

Oryginalna praca badawcza

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INTERMINGLING MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY CONFLICTS AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES. SELECTED ASPECTS

WZAJEMNE PRZENIKANIE SIĘ KONFLIKTÓW MILITARNYCH I POZAMILITARNYCH NA PRZEŁOMIE XX I XXI WIEKU. WYBRANE ASPEKTY

Abstract: Conflicts are part of the human condition and are present both in the military and non-military spheres. Under the influence of changes in civilization, including the scientific and technological revolution and modern technologies, there are changes that affect the international community. Progress is particularly evident in information and communication technology, which is present in all areas of human life. The ongoing transformation and the aforementioned revolution is also present in the armed forces, whose components take an active part not only in humanitarian missions abroad but also, in accordance with their function, participate in internal and interstate armed conflicts. The ongoing processes in the global security space have a significant impact on the nature of the actions carried out and the adaptation of modern techniques and technologies, which is evident in the armed conflicts of the 21st century. In addition to the theatres on land, at sea, in the deep sea, in the air and in space, another theatre has emerged – cyberspace and the human mind. Accompanying these is global information warfare, with information operations playing service roles. Winning in these theatres provides advantages of particular interest. The material is supported by observation of ongoing

military and non-military conflicts, analysis of selected literature on the subject, as well as on-going phenomena, events and processes in the current global security space.

Zarys treści: Konflikty zawsze towarzyszą człowiekowi. Są obecne zarówno w sferze militarnej, jak i pozamilitarnej. Pod wpływem przemian cywilizacyjnych, w tym rewolucji naukowo-technicznej i nowoczesnych technologii, następują zmiany, które dotyczą społeczność międzynarodową. Postęp, który jest obecny we wszystkich dziedzinach życia człowieka, jest szczególnie widoczny w technikach teleinformatycznych i komunikacyjnych. Trwająca przemiana i wspomniana rewolucja są również obecne w siłach zbrojnych, których komponenty nie tylko biorą aktywny udział w misjach humanitarnych poza granicami kraju, ale również, zgodnie z ich funkcją, uczestniczą w wewnętrznych i międzypaństwowych konfliktach zbrojnych. Procesy zachodzące w globalnej przestrzeni bezpieczeństwa mają znaczący wpływ na charakter prowadzonych działań, adaptowanie nowoczesnych technik i technologii, co jest widoczne w konfliktach zbrojnych XXI wieku. Obok teatrów działań wojennych w przestrzeniach: lądowej, morskiej, głębin morskich, powietrznej, kosmicznej, pojawiły się kolejne teatry działań: cyberprzestrzeń i umysł ludzki. Związana z nimi jest globalna wojna informacyjna, w ramach której prowadzone są operacje informacyjne pełniące role usługowe. Ich wygranie to przewaga w sferach zainteresowania. W materiale posiłkowano się obserwacją trwających konfliktów w sferach militarnej i pozamilitarnej, analizą wybranej literatury przedmiotu, a także zachodzących zjawisk, zdarzeń i procesów w obecnej przestrzeni bezpieczeństwa globalnego.

Keywords: war, armed conflict, theatre of warfare, cyberspace, information warfare.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna, konflikt zbrojny, teatr działań wojennych, cyberprzestrzeń, wojna informacyjna.

Characteristics of the problem

“Man and societies strive to expand their possession and power, driven by the motive of survival and expansion. The struggle for the existence of man, enterprise and the state forces not only to strive for their own existence, but in fear of collapse, causes expansion, which results from the nature of man, from his psyche, which produces the need for success, fame, wealth, power, distinction.

The system of the social system, based on competition and private wealth, forces the expansion of capital, which must show aggressive expansion in order to last.”¹

It is worth bearing in mind that “from time immemorial, contradictions and struggle have been the fundamental law of nature, life and human existence, and the source of all change and progress. The principle applies here that every decision, even the most positive one, consists of giving to someone and taking away from someone else. Therein lies the essence (source) of the contradiction of interests (aspirations, hierarchy of values). One can, of course, relate this to the macro scale, when, for example, one state seeks to satisfy its needs at the expense of another.”²

This characteristic phenomenon, inherent not only to humans but also to biota, is accompanied by a constant struggle for survival in its environment and, above all, for domination. We are witnesses and sometimes direct participants in military and/or non-military conflicts, which have diverse backgrounds and causes and, in the absence of rational decisions and behaviour (of political elites, including leaders, as well as of nations, societies) in relation to the existing threats (external and internal) to the security of the state(s), lead to a crisis situation which, in extreme cases, may escalate into armed conflict.

“In the modern world, wars have not ceased to be a tool of international politics despite the existence of international organisations carrying out vigorous activities aimed at disarmament and the complete elimination of war as a means of conflict resolution. The development of weapons of mass destruction and their new derivatives (without radiation), which are in a sense the pinnacle of scientific, technical and technological thought, has at the same time become a denial of the possibility of using them to achieve any goal.”³

What is particularly noteworthy is that no political objective can justify the use of nuclear weapons and their successive derivatives, due to the fact that there are and can be no winners in a nuclear war.

The above spaces, as well as the security spaces of individual states at the beginning of the 21st century, are dominated by information warfare, with information operations aimed not only at securing the information needs of its participants, but at taking control of the opponent’s information resources, up

¹ Z. Narski, *O dyktaturze kapitału globalnego*, Wydawnictwo SUSPENS, Toruń 2004, p. 5.

