th April was published 16 posts as well.

³⁰ Video published by a FB account of the Army of the Czech Republic (<https://www.facebook.com/ArmadaCeskerepubliky/posts/2366792116685825>) was the most often shared altogether (180times); the same video published by the FB profile of the MoD (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=490293471505713>) got the most likes (388).

³¹ This post got 145 likes and was 27times shared (<https://twitter.com/mzvcr/status/1113697710538809345>)

were posted by all institutions. The MFA highlighted being awarded a merit for diplomacy³², and recognized the Nazi occupation in 1939 within the realm of the campaign.³³ The MoD and army expounded mainly on the contemporary employment of Czech soldiers in the Baltics and the functioning of particular army units.³⁴ The Office of the Government made use of the activities of the premier Andrej Babiš to propagate the campaign-related posts further.³⁵

To a certain extent, it was possible to detect a mutual sharing and support of the posts between the accounts of each department. For example, a video post depicting the 24th Air Transportation Base in Prague³⁶ and a promotional video of the NATO campaign³⁷ were both published by all monitored accounts. At the same time, it was possible to see a higher level of coordination regarding the published content, particularly between the Ministry of Defense and the army, for instance, the aforementioned video regarding the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade.

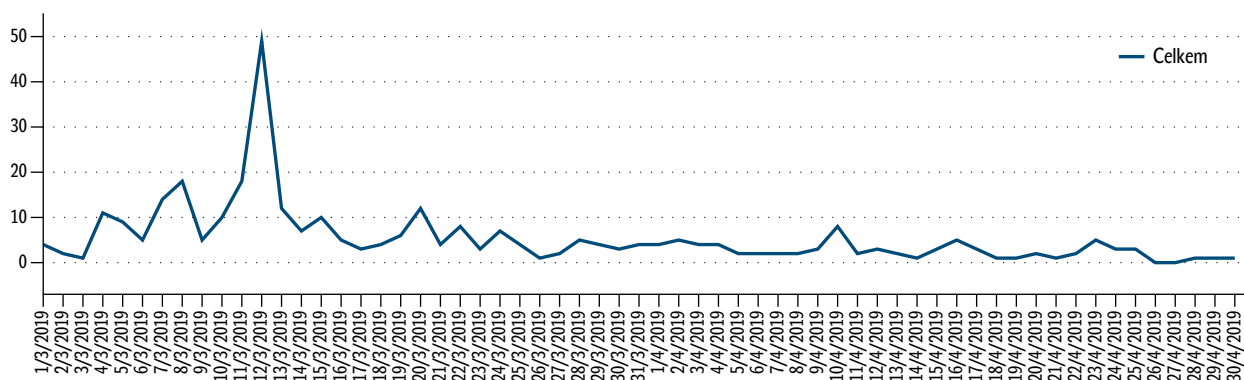
Some of the departments also engaged their highest representatives via their official profiles on social networks. Specifically, Tomáš Petříček from the

Minister of Foreign Affairs, contributed to the campaign with 16 posts while Lubomír Metnar from the Minister of Defense mentioned the campaign in two posts. The Chief of the General Staff, Aleš Opat, does not have an official profile, and Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, in spite of having an official profile at his disposal, did not mention the campaign WeAreNATO.

NATO in Czech Media

During March and April of 2019, the media monitored for this study published 453 articles mentioning NATO with 326 of them were related to the Czech Republic.³⁸ The media most frequently highlighted NATO in the context of the 20th anniversary of Czech membership in NATO (in 143 cases). They also connected NATO with Premier Babiš's visit to the White House (mentioned in 68 articles). The question of the Czech Republic's defense expenditures was also a matter of interest (mentioned in 67 articles in sum). The campaign as such, was not described at all. The mention of WeAreNATO appeared in only one report, incorporating the tweet of the MoD with a particular hashtag.³⁹

