

Andrzej Żebrowski

College of Public Safety and Individual APEIRON

andrzejzebrowski@onet.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-2779-9444

THE EVOLUTION OF SECURITY IN EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY. SELECTED ASPECTS

EWOLUCJA BEZPIECZEŃSTWA W EUROPIE NA POCZĄTKU XXI WIEKU. WYBRANE ASPEKTY

Abstract: Security is a phenomenon that is undergoing constant evolution. The beginning of the 21st century has brought many changes in the field of security. This has been influenced by, among other things, civilizational changes, the development of technology and a change in the mentality of society and politicians. In the first part of the article, the term security and a historical outline of the changes in international security are indicated. Subsequently, the factors that have had a significant impact on the changes in the evolution of security in Europe are listed and then the current situation in international security is characterised.

Zarys treści: Bezpieczeństwo jest zjawiskiem, które podlega ciągłej ewolucji. Początek XXI wieku przyniósł wiele zmian w dziedzinie bezpieczeństwa. Wpływ na to miały m.in. zmiany cywilizacyjne, rozwój technologii oraz zmiana mentalności społeczeństwa i polityków. W pierwszej części artykułu wskazano pojęcie bezpieczeństwa oraz zarys historyczny zmian w bezpieczeństwie międzynarodowym. Następnie wymieniono czynniki, które miały istotny wpływ na zmiany w ewolucji bezpieczeństwa w Europie, a następnie scharakteryzowano obecną sytuację w zakresie bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego.

Keywords: security, international security, evolution of international security

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe, ewolucja bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego

The concept of security has evolved over the years and new definitions of it have been created. Particularly in recent years, due to the development of security sciences, new definitions and divisions of it are emerging. The evolution of security that has taken place in recent years and the factors that influence it are not insignificant. "Security in general is a universally understood concept. Like justice, joy, happiness, respect or love, security contains many personal references. Something that for one person,

community or nation is happiness or justice for others will mean quite the opposite. Some people under specific conditions are happy and secure, while others under the same conditions will be desperate, lost and live with a sense of insecurity. Security at the level of the individual is generally associated with peace, whereas at higher levels, e.g. at the national and international levels, we usually associate security with peace, as the opposite of war.”¹

Security is a primordial need of individuals, social groups, nations, states and continents. It is not a once and for all good. It is subject to evolution, depends on shifting balances of power and is a function of changes in the global security environment. Given that it is a process where participants in international relations form a mosaic of states that are diverse in terms of: aspirations and influence of a given state on international relations, geostrategic, geopolitical, historical, ethnic, national, religious, cultural and many other conditions – it requires a comprehensive approach taking into account the scale and dynamics of the changes taking place.

During the period of the bipolar division of the world, security issues were closely linked: with military policy, with military structures, with armed forces and defence in the broadest sense. The erosion and collapse of this system was a triumph of Western politics. However, these transformations bring with them serious international concerns and problems; their development and consequences were probably not foreseen by the architects of this policy.² It is worth bearing in mind, however, that all changes, including those in the modern world, are very complex and cannot be predicted, let alone their side effects avoided. For we are witnessing progressive globalisation, which, with the breakdown of the bipolar division of the world, does not encounter any barriers and is accompanied by systemic, socio-political, cultural, economic and military transformations with unforeseeable consequences. The development of organised cross-border crime, terrorism, the phenomena of nationalism, chauvinism and religious fundamentalism must also be taken into account. The mass movement of people, knowledge, services, finances and hostile ideas is also an important issue. It is therefore important to modify the approach to security views in particular, including national and international security.

Currently, the concept of security refers to almost all areas of development: political, ideological, social, cultural, ethnic, demographic, economic, financial, access to natural energy resources, scientific, technical, technological, food, information, information technology (ICT, cyber), environmental, health and military etc. This catalogue is open-ended and will be systematically supplemented with the progress of civilisation.

“In specific situations individual aspects may be dominant and the order presented above will not correspond to reality. However, it seems that, regardless of the circumstances of the environment, the political aspect will always be dominant, if not at the beginning of the development of the situation, then certainly during. It is worth

¹ Gołębiewski, J., *National Security of the Republic of Poland*, [in:] *Universal Rescue System and Defence and State Security*, „Zeszyt Problemowy Towarzystwo Wiedzy Obronnej” 1999, no. 1, p. 5.