² S. Dworecki, *Od konfliktu do wojny*, Wydawnictwo BUWIK, Warszawa 1996, p. 102.

³ A. Żebrowski, *Przywileje i immunitety dyplomatyczne i konsularne podczas konfliktu zbrojnego*, Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, Kraków 1999, p. 21.

to and including physical destruction. "ICT and communications are widely used in negative and positive cooperation, supported by information warfare (war), treated as negative mutual cooperation, at least subjectively, implemented in the spheres of information acquisition, information disruption and information defence, where every action of one side is subordinated to the antagonistic action of the other side."⁴

Information warfare in the 21st century takes the form of information warfare on a global scale. "Information warfare always accompanies human action, plays the role of supporting combat and is thus present in the spheres: political, ideological, economic, military, cultural, military conflicts with diverse backgrounds, in the fight for legally protected secrets, in the fight against terrorism, internationally organised crime, etc."⁵

It is worth bearing in mind that "in-depth reflection on the problems of the future makes it possible to forecast the role of force in general and of military force in resolving the contradictions and conflicts that arise and will arise in many spheres and fields. On this basis, a list of selected features of armed struggle, war and military action can be drawn up:

1. the threat of war remains real, hence military power will not lose its *raison d'être*,
2. the likelihood of small-scale conflicts will remain low, while the number of local, limited conflicts will increase,
3. the basis of conflicts will increasingly be economic (raw materials, markets, technology, profits) and ethnic and religious problems,
4. the number of different forms and means of warfare will increase rapidly,
5. there will be extreme oppositions, asymmetry of forms and means, tools, principles and modes of action,
6. warfare and other actions will, as a rule, be combined actions in the national-international, civil-military, combat-non-combat and within the framework of types of action,
7. armed combat will less often be a planned policy measure, more often an escalation effect in situations of ineffective non-military measures,
8. the level of technological development and economic affluence of the parties will be the primary determinant of conflict characteristics,

⁴ L. Ciborowski, *Walka informacyjna*, Toruń 1999, p. 187.

⁵ A. Żebrowski, *Walka informacyjna w asymetrycznym środowisku bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2016, p. 8.

9. military activities other than war will become the primary area of activity of the armed forces.”⁶

“There are around 200 states and several times that number of ethnic, national, tribal and religious groups in the world. States and groups have their own interests and goals. These can be either common or divergent. If a group or entities have common interests and goals, there is often cooperation between them. If, on the other hand, there are divergent interests and goals, conflict can occur.”⁷ Disagreements sometimes exist, i.e. issues on which no agreement has been reached, meaning that the parties are unable or unwilling to reconcile peacefully.

It is also worth bearing in mind that in the evolving global security environment the processes accompanying aggressive globalisation affect practically all spheres of state (states) activity, which also makes its presence felt in the sphere of state (states) security and defence. After the collapse of the bipolar division of the world and the Soviet Union, as well as many other significant decisions, there has been a change in the approach to security, which takes on a special dimension in the 21st century. Alongside non-military conflicts in this new global reality, military conflicts continue to pose the greatest threat to humans and their environment.

“Political and military changes in Europe (and the world) and the rapid development of the means of armed struggle present security science with entirely new challenges. (...) Ways of waging war and forms of warfare are changing with the progress of civilisation, science and technology. With the interdependencies that exist between a society, its economy and its military, every socio-economic change leads to transformations in the ways of warfare.”⁸ This applies to positive competition and, above all, to negative confrontation.

Despite the collapse of the aforementioned bipolar division of the world, people and the world cannot be expected to change, and wars and conflicts in the military and non-military spheres thus cannot be avoided. The balance of power and international politics at the time did not solve many important problems, including those of nationality, ethnicity or religion. New threats are superimposed on existing ones, which pose serious challenges to the international

⁶ C. Rutkowski, *Problemy bezpieczeństwa i sił zbrojnych XXI wieku*, “Myśl Wojskowa” 2001, no. 2, pp. 19–20.

⁷ *Konflikty zbrojne we współczesnym świecie*, Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna, <https://zpe.gov.pl/a/konflikty-we-wspolczesnym-swiecie/DtXFbF0BZ> (accessed 12.01.2023).

⁸ M. Wiatr, *Między strategią a taktyką*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 1999, p. 7.

community. Some are internationalised, some are ignored and other flashpoints are eliminated and not allowed to reactivate.

This poses a major challenge for states and organisations competent in the sphere of strengthening international security and peace. Other participants also deserve attention: “the participants in the new wars are incommensurable, fundamentally different, incomparable organisations: paramilitaries, self-defence groups, armies and armies of local chiefs, criminal gangs, police (militia) units, mercenary groups and demoralised units (remnants) of regular troops. From an organisational point of view they are highly decentralised or even dispersed. They only appear in a coordinated manner in certain situations from confrontation to confrontation.”⁹ The designated participants very often engage in guerrilla warfare, which is a specific form of armed struggle that expresses itself in surprising, brief and violent armed clashes, ambushes, assaults, acts of diversion and sabotage combined with psychological impact.¹⁰ Very often, children are involved in armed conflict, which is particularly the case in Central and South American countries, Africa and Southeast Asia.

We are also witnessing the development of nationalism, chauvinism, religious fundamentalism, international terrorism, anarchist religious and mafia organisations. The processes associated with globalisation are accompanied by epidemics, pandemics, famine, lack of and/or limited access to safe drinking water supplies, religious and national conflicts, most often accompanied by genocide, ethnic cleansing, the emptying of territories, shelling, destruction of infrastructure and laying of landmines, etc.