Graph no. 3: Number of articles devoted to NATO in time



The media frequently presented the 20th anniversary of Czech membership in NATO in connection with

the celebrations that took place at Prague castle⁴⁰ (as part of the conference "Our Security Cannot Be

³² Facebook profile of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.facebook.com/mzvcr/photos/a.199375343459755/2222897691107500/?type=3&theater>); Twitter account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://twitter.com/mzvcr/status/1105468492868915201>)

³³ Facebook profile of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.facebook.com/mzvcr/posts/2225215810875688>)

³⁴ Twitter account of the Ministry of Defense (<https://twitter.com/ObranaTweetuje/status/1117723585714491392>)

³⁵ Facebook profile of the Office of the Government (<https://www.facebook.com/uradvlady/posts/10156988279165390>)

³⁶ "Video post depicting the 24th Air Transportation Base at Prague", Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mzvcr/posts/2288092954587973>; <https://www.facebook.com/uradvlady/posts/10156988279165390>, <https://www.facebook.com/ArmadaCeskerepubliky/posts/2382718245093212>, <https://www.facebook.com/Ministerstvooobranyceskerepubliky/posts/2057886481006678>)

³⁷ See footnote no. 19.

³⁸ The key word "NATO" was applied for the analysis.

³⁹ „Česko si připomíná výročí vstupu do NATO. Na pražských tramvajích vlají prapory“, Deník (https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/praha-slavi-vstup-do-nato-na-tramvajich-vlaji-prapory-prijela-i-albrightova-20190312.html)

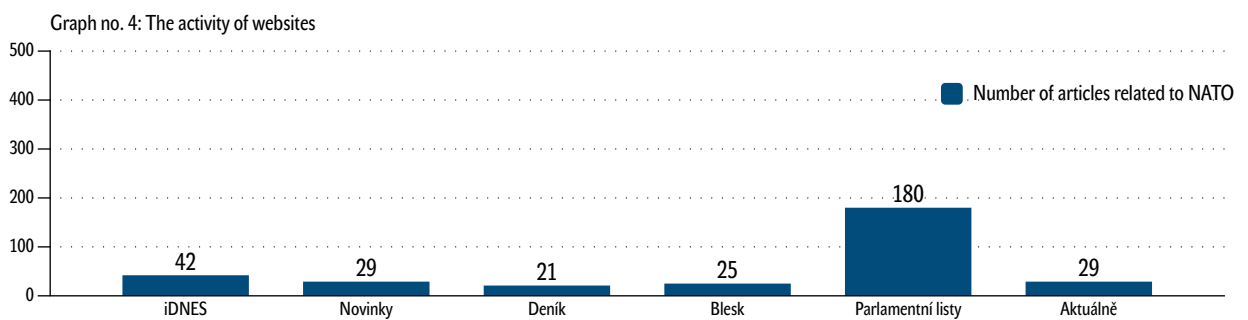
⁴⁰ „Havlová s perlami i Babiš na oslavě 20 let ČR v NATO. Zemana štve vraždící „tygr“, Blesk (<https://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-politika/599703/zeman-vytahl-kvuli-vyroci-cr-v-nato-teroristy-a-zbabelce-havlova-slova-vzpomnel-petricek.html>)

Taken For Granted") and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹ Besides the official representatives of the Czech Republic and other members of V4 who participated in the celebrations, Madeleine Albright was also frequently mentioned (35 texts).⁴²

During Andrej Babiš's visit to the White House on the 7th of March, the Alliance was cited as one of the planned themes for debate, particularly concerning the question of defense expenditures, intelligence cooperation, and cybersecurity.⁴³ During these meetings, NATO was presented as the main guarantor of European security⁴⁴ while the Czech Republic was identified as a reliable partner with a strong army, effective counterterrorism support, and efficient cyber capabilities to deal with potential cyber threats..⁴⁵

Discussions on NATO, within the framework of domestic policy issues, were most often linked to debates surrounding defense expenditures.⁴⁶ This critical question was also discussed in the context of a law proposal presented by the Civil Democratic Party on the day of the 20th anniversary. The proposed law would compel the Government to fulfil the 2% GDP investment towards the defense expenditures.⁴⁷

The most active news website was the Parlamentní listy which published 180 articles on NATO and the Czech Republic in total during the two-month period. The second most active website was iDNES.cz, which published 42 texts altogether.