² Dworecki, S., *From conflict to war*, BUWIK Publishing House, Warsaw 1996, p. 11.

noting that, as a general rule, one cannot expect only one aspect of security because the emergence of any one aspect implies another.”³

The scale and dynamics of the changes occurring in the global security environment include times of major re-evaluation in social life, the development of technology and, above all, in the mentality of the population (politicians) and the rise of civilizational threats also have an impact on the perception of security. All the more so as security is not only about the will to survive, but also about protecting prosperity and free lifestyles, freedoms and national, ethnic, religious identity and movement etc. This means that the world has shrunk, we live in a global village and security is primarily an international category. It is the processes taking place in this environment (positive and negative) which translate into the level of security: state, local, sub-regional, regional, supra-regional and global. The space dimension of security should also be borne in mind, concerning, among other things, protection from asteroids approaching the Earth.

In terms of the reflections carried out, the end of the then political-military and economic division of the world resulted in major changes and turbulence in the international security environment and the perception of this qualitatively new reality. Many states were forced to search for a new security formula in order to move freely in a high-risk environment in the face of evolving changes in their geopolitical and geostrategic positions.

It is important to note that the discussion on the new shape of security was accompanied by serious re-evaluations, among others, in the perceptions of politicians, whose decisions did not always lead to rational solutions. As a consequence of the decisions taken, the internal and external security systems of states (including the protection of state secrets) were compromised, which directly translated into reduced defence budgets and significant reductions in the armed forces. This has led to a so-called military stalemate, affecting the current military capabilities of, among others, NATO member states, as pointed out by the former US President (Donald Trump). It can be assumed that his successor, Joe Biden, will uphold the position of his predecessor. In view of the US presidential election (2020), the current President, due to the ongoing review of decisions made by the former President, has put on hold the decision to further withdraw US troops from German territory. This situation will undoubtedly have an impact on international politics, relations with NATO and the EU, as well as with Russia and Turkey, and thus on European and global security.

The processes taking place in the international security space are no longer accompanied by information warfare, but by active information warfare, where its participants, appreciating its importance for their own particular interests, will conduct active information activities aimed not only at acquiring information, but also at disrupting the perception of the object of attack.

With the above in mind, it must be assumed that security must be viewed through the prism of many complex aspects (internal and external), which are interdependent

³ Gołębiewski, J., *National Security...*, op. cit., p. 13.

and have an impact on its level. Security is interdisciplinary and multifaceted and should be related to all functions of the state and the global security environment.

The asymmetry, turbulence and complexity of the international security environment characterise the 21st century world. Its determinants are diversity (variety and varying speed of the processes taking place), complexity (non-linearity and huge number of processes), volatility (dynamic changes of informational, civilizational, cultural, nature etc.) and unpredictability (dynamics and non-linearity of processes).⁴ These are factors that fundamentally affect the current and future international security environment. Considerations include globalisation processes, increasingly sophisticated forms of asymmetric warfare, the impact of demographic and environmental change, states in decay, radical ideologies and unresolved conflicts.⁵

Thus, “the concept of security is constantly acquiring new meanings, which are, of course, accompanied by diversity and even freedom of interpretation. This capacity for meaning and interpretation is due not only to the different traditions, sizes, locations and particular interests of states, nor only to the developmental tendencies of the international community, which are forcing an ever broader understanding of the concept, but also to its hitherto objective and subjective nature. On the one hand, security is a state defined by a set of measurable factors and circumstances subject to rational judgement. On the other hand, it signifies the more or less subjective feeling of the nation and the forces governing it that the state is secure or not. With, of course, a whole range of intermediate feelings.”⁶

International security (which is a broader concept than state security), on the other hand, encompasses the external security of individual states and the global system as a whole. It should be noted that international security is not the sum of the security of states, as it encompasses both the existential values of individual states and the common values of the global security system, such as stability, peace, international order, degree of democratisation, cooperativeness, balance and cooperation in various areas.⁷ Security is a dynamic process that changes in time and space and is significantly influenced by the information warfare that always accompanies human action. It involves information operations in support of all decisions aimed at adhering (or not adhering) to norms and principles of non-use of force in solving international problems. This can be military as well as non-military force. Thus, international security is seen in the category of complex conditionality, which corresponds to diverse international arrangements.

The historical changes that took place in the international security environment after the break-up of the bipolar division of the world: the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 1989) and the reunification of the German states (October 1990); the dissolution of the Soviet Union (December 1991); the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact

⁴ Witecka, M.S., *Asymmetric threats and information technologies*, “Issue Notebook of the Defence Knowledge Society” 2011, no. 4, p. 9.

⁵ Kozub, M., *Strategic security environment in the first years of the 21st century*, AON Publishing House, Warsaw 2009, p. 128.

⁶ Dworecki, S., *From conflict to war...*, op. cit., p. 12.