The contemporary international security environment is complex, turbulent and unpredictable, where the causes of military (and non-military) threats are to be found in tensions and conflicts of interest in the area of socio-political, financial-economic, national-ethnic, religious-cultural and even environmental and military relations. Such a position is supported by the multifaceted and multifaceted intertwining of conditions occurring in the internal and external (near and far) environment, which is evident in, among other things:

1. the increasing anarchisation of socio-political life on a global scale, including in states possessing or seeking to acquire nuclear weapons,
2. ongoing armed conflicts between states,
3. ongoing internal armed conflicts,

⁹ B. Balcerowicz, *Siły zbrojne w stanie pokoju, kryzysu, wojny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2010, p. 162.

¹⁰ M. Laprus (ed.), *Leksykon wiedzy wojskowej*, MON, Warszawa 1979, p. 103.

4. the unstable situation in the global security area, where economic difficulties, socio-political contradictions, trends towards the development of military capabilities, or divergent aspirations are apparent in many states,
5. the arms race (including new generations of weapons with increased destructive power without, *inter alia*, a radioactive effect),
6. the revolution in information and communication technologies,
7. the great-power aspirations of China and Russia, and the nuclear-weapon states (China, France, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea),
8. power aspirations of Germany, Japan, Israel, Turkey,
9. criticism and denial of existing treaty arrangements and the exposure of historical pasts,
10. the widening circle of states possessing nuclear weapons and seeking to acquire them (e.g. Iran),
11. the lack of international control over nuclear weapons proliferation, the means of their production and their means of delivery (ballistic missiles),
12. ongoing wars: economic, psychological, religious, cultural, information,
13. cyberspace, generating threats to the security of the international environment and individual states,
14. ongoing global information warfare,
15. mass movement of people on a global scale.

It should be borne in mind that the above phenomena cannot be ignored by participants in international relations, treating them as a source of direct and/or indirect threats, including armed conflict.

Particularly noteworthy is the aforementioned loss of the state's exclusivity in the disposition of violence, as represented by the armed forces. In addition, states are no longer a monopoly on services of an intelligence and counter-intelligence nature, thus losing their previous ability to control society. This also applies to the sphere of security and public order involving private (including non-state) actors.

The processes that accompany the aforementioned globalisation affect not only the economic sphere, where it is particularly visible, but also other areas of state and private sector influence. From the point of view of the reflections carried out, the gradual loss by states of their competences in favour of international actors deserves attention. "The state is privatising its enterprises and withdrawing from economic activity. Privatisation, moreover, concerns not only the

economic sphere, science, education, health, schooling, railways and transport, but is also beginning to encompass areas traditionally considered to be core tasks of the state, such as the provision of internal security (e.g. personal and property security entities, private security patrols¹¹ – author’s note), the functioning of the penitentiary system, and the defence system (e.g. defence industry, privatisation of military services, private services of an intelligence and counter-intelligence nature – author’s note).¹²

The early 1990s saw conjunctural political decisions that led, among other things, to reductions in defence budgets, which translated into reductions in armed forces in many countries. “This led (...) to a kind of military stalemate. This meant that no state in the world (with the exception of the United States) could afford to intervene militarily against anyone with impunity (e.g. Iraq or Afghanistan). The resulting situation provided security comfort on the one hand, but on the other hand is a source of various regional conflicts triggered by all manner of authoritarian caciques and leaders, fundamentalists, nationalists and other irresponsible claimant movements.”¹³ These decisions have influenced the development of the armed forces of many states, whose level of training and equipment does not always allow them to perform tasks on a modern battlefield in the event of the outbreak of a traditional armed conflict. The conflict in Ukraine (or the Middle East) has demonstrated the military weakness of many European states, including NATO (European Union) member states, which is exploited in the information war not only by the direct participants, but also by third parties.

Reducing the armed forces in each country creates an army of unemployed trained professionals who, faced with unemployment, have found employment in private companies offering a wide range of military services. Many of them have fed into organised crime structures.

Services of this nature are used by both state institutions (e.g. Department of Defence, US State Department, UN) and private economic sector actors. The range of services, the specialised training and the ability to use sometimes

¹¹ This concerns the Generation Identitaire (GI) organisation founded in France. It is a youth organisation that aims to protect local, national and European identity. Its members learn self-defence and are encouraged to maintain physical fitness. GI members organise security patrols.

¹² E. Haliżak, R. Kuźniar, J. Symonides (eds.), *Globalizacja a stosunki międzynarodowe*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Branta, Bydgoszcz–Warszawa 2004, p. 132.

¹³ J. Gołębiowski, *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe RP*, “Zeszyt Naukowy Towarzystwa Wiedzy Obronnej” 1999, no. 1, p. 10.

state-of-the-art weapons has an impact on the so-called privatisation of armed conflict. Companies of this nature are driven primarily by profit rather than politics or ideology.