⁴¹ „Albrightová i Robertson. Petříček předal medaile za zásluhy o členství v NATO“, Deník (https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/albrightova-i-robertson-petrick-predal-medaile-za-zasluchy-o-clenstvi-v-nato-20190312.html)

⁴² „Albrightová, Kavan, Schwarzenberg. Osobnosti dostaly medaile za zásluhy o členství v NATO“, Novinky (<https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/499637-albrightova-kavan-schwarzenberg-osobnosti-dostaly-medaile-za-zasluchy-o-clenstvi-v-nato.html>)

⁴³ „Babiš lákal Trumpovu dceru Ivanka do Česka. A Moniku nadchlo přijetí od Melanie“, Blesk (<https://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-politika/598844/babis-trumpovi-v-bilem-dome-sebral-heslo-monika-vyhrala-usmevem-melania-podpatky.html>); <https://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-politika/599516/babis-pro-blesk-o-ztracenem-bratrance-monice-v-bilem-dome-i-mizeni-kolem-cia.html>)

⁴⁴ „DOKUMENT: Společné prohlášení Donalda Trumpa a Andreje Babiše“, iDNES (https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/babis-trump-prohlaseni-dokument.A190307_225902_zahranicni_maka)

⁴⁵ „Babiš jednal s Trumpem v Bílém domě“, Novinky (<https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/amerika/499252-babis-jednal-s-trumpem-v-bilem-dome.html>)

⁴⁶ „Ministerstvo financí vylekalo kolegy na obraně pomalejším růstem rozpočtu“, Novinky (<https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/502655-ministerstvo-financi-vylekalo-kolegy-na-obrane-pomalejsim-rustem-rozpoctu.html>)

⁴⁷ „Povinnost vydávat dvě procenta HDP na obranu by prezident zákonem nenařizoval“, parlamentnilisty.cz (<https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/monitor/Povinnost-vydavat-dve-procenta-HDP-na-obranu-by-prezident-zakonem-nenarizoval-573576>); „ODS předloží zákon, aby Česko dávalo ročně na obranu 2 procenta HDP, idnes.cz (https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/ods-vydaje-na-obranu-zakon-2-procenta-hdp.A190307_113552_domaci_kop)

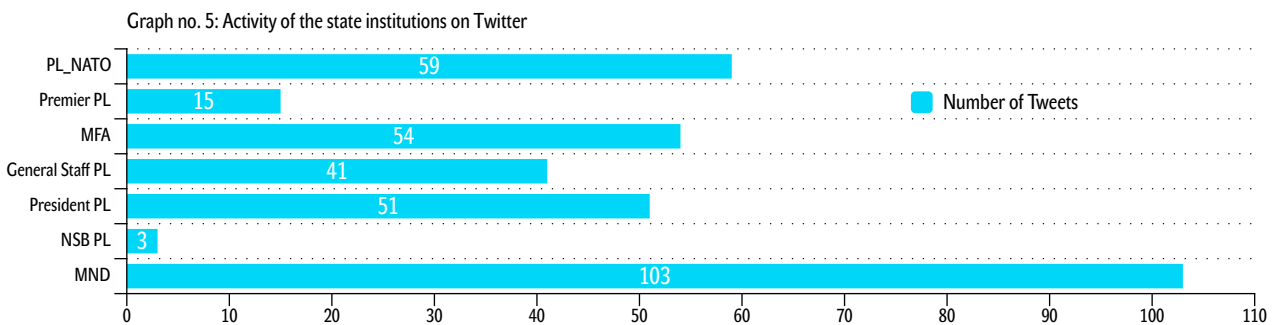
INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF POLAND'S ACCESSION TO NATO