⁷ Pokruszyński, W., *Bezpieczeństwo teoria i praktyka*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Gospodarki Euroregionalnej, Józefów 2012, p. 69.

(July 1991), the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (June 1991); and the division of Czechoslovakia (1992/1993) into two independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, fundamentally changed the approach to the emerging global security environment. After the collapse of the Soviet Union many new states were created, including Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine among others, and in its Asian part (e.g. Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The Commonwealth of Independent States with a dominant position for Russia has also emerged. It should also be borne in mind that the states that had lost the protection of the nuclear umbrella of the Soviet Union and its military might were faced with a new balance of power, which at that time had yet to see adequate security structures.

“For the sake of security, in the initial phase of the transition, an attempt was made to give new importance to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This resulted from both the Paris meeting in 1990 and the Review Conference in 1992, which had the effect of clarifying cooperation with European organisations and states. The main European institutions and institutions providing security on the European continent included the aforementioned Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO), together with the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Partnership for Peace, which the Alliance had established; the European Union (EU); the Western European Union (WEU); the Council of Europe; and the Commonwealth of Independent States, with its main power, Russia.”⁸

At the time, it was felt that the above institutions dealing with security issues should undertake comprehensive activities in accordance with their capabilities. At the same time, care was taken to ensure that their activities did not conflict with those of other similar organisations.

In the international realities of the time, European and world politicians posited that there was a limited possibility of an East-West political-military conflict. This meant a change in the approach to international security, where security and peace-keeping issues continued to be prioritised. Under these qualitatively new conditions, decisions were made in the designated organisations to take them into account and to develop new rules of operation. Discussions on the new shape of the European security system continue to this day. Three model concepts of security have been identified:

1. collective security under the leadership of the OSCE,
2. European with a dominant role for the European Union,
3. Euro-Atlantic with the North Atlantic Alliance as a key force.

Following the processes taking place, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union have been recognised as a significant component of the European security system.

“The OSCE emphasised human rights, the free market and the peaceful settlement of disputes, all of which dominated the Paris Conference in November 1990.

⁸ Kaczmarek, J., *Models of European security*, „Zeszyt Problemowy Towarzystwo Wiedzy Obronnej” 1998, no. 2, p. 6.

Considerable progress was made in the elimination, reduction and control of armaments of various classes and categories (Conventional Forces in Europe Agreement – CFE). The agreement reached on the basis of this treaty made it possible to undertake undertakings verifying the work on the reduction of military equipment and personnel (e.g. the Clean Sky Agreement).⁹

The result of the processes taking place was, among others, the inclusion of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine in the programme on: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and strategic arms reduction. For example, “in the rolling of 1993, 158 states signed *the Chemical Weapons Convention*. In addition, work on the Start I and Start II treaties was resumed, and work was undertaken on limiting the production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (including their production technologies). During this period, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty were adopted, the International Atomic Energy Agency was strengthened, work resumed on the verifiable implementation of the 1972 *Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention*, negotiations began on the near completion of the *Fissile Material Convention* and missile technology transfer control regimes were expanded.”¹⁰

In addition to the work indicated, decisions were made to cut defence budgets, resulting in reductions in armed forces in all countries. For example, Canada between 1989 and 1999 (by 32%), Italy in the 1990s (by 21%), the Netherlands between 1990 and 2001 (by 42.5%), Austria between 1991 and 1995 (by 16%), Sweden by 1999 (by 37%), Poland between 1990 and 1995 (by 37%).¹¹ These trends led to a serious weakening of these countries’ defence capabilities in the mid-1990s, the effects of which are still visible today.

It should also be borne in mind that the turn of the 1990s, as a result of significant reductions in the armed forces, resulted in changes to the tasks facing the modern army, with a reduction in its functions.¹²

In the new liberal conception of the approach to this specific public good of national defence and the army, governments are attempting to introduce elements of economic calculus, limiting the military’s area of activity to performing only defence and offensive functions and taking away from it many activities related to logistics.¹³ Internal armed and non-armed conflicts, ongoing in the international space, cause armed forces to be engaged in missions and operations conducted in support of peace. Each of these activities is treated as non-war operations involving international components of the armed forces.

⁹ Gołębiewski, J., *Bezpieczeństwo Polski – aspekt międzynarodowy*, „Myśl Wojskowa” 2000, no. 5, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

¹¹ Gołębiewski, J., *National Security...*, op. cit., p. 10.

¹² Żebrowski, A., *Wywiad i kontrwywiad XXI wieku*, Wydawnictwo Wydziału Administracji Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomii i Innowacji, Lublin 2010, p. 289.