We have entered a new world, a world in which the state's de facto monopoly on the means of violence is passing away.¹⁴ "The violence hitherto monopolised by the state is partly passing into the hands of paramilitary (non-state) groups, private security agencies, security organisations, etc. There are many international and multinational corporations offering security services to states and non-states in the international market."¹⁵ The privatisation of military and paramilitary activities is based on the theory that security can be treated as a service and that private corporations are more efficient than state-owned ones.¹⁶

Globalisation and the accompanying threats, including new ones, have an impact on the need to address them in security policy, which has been evolving since the collapse of the bipolar division of the world along with its consequences. "The dominance of internal conflicts claimed some 3.6 million lives in the 1990s, while some 220,000 people were killed in interstate conflicts. This demonstrates the increase in internal insecurity due to numerous conflicts resulting from, among other things, lack of development, poverty, cultural and religious differences, questioning of minority rights and the rights of peoples to self-determination."¹⁷

The conflicts of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries are different, most often punctuated by high-intensity conflicts where the warring parties use diverse means of destruction. The scale and dynamics of these conflicts, due to the parties involved and their consequences, require new approaches to conflict resolution.

Under these complex conditions, the traditional function not only of the armed forces but also of the intelligence and counter-intelligence services is evolving. In the case of the armed forces, their traditional role and mission of defending the state against external attacks, protecting borders, maintaining internal stability

¹⁴ H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Macmillan, London 1977, p. 15; cited in: B. Balcerowicz, *Sily zbrojne w stanie pokoju, kryzysu, wojny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2010, p. 164.

¹⁵ B. Balcerowicz, *Sily zbrojne...*, op. cit., p. 164.

¹⁶ K. R. Nossal, *Roland goes corporate: Mercenaries and transnational security corporations in the post-cold war era*, "Civil Wars" 1998, vol. 1, iss. 1; cited in: B. Balcerowicz, *Sily zbrojne w stanie pokoju, kryzysu, wojny*, Warszawa 2010, p. 164.

¹⁷ E. Halizak, R. Kuźniar, J. Symonides (eds.), *Globalizacja...*, op. cit., p. 135.

and restoring constitutional order when necessary has been re-evaluated. In this new situation, with the exception of a few countries, they are becoming a relatively less used instrument of pressure and foreign policy.¹⁸ Very often their role is reduced to an internal function, where the main emphasis is on the fight against international terrorism, organised crime structures, participation in the crisis management process or the implementation of foreign humanitarian missions.

Intelligence and counter-intelligence activities have also been privatised, which means that the state(s) is not the only entity using subordinate agencies of this nature. Tasks of this nature are carried out by specialised intelligence/counter-intelligence cells of large industrial and commercial corporations, consulting companies, business intelligence, the aforementioned private companies offering military services, as well as terrorist organisations, organised crime groups and nationalist groups, etc. The loss by states of their monopoly on such an important sphere of internal and external security means the loss of their monopoly on the control of society. Thus, states take many measures of a legal and institutional nature to secure their own information needs for the control of society (internal and external adversary).

To this end, they take advantage of existing threats to the security of citizens, e.g. from terrorist organisations, where propaganda, disinformation and manipulation of perception are key to legitimate surveillance of society in a state under the rule of law. These actors support their activities with tools of the scientific and technological revolution, e.g. the Pegasus and Cellebrite spy systems.¹⁹ For example, “tools from Israeli company Cellebrite, when connected to a phone, can, among other things, read user data stored in the cloud from more than 50 sources, including Facebook, Twitter, Gmail, Google Drive and WhatsApp. The technology can crack the security of phones and seize user data from them.”²⁰ It is noteworthy that Cellebrite, like Pegasus manufacturer NSO Group, sold its technology under an export licence from the Israeli Ministry of Defence. Obtaining information about people of interest (e.g. individuals with access to classified state security

¹⁸ J. Symonides, *The New Role of the Army in Peacebuilding*, in: *From Partial Insecurity to Global Security*, UNESCO, Paris 1997, pp. 103–115, cited in: E. Halizak, R. Kuźniar, J. Symonides (eds.), *Globalizacja...*, op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁹ Once connected to a phone, they can, among other things, read user data stored in the cloud from more than 50 sources, including Facebook, Twitter, Gmail, Google Drive and WhatsApp (P. Szostek, *Policja znowu kupuje izraelską technologię szpiegowską Cellebrite*, tvn24.pl, <https://tvn24.pl/polska/policja-znowu-kupuje-cellebrite-czym-jest-ta-izraelska-technologie-szpiegowska-st6624777>, accessed 03.03.2025).

²⁰ Ibidem.

information) by a foreign intelligence service not only violates the existing system of protection of classified information, but also allows for a hoodoo probe and the recruitment of a cooperative agent. In the ongoing war on the classified front, such operations are carried out by intelligence elements of both the adversary and the targeted state.

Information operations conducted by organised cross-border criminal groups, terrorist organisations or private companies offering security services should also be borne in mind.

Armed conflicts at the dawn of the 21st century are conflicts with diverse rationales and causes, as well as the power of destructive impact, where the development of computer, communication networks and the Internet, as well as emerging spontaneous forms of warfare in these networks, precision-guided weapons and weapons with nuclear weapon effects (e.g. electromagnetic weapons) are changing the modern battlefield. All the more so because “the boundaries between soldiers and non-soldiers have now been blurred and the divide between combat and non-combat has almost disappeared, also globalisation has made all problems interdependent and interconnected, so the key to confront these phenomena must be found, a key that should open all the locks that close the door to war. Moreover, this key should fit all levels and dimensions of war from politics to strategy and operational techniques to tactics. It should also be useful for politicians and generals as well as ordinary soldiers. It is hard to imagine a more appropriate key than unrestricted warfare.”²¹

This soldier and non-soldier will most likely be (or perhaps already is) a hacker (an army of hackers) who, using their specialised knowledge, access to cyberspace and ICT equipment (including specialised equipment), will be able to achieve strategic political, economic, military, cultural or social objectives without the use of armed forces and military might leading to physical destruction. “After all, forms that are not characterised by the use of armed forces and military might, and are not even associated with the occurrence of bloodshed and casualties, are just as likely to guarantee the successful achievement of the objectives of war, and even to achieve greater benefits than when military might is used.”²²

²¹ Q. Liang, W. Xiangsu, *Unrestricted Warfare: Assumptions on War and Tactics in the Age of Globalization*, Beijing 1999; cited in: R. Szpyra, *Militarne operacje informacyjne*, AON, Warszawa 2003, p. 9.