The previous chapter provided a general outline of the structure and functioning of entities involved in Poland when conducting strategic communication. This section focuses on analyzing communication activities on a specific topic relevant to the strategic interests of the country. The following case study presents a summary of information campaigns conducted in the context of the 20th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO. The conclusions of the analysis were also compared with results gleaned from monitoring how major Polish online information media reported on topics related to the North Atlantic Alliance. The study of official state channels included communication via websites and Twitter (messages were searched containing at least one of the following hashtags: #20latPLwNATO, #WeAreNATO, #PLNATO20, #NATO), while the media study included articles containing the slogan "NATO." The period under examination for this study included materials published between 1st March and 30th

April 2019. The messages analyzed were collected using Twitter Advanced Search and Google Advanced Search.

Official communication on Twitter

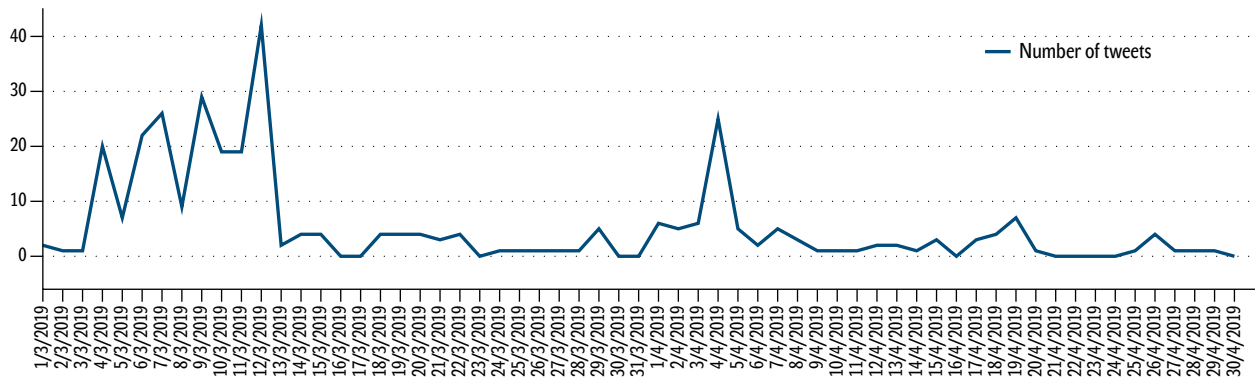
The largest number of messages were published on the profile of the Ministry of National Defense which consisted of 103 tweets on NATO in the 61-day period. However, it should be emphasized that other accounts were also actively involved in communication activities. For example, the total number of tweets on the profile of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to NATO (a diplomatic mission that has a separate account) exceeded the number of messages published by the Ministry of National Defense (MND). Accounts of the Chancellery of the President, National Security Bureau and the General Staff of the Polish Army were also particularly involved in communication.



The main communication activities on the indicated profiles were conducted primarily in the first half of March (4th – 12th March). Communication peaked on March 12 the day of the actual anniversary. The second day in terms of news volume was March 7, as it was associated with several important events which were part of the celebrations. These events included a solemn briefing of the Ministry of National Defense staff and the Polish Armed Forces regarding the management and participation of the President,

followed by posts on the NATO Secretary General's visit to Poland. The third most popular date was March 9, when an event coordinated by the Ministry of National Defense took place under the slogan of 20 military picnics for the 20th anniversary of Poland in NATO. As noted earlier, after March 12 communication activities clearly reduced in their intensity, the only exception being April 4 when the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty was signed.