¹³ Łukaszewicz, A., *Afghanistan and Iraq: the economic balance sheet of the war on terrorism*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 73–74.

“The decline in the threat of world war and the emergence of the so-called peace dividend – the possibility of allocating resources previously spent on defence to other purposes – has resulted, among other things, in significant reductions in the size of the armed forces in most European countries and in the United States and Canada. In the USA alone, the armed forces were reduced from 2.1 million men in 1989 to 1.4 million in 2008. On a larger scale, these processes took place in Russia and the pro-Soviet states.”¹⁴ This meant massive reductions following which a large group of relatively young, dynamic and well-trained (often with combat experience) military professionals appeared on the labour market.¹⁵ Thus, they naturally became the cadre of private military companies and therefore it can be assumed that the end of the Cold War contributed to the development of the market for private military services.

“Private military companies are legal business entities whose activities cover the international area. They employ personnel to carry out tasks, the details of which are defined by civil-legal contracts with the client. At the same time, the client can be either an individual, an organisation or even the government of any country. One proposed definition to describe private military corporations is as follows: legally constituted entities that profit from the provision of services of a military nature, in an organised manner, including training, logistical support, equipment production and intelligence gathering. These companies are most often covered by contractual secrecy under threat of cancellation and consequent loss of remuneration. Employees of military corporations are obliged to fulfil the tasks set before them by their employers, according to the rules established in accordance with the company’s internal policies.”¹⁶

Another important argument is the processes associated with increasing globalisation, which include the free movement of people, services, capital, information and knowledge. These provide the natural conditions for concealing the relationships that exist between private military and private security companies and other actors. The demand for such services is also closely related to the growing national and transnational concerns that are increasingly relocating their activities to other geographical areas, sometimes with unstable internal situations.

It should be noted that in many countries the developing market for private military services has been favourably received, which has made it possible, among other things, to solve problems related to the management of soldiers discharged from service.¹⁷ This complex process has, however, been accompanied by negative phenomena related to the supplying of organised transnational criminal groups and terrorist organisations by dismissed soldiers. It is also important to bear in mind the transfer of scientists (nuclear physics) from the former Soviet Union to countries launching their own national nuclear programmes.

¹⁴ Uessler, R., *War as a Service. How private military companies destroy democracy*, Warsaw 2008, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Błonko, K., *Contractors vis-à-vis Temida*, ‘Komandos’ 2009, no. 12, pp. 59–60.

¹⁷ Żebrowski, A., *Wywiad i kontrwywiad...*, op. cit., p. 289.

There are many complex reasons for the popularity, growth and involvement of private companies offering services in the military sphere, such as:

- 1) the breakdown of the bipolar division of the world and the end of the Cold War;
- 2) the employers for private military companies are multinationals, which are most often involved in the extraction of natural resources. Such activities are often carried out in politically unstable regions, which makes the costs of running the infrastructure extremely high (including providing security for European and US personnel). In addition, in some cases, agreements made by governments with multinational corporations are not accepted by local communities, often leading to conflicts including the use of violence (force). Therefore, services to both unstable governments and the aforementioned economic actors are becoming a motivation for the development of private military services;
- 3) the execution of government contracts abroad. It should be noted that government contracts executed abroad as a form of military assistance to other countries are more politically secure, meaning that any failure does not trigger repercussions. This is also supported by the fact that the employer is a private civilian company and not the government. Additionally, in the event of the death or kidnapping of an employee, the fact is less likely to shock the public. It should be emphasised that private military services are closely linked to politics and the economy (natural resources) and companies operating in this sphere are an excellent tool in the hands of state authorities;
- 4) carrying out government contracts for the benefit of its own armed forces. Private companies for the benefit of the armed forces offer a wide range of services, which include the following: protection of military facilities, implementation of logistical security activities, training of armed forces and security in other countries, protection of VIPs, security of infrastructure related to oil and gas extraction, protection of transport (e.g. money).¹⁸

Terrorist attacks, the growth of organised cross-border crime and, above all, armed conflicts (Afghanistan, Africa, South America, the Middle East, Chechnya, Iraq, Oceania, Syria and Ukraine) are increasing the involvement of private military companies in security tasks.

The security and defence services offered by private companies are very broad. They include, among others: advising high-level commanders, training in the application of new strategies and tactics for action on the modern battlefield, hand-to-hand combat techniques, learning to operate missile launchers for various purposes with the use of simulators and demonstrating modern military techniques. Diverse services also include the latest types of weapons and military equipment (usually of American production), which is very often related to orders placed with the American arms industry. In addition, training includes: psychological preparation of personnel for military operations, specialised training for special forces