²² Ibidem.

Armed conflicts that have taken place after the breakdown of the bipolar division of the world and that are part of the transformation of civilisation are diverse forms of warfare conducted by regular armed forces as well as many non-state actors. These actors already have at their disposal a powerful arsenal that allows them not only to create permanent fear, but also to lead to the realisation of accepted goals without the use of armed violence.

Imagination is paramount in these actions, which, combined with modern technologies, pose a serious challenge, where the material consequences are sometimes difficult to predict and, in the absence of rational assessment by politicians or specialists, can lead to serious consequences for the security of not only the individual, but also the nation or the state. It can also threaten the security of the international environment. Imaginative thinking can lead to the thesis that anything can be used to neutralise an adversary, not necessarily physically. Creative thinking includes the emergence of a new paradigm to describe this thesis, indicated below:

ANYTHING THAT GOES BEYOND THE MILITARY SPHERE SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A WEAPON. HOWEVER, ANYTHING THAT CAN BE USED IN MILITARY OPERATION THAT CAN BENEFIT MAN CAN ALSO HARM HIM, BEING IN EFFECT A WEAPON.

Concept, nature and types of conflict

Armed conflicts are characterised by the pursuit by one of the parties to a negative co-option “to achieve its objective by harming the basis of existence (constraints) of the other party – in territorial, political, economic or military terms. (...) Depending on their objectives or grounds, armed conflicts can be divided into: partition, liberation, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, etc.”²³ Every conflict, including armed conflicts, has diverse substrates which makes their peaceful resolution very difficult because the parties to the conflict are always guided by vested interests that are not always acceptable to the opposing side, as well as the international environment.

²³ Ibidem, p. 105.

Table 1. Concepts of armed conflict

Source	Notions of armed conflict
L. Mucha, <i>Przemoc zbrojna</i> , Warszawa 1991, p. 33	Armed conflict is the action of armed forces of opposing states (nations, social classes) conducted on a limited (in terms of purpose, means used, area, duration) scale
<i>International Military and Defense Encyclopedia by Trevor N. Dupuy</i> , vol. 6, Washington 1993, p. 2886	Armed conflict is an ambiguous term about which there is no consensus in science. Among the different types of war, one mentions reduced-intensity conflict, defining it as: armed action on the ground between peace and open war using strictly limited forces and methods
B. Balcerowicz (ed.), <i>Słownik podstawowych terminów dotyczących bezpieczeństwa państwa</i> , Warszawa 1994, p. 12	Armed conflict is a type of armed violence involving the pursuit of state (coalition, social group) objectives through mutual action using armed forces or organised and armed groups. By applying the criteria of the uses of armed conflict, it is possible to distinguish between wars and border armed conflicts
S. Dworecki, <i>Współczesne konflikty zbrojne. Studium wybranych problemów</i> , Warszawa 1994, p. 40	Armed conflict is a form of struggle, or more precisely of armed action, which occurs when the (formalised) parties, defending their interests (the country), use coercion in an institutionalised form – in the sense of international law
The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ruled on 2 October 1995 that	An armed conflict exists whenever there is armed force or prolonged armed violence between government authorities and organised armed groups or between such groups within the territory of a single state
S. Dworecki, <i>Od konfliktu do wojny</i> , Warszawa 1996, p. 105	Armed conflict is a form of combat (armed action) and occurs when the (formalised) parties, defending their interests (reasons), use coercion (physical violence) in an institutionalised form – in the sense of international law
B. Balcerowicz, <i>Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego</i> , Warszawa 2002, p. 59	Armed conflict, is a contradiction, a dispute (...) resolved with the use of armed forces (armed groups) using armed violence

Source	Notions of armed conflict
B. Barnaszewski, <i>Współczesny konflikt zbrojny – państwo ubezwłasnowolnione</i> , “Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL” 2008, no. 3, p. 72	Armed conflict is any manifestation of armed belligerence – including unspoken, also involving participants who are not subjects of international law. Armed conflict is preceded by antagonism, a growing clash of interests, a verbal clash and conflict action
W. Łepkowski (ed.), <i>Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego</i> , Warszawa 2009, p. 59	Armed conflict, is a contradiction arising between states (coalitions of states) resolved by the use of armed force, using armed violence. From the point of view of the forms and methods of armed violence used, armed conflicts include war, armed intervention, armed incident, military coup, armed blockade, demonstration of force and others
<i>Konflikty zbrojne we współczesnym świecie</i> , Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna, https://zpe.gov.pl/a/konflikty-zbrojne-we-wspolczesnym-swiecie/DtXFb0BZ (accessed 11.01.2023)	Armed conflict is a situation in which armed force has been used between the parties. This means that conflicts include any manifestation of armed struggle. An international dispute, in which confrontation between parties is carried out by methods other than armed struggle, such as by economic, diplomatic, informational means, should be distinguished from armed conflict

Source: compiled from available literature.