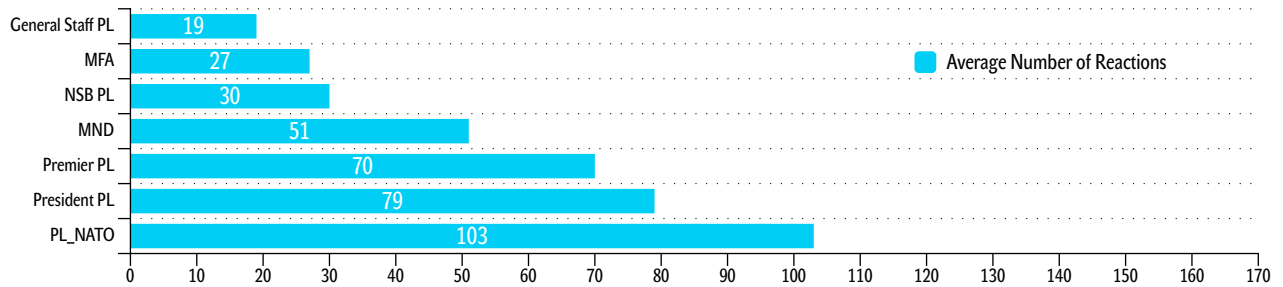
Graph no. 6: Timeline and frequency of posts



Audience responses to published materials were also analyzed. The highest average number of responses to tweets (combined number of comments, retweets and likes) was visible on the profile of the Polish

Permanent Representation to NATO. On the other hand, messages from the General Staff of the Polish Army received the least involvement among the audience.

Graph no. 7: Number of interactions on profiles on state institutions



The way of marking messages using hashtags was also analyzed. The #NATO tag was used the most (157 times in total), while the #WeAreNATO tag came in second, and #PLNATO20 in third. Individual accounts differed in the way were used, and for this reason it is difficult to distinguish what could be considered as the main, or official hashtag of the joint information campaign. Several equivalent tags were often used in conjunction with others, specifically #20lat-PLwNATO, #WeAreNato, #PLNATO20 and #NATO. The latter, however, was of a more general nature and applied to material beyond the anniversary context. It is worth noting that the #NATOweek tag, used in many presidential announcements, was very rarely used on other profiles. In addition, that the tag #20latPLwNATO, which was the main designation on the @PremierRP and @MON_GOV_PL profiles, was not popular on other accounts.

Both textual and visual communication was used in communication via the portal. Each of the profiles (except for the account of the General Staff of the Polish Army) featured their own infographics. In addition, the profiles published photos and videos covering various activities of representatives from various bodies, depicting mostly Polish and foreign

politicians (e.g. from V4 and B9 countries), soldiers or military equipment. The Ministry of National Defense also published 5 professionally prepared film spots, one of which was shared on the profiles @MSZ_GOV_PL and @PLinNATO. The own spot prepared by the President's office was also published on the President's profile. The broadcasters also used fewer standard forms of communication, such as animation (@PremierRP), or "real time marketing" techniques (@PLinNATO) which are communication tactics used to connect a given entity's communications with a current event from the world of entertainment, culture, or sport. In general, apart from a few isolated cases of mutual message sharing, each of the accounts carried out separate communication activities, resulting in a lack of visual consistency between the messages of different senders and did not give the impression of a joint information campaign.

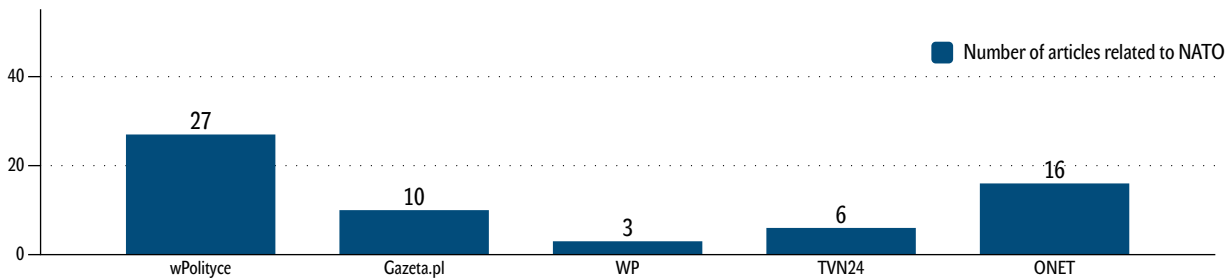
NATO in Polish Media

A total of 262 materials on NATO were published in major online news media during the period under review, including 62 directly related to the