Bearing in mind the complex rationale and causes of armed conflicts, their participants (state and/or non-state), the means of warfare used (including the latest generation of weapons, sometimes with effects accompanying the explosion of a nuclear bomb, such as an electromagnetic pulse), it is necessary to point out the objectives of armed action, which have always been and are present among policy makers making decisions on the use of armed forces in the external as well as internal environment of the state.

Table 2. Targets of military action

Objectives of military operations	
seizure of power	seize territory
revindication of territory	ensuring territorial unity
secession of regions	repelling military aggression

Objectives of military operations	
territorial annexation	defence of sovereignty
restrictions on civil liberties	defence of territorial cohesion
defence of national minorities	taking control of natural resources (including energy resources)
seizure of control of strategic points in selected geographic regions	humanitarian missions
global information dominance, taking control of energy resources (oil, natural gas), safe water resources on a global scale	

Source: S. Dworecki, *Od konfliktu do wojny*, AON, Warszawa 1996, p. 106.

Armed conflicts can also be divided according to: spatial extent; participating parties; means of warfare used (conventional, unconventional); mode of armed action (regular, irregular, dispersed, guerrilla); intensity of action (low, medium, high intensity) or other criteria. It is important to consider whether the above division will be appropriate for the conduct of conflicts in cyberspace, space, as well as in the battle for the minds of individuals, social groups, professional groups, nations and the international community.

Table 3. Armed conflicts

Armed conflicts	
Division of armed conflicts by range (area)	
local armed conflict	border armed conflict
continental armed conflict	regional armed conflict
global armed conflict	
Division of armed conflicts by the form of achievement of objectives	
internal armed conflict	interstate armed conflict
civil war	international armed conflict
military coup	armed assault
armed incident	armed retaliation
armed intervention	

Source: S. Dworecki, *Od konfliktu do wojny*, AON, Warszawa 1996, p. 107.

The changing environment of conflicts

Changes are taking place in the international security environment, where the breakdown of the bipolar division of the world and its aftermath, justify the need

to change the approach and evaluation of previous views on armed conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. First of all, such mundane phenomena as the free movement of people, capital, services, information, knowledge and ideas have fundamentally changed the approach to threats, their scale and dynamics, and require a new perspective on the accompanying conflicts (including armed conflicts). The ongoing revolution in ICT and communication techniques, the Internet and modern technologies that dominate our daily lives should be kept in mind.

The emergence of the fifth dimension of confrontation, cyberspace, is changing the approach to the conduct of armed (non-armed) conflicts, where the realization of strategic objectives related to expansion into the territory of the state – the opponent – does not necessarily involve the introduction of armed forces. Conflicts will be conducted in cyberspace, where information/an information attack will target the critical infrastructure of the state of interest, which depends on the mentioned ICT and communication techniques. In these conflicts, there are no political or administrative borders, no need for passports and the offensive side can always be anonymous.

Cyberspace, ICT and communication techniques are permanently part of the development of the armed forces, where the saturation of command, communications and automation systems, reconnaissance and weapons management determine the effectiveness of the performance of tasks at all levels of the armed forces in the system of state security and defence.

The existing and emerging new threats, and the conflicts erupting against them (among other armed conflicts) require a qualitatively new look at: the rationale and causes, the course, the parties involved, the means of warfare used, the tactics of action, the sponsors, their nature, the consequences, and above all, a departure from the traditional perceptions of them in terms of the armed conflicts of our past (the First and Second World Wars), i.e. a linear course.

The following elements should be taken into account when viewing and defining them:

1. progressive and pervasive globalization affecting the causes, course and nature of armed conflicts,
2. the progressive and pervasive globalization affecting the military sphere,
3. the loss by states of their monopoly on the exclusive disposal of armed forces, which was previously reserved for these entities,
4. the emergence of non-state actors who are active participants in many conflicts, including armed conflicts,
5. the involvement of non-state actors in armed conflicts by states,

6. access to dual-use technologies, with an indication of the scale of the phenomenon,
7. the spaces of armed conflict: land, sea, deep sea, air, space, cyberspace and the human mind are not reserved for states, their armed forces, special services or police services,
8. scientific and technological progress (information and communication technology) and technology,
9. cyberspace, a new space of conflicts, that can lead, among other things, to the physical destruction of the enemy and armed conflict,
10. cyberspace is the possibility of a new generation of weapons (e.g. electromagnetic weapons, radio frequency weapons and particle weapons),
11. new means of warfare: laser weapons, ultrasonic weapons, plasma weapons, vacuum weapons, psychophysical weapons, radiation weapons, hypersonic weapons and others.

“The distance noticeable in the development of countries and regions is increasingly widening. Its driving force is primarily states that are politically, economically and militarily strong, as well as access to dual-use technologies. The progressive dependence manifests itself, among other things, in imposing cultural patterns considered only legitimate, restricting access to achievements in the sphere of science and technology and to modern production technologies, limiting access to natural resources (including energy), waging trade wars, failing to abide by international treaties, fuelling the spiral of armaments, recognizing hostile ideas, fuelling migration movements, initiating internal conflicts and internationalizing them. These types of actions translate into already existing differences in the development of professional groups, national, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as nations and societies.”²⁴ The civilization gap, which is bipolar in nature, is widening more and more:

- at one pole are material prosperity, political participation, openness to modernity of cultural and civilizational signs,
- on the other is the sphere of deprivation, poverty, alienation from political life, attitudes of non-adaptation to the emerging information order, extreme attitudes, alienation and social exclusion.²⁵

²⁴ A. Żebrowski, *Globalna przestrzeń zagrożeń. Wybrane aspekty*, Wydawnictwo Sztafeta, Kraków 2018, p. 75.

²⁵ A. Chodubski, *Asymetryczne zagrożenia cywilizacyjne a istota bezpieczeństwa państwa*

This second pole is particularly dangerous, as asymmetry relative to the first pole is a potential source of violent (armed and/or non-armed) conflict. Occurring (progressive) asymmetry can be the cause of the outbreak of a new armed conflict of an asymmetric nature. This means that the other pole, due to limited development opportunities, also has limited chances of access to modern armaments, which implies that it will seek such forms and means that will allow it to carry out a precise strike on the place(s) vulnerable to destructive attack using, for example, kinetic or electromagnetic energy, ICT and communication techniques. The aggressive foreign policy of dominant states, supported by information warfare, contributes to the fact that such a scenario is currently being constructed. In extreme cases it takes the form of a violent, asymmetric conflict.

The ongoing discourse on future armed (non-armed) conflicts takes into account a wide spectrum of asymmetric features. It should be noted that the differences that exist in their development directly translate into limited access to modern means of destruction or lack thereof, resulting in the search for such methods and means, the effects of which will compensate for economic, technical and military backwardness. It is worth bearing in mind that it is possible to use many means available in the retail market (e.g. transportation: road, rail, air and water), which, with imagination, can also be used for destructive actions.

Based on the available literature, it is possible to identify features of current and future armed conflicts that have asymmetric characteristics, which will be a consequence of the existence of significant differences in the scientific, economic-defence and military potentials of individual countries and even regions. The President of the United States has announced the exit from the INF disarmament treaty (treaty on the complete elimination of intermediate-range missiles²⁶), accusing Russia of failing to comply with it. It is worth bearing in mind that currently (as of 2018) 32 countries have intermediate-range missiles and the capability to produce them. Moreover, many countries are not bound by the INF Treaty, such as China, India and Pakistan. This situation will most likely result in

polskiego, in: S. Wojciechowski, R. Fiedler (eds.), *Zagrożenia asymetryczne współczesnego świata*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe WNOiD UAM, Poznań 2009, p. 35.

²⁶ INF Treaty – treaty on the complete elimination of intermediate-range ballistic missiles. An international agreement concluded on 7 December 1987 in Washington between the United States and the Soviet Union on the complete elimination of the two contracting parties' arsenals of intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and the prohibition of their production, storage and use. Signed by US President Ronald Reagan and First Secretary of the CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev. Ratified by the US Senate on 27 May 1988, it entered into force on 1 June 1988.

another arms race. In addition, the lack of international control over the production and proliferation of such weapons will allow state actors (who do not have production capabilities), as well as non-state actors, to gain possession of them, which will increase the threat of carrying out a strike of an asymmetric nature (including pre-emptive strikes).

Accordingly, it is possible to identify features of current and future armed conflicts with asymmetric dimensions:

- First, the threat of war (including of an asymmetric nature) will remain real, the probability of large-scale conflicts will remain low (however, it should not be excluded), turbulently increasing, while the number of conflicts limited in scale, objectives and forms will increase; the primary determinant of the characteristics of the conflict will be the level of technological development and economic affluence of the parties (they will be a source of progressive differentiation in access to modern solutions); military actions will increasingly serve to exploit opportunities rather than counter threats; the processes of direction and flare will be implemented in real time; the direction (command) of troops will be replaced by the direction of war and armed struggle; the focuses on non-combat impacts will increase while decreasing on combat elements; the problems of deterrence, information warfare, special warfare, etc. will be transferred to a higher, political level. The integration of civilian and military activities will increase; military activities other than war will become the primary area of activities of the armed forces and will be, as a rule, combined in dimensions: national-international, civil-military, combatant-noncombatant, and in terms of types of armed forces; the role of ground troops will decrease and their character will change; technologies enabling activities in space will increasingly determine the possibility, efficiency and character of activities in other spheres.
- Secondly: armed struggle in the future will be specific to society and information civilization (deepening the existing differences in development), taking advantage of its opportunities; it will be more subordinated to geopolitics and geo-economics; it will become a more frequent means of pursuing economic interests; it will guarantee permanent political solutions, security stability to a lesser extent; it will also be fought between non-state actors or in their interests; it will be increasingly complex, multidimensional, diverse in forms, combinations of means and tools will also become more complex; it will be less often a planned policy measure, and more often the result of escalation in situations where non-military means are ineffective; it will be increasingly

asymmetric and indirect, even more surprising and difficult to forecast, scenario planning; it will be fought in new centres whose importance will increase (space, infosphere, new forms of energy – an example of asymmetry); new forms and dimensions of deterrence will emerge (within the framework of asymmetric actions); the role of weapons of mass destruction and, at the same time, security of systems will increase; armed struggle will raise new and different problems and dilemmas of leadership, execution, morality, etc.²⁷

The development of science, technology and, above all, modern production technologies is gradually leading to an increase in the combat capability of the military, both in the sphere of early detection and precise reconnaissance, and effective destruction of recognized objects. This involves next-generation equipment and armaments with high destructive (physical) power against the enemy. Such a level of science and technology is available only to a few countries with strong political, defence-military, economic and financial potentials, introduction of innovative solutions, open to any changes occurring in the internal and external environment of the state, adapting to emerging challenges, i.e. opportunities and threats, including those of a military nature. In addition, the ability to penetrate the personal and technical information space on a global scale makes it possible to adapt current scientific and military potential to the changes that are taking place.