anniversary of Poland joining the Alliance. The most materials were published on wpolityce.pl and the least on wp.pl, which was the only respondent that

did not conduct special communication related to the jubilee.

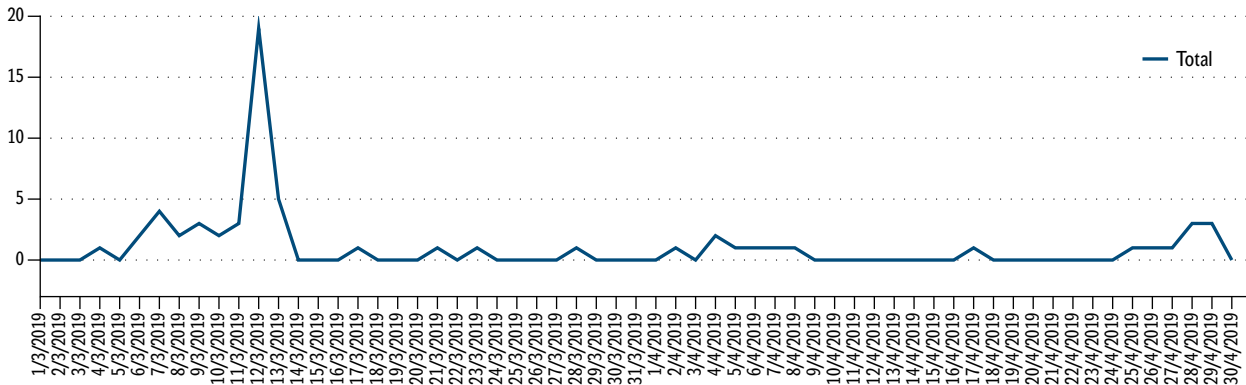
Graph no. 8: The activity of websites



Materials, as in the case of official state communication, appeared primarily in the first half of March and peaked on the day of the anniversary. On March 12, all portals posted in-depth, thematic material on Poland’s presence in NATO. These publications included historical descriptions, interviews, detailed information on NATO, the structure of the alliance

and the Polish role within the organization. In addition, the portals wPolityce and TVN24 provided information on activities of Polish politicians (in particular the President) related to the anniversary celebrations, such as visits to training grounds, anniversary meetings with foreign politicians, and presentations of general nominations.

Graph no. 9: Number of articles devoted to NATO in time



It is worth noting that the portal wPolityce, which is the only website in the Polish media analysis classified as a right-wing conservative source⁴⁸, covered the jubilee activities in the fullest manner, and articles. Materials often included links to official Twitter accounts responsible for the communication of state authorities. This portal also posted a film of the Ministry of National Defense advertising a military parade along with an invitation to an event⁴⁹ in the

“We recommend” category, which is an example of the website joining the promotional activities of the celebration. The mentioned film material was also published on Gazeta.pl and TVN24 but in a negative context, criticizing the concept and performance of the film. Finally, Onet and Gazeta.pl prepared their own visual materials in the form of infographics and animations in connection with the anniversary.

⁴⁸ „wPolityce.pl zdecydowanym liderem wśród informacyjnych serwisów konserwatywno-prawicowych. Dziękujemy Czytelnikom!”, wPolityce.pl (<https://wpolityce.pl/media/257197-wpolitycepl-zdecydowanym-liderem-wsrod-informacyjnych-serwisow-konserwatywno-prawicowych-dziekujemy-czytelnikom>)

⁴⁹ „Wielka majowa defilada w czasie ważnych rocznic pod hasłem “Silni w sojuaszach”. Kogo zobaczymy na Wistostradzie? WIDEO”, wPolityce.pl (<https://wpolityce.pl/spoleczenstwo/444183-wielka-majowa-defilada-w-czasie-waznych-rocznic>)

CONCLUSION

As discussed in the introduction of this study, the new shape of our information environment which emerged in 21st century represents a significant challenge for state communication. Nevertheless, it is positive that both countries analyzed in this study – Czech Republic and Poland – are aware of this threat and are taking the steps to improve their capabilities in this field.

In both countries, the Ministry of Defense and the army are at the forefront of strategic communication practices through making use of social media, organizing events for the public, as well as planning communication activities. In the Polish case, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also aims to include strategic communication into its activities, and in the goal to tackle disinformation, it is exceeding the activities of its Czech counterpart. This might also be due to the fact that the main institutional actor tackling disinformation in Czech Republic is the Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats at the Ministry of Interior. Another interesting yet usually secretive actor aiming to incorporate strategic communication into its practices, is the Czech counterintelligence service BIS or National Cyber and Information Security Authority responsible for cybersecurity. It should be noted though, that state institutions managing non-security related issues are also implementing steps to improve their communication while for example using the information campaigns. Despite these positive examples, both countries are still lacking coordination among the various bodies of state administration, subsequently preventing effective mutual support and leading to the potential communication of contradicting messages. This might also result from the absence of a commonly accepted definition of strategic communication that could be used by all state bodies.

The communication of Czech and Polish state institutions in relation to the 20th anniversaries of NATO accession can only be compared after considering the different contexts which led to different analytical approaches. For Czech institutions, the period between March and April 2019 presented the start of the long-term campaign #WeAreNATO; hence, researchers considered only the posts related to the campaign and published by state institution involved in the campaign. While for Polish institutions, the anniversary of NATO accession and the foundation of the Alliance were presented as isolated events (which however does not mean that they would not use the hashtag WeAreNATO at its posts). For this

reason, Polish researchers considered a wider variety of institutions in addition to all posts mentioning NATO. The analysis of media was conducted in both countries in the same manner, with the use of different data-gathering tools.

While taking into consideration these differences, it is still possible to provide some general comparisons. In terms of Twitter, both countries displayed dynamic communication surrounding the anniversary of NATO accession (12th March) and the foundation the Alliance (4th April), demonstrating the perceived significance of these events. However, it is possible to see a different emphasis in the application of these communications. In Poland, more posts were related to the NATO accession anniversary (and events related to the celebration) while in the Czech Republic, posts were more frequently related to the foundation of NATO, demonstrated through the fact that #WeAreNATO campaign got into full swing. The overall number of posts were fewer than in the Polish context, yet due to the different methods of analysis discussed above, output should not be considered comparable in this situation. When considering discussions surrounding NATO on popular online media outlets, the issue of NATO was discussed mostly in relation to the anniversary of accession, while the foundation of organization was rather absent. Hence, it is possible to argue that topic of NATO in both countries remains in the domestic context, which could complicate the understanding of broader consequences of Alliance membership, such as obligation to other partners. This issue has already been tackled in the Polish media by providing an in-depth analysis of NATO's role and functions, as well as including state communications, which have subsequently been reposted directly on the right-wing conservative portal wPolityce.

Czech and Polish perspectives and practices in the area of strategic communication illustrations achievements and willingness on the side of state institutions, although there is still significant room of improvement. The most significant challenge for both countries has been identified as a lack of coordination among various state bodies. Although this obstacle is significant, there are number of good practices which can be shared between these two countries. For this reason, the debate and exchange of experiences on this topic should be intensified and not limited to expert community, but instead become one of most important subjects of consultation between state institutions.