The evolving global security space, where international rivalries taking the form of military and non-military conflicts are ongoing, is changing the human environment using the achievements of science and technology in this multifaceted confrontation. The turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is also a new approach to ongoing combat operations, where new trends and directions in the development of means of armed combat and concepts as to their use on the modern battlefield are evident. In ongoing as well as in future combat, the following actions will dominate: irregular, unconventional, dispersed, point, sabotage and diversion, retaliation, guerrilla, combined, terrorist, information, cyber attacks, computer crime, etc. "Activities of this nature are fostered by, among other things:

1. lightweight, autonomous, multifunctional and effective weapons,

²⁷ Position of the Head of the Department of Strategy at the Academy of National Defence, cited in: B. Balcerowicz, *Siły zbrojne w stanie pokoju, kryzysu, wojny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2010, pp. 176–177.

2. modern optoelectronics,
3. a new generation of artillery and munitions (circulating munitions), and a new generation anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft missiles, both guided and self-guided, with increased destructive power,
4. a new generation of self-guided missiles, ammunition and mines capable of individually selecting targets, see and forget, penetrating missiles, fuel-air missiles and mines, cluster missiles, etc.,
5. aircraft with very different characteristics and performance: helicopters (combat, transport and multi-purpose) capable of rapid manoeuvre and re-deployment of troops, effective and strong support of the fighting troops with fire, targeting enemy facilities and placing mine barriers; multi-purpose aircraft with very good tactical and technical parameters, reconnaissance and strike aircraft, supporting the fighting troops, interacting with anti-aircraft artillery and maintaining air superiority (e.g. application of stealth technology); unmanned remotely piloted or self-guided aircraft (reconnaissance, strike, for remote erratic mines, logistical security),
6. vessels – reconnaissance, high-speed, multi-purpose, equipped with reconnaissance and strike systems that enable effective fire in various conditions and in various means of combat,
7. support equipment – reconnaissance, engineering, evacuation with greater manoeuvrability; on a unified armoured chassis; multi-functional, performing tasks in difficult terrain; equipped with effective means of defence,
8. modern technologies (new types of plastics for the construction of light-weight and mechanically strong structures and armour, resistant to environmental effects, absorbing neutron radiation; paints and varnishes capable of suppressing electromagnetic pulses, scattering heat radiation, absorbing laser beams; substances with super-sticky and hardening properties that, when sprayed over enemy troops, immobilize equipment and paralyse soldiers),
9. multi-functional information systems; multi-application smart sensors (multi-purpose sensors); electronic devices operating at terahertz speeds; secure broadband communications; techniques for designing and manufacturing modern structural materials; methods and techniques for designing and manufacturing integrated and autonomous systems.”²⁸

Ongoing conflicts are accompanied by an arms race, where hypersonic weapons, for example, are of interest to many countries, especially those whose

²⁸ S. Dworecki, *Od konfliktu...*, op. cit., pp. 149, 151, 154–155.

position in the international arena and, above all, scientific, economic and financial potentials allow them to direct their research into such weapons. Speaking of this type of weapon, the most common reference is to gliding missiles, the so-called gliders, which move at speeds many times faster than existing missiles and are virtually undetectable by radar.²⁹ This could mean that the nuclear potentials of a handful of countries will be useless, as they could be destroyed in the run-up to an armed conflict. Whoever first comes into possession of hypersonic weapons will violate (or even overthrow) the existing rules of warfare.

Also, electromagnetic jamming (electromagnetic bombs) of reconnaissance, and guidance systems of laser weapons, will be intensively disrupted. Particularly vulnerable to electronic and kinetic attack in the period preceding the outbreak of armed conflict and in its first phase are missiles located in launchers or silos. All potential combatants conduct peacetime reconnaissance of the regions of deployment of such weapons, on which a pre-emptive strikes will be carried out, as they are treated as first-strike objects.

The current human environment is dominated by global information conflict, where information supports ideology, politics and propaganda, disinformation and lies, and cover-ups dominate global communication. Ongoing political and social discourse, with diverse backgrounds, reaches every individual, social group and nation, and who are bombarded with information with the goal of disrupting their perception of perception.

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²⁹ *Broń hipersoniczna – najszybszy wyścig zbrojeń w historii*, Młody Technik, <https://mlo-dytechnik.pl/technika/29117-bron-hipersoniczna-najszybszy-wyscig-zbrojen-w-historii>, (accessed 08.10.2023).

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Summary

Current and, above all, future military and non-military conflicts are testing grounds for their participants. In mind should be those states whose potential allows them to participate in the economic and military race in search of qualitatively new means of physical destruction. They are supported by scientific and technological progress, which is adopted for the needs of modern states and their armed forces. The transformations that are taking place in the global security space have an impact on the forms, methods and also the means of cooperation used. The saturation of modern means of state management, command, communications, reconnaissance and arms control by ICT and communications technology means a change in the current battlefield. This technology is shaping another theatre of warfare, which is cyberspace, making it possible to effectively interact with soldiers, the enemy's civilian population and one's own. They are part of the global information warfare that dominates the field of confrontation in the military and non-military spheres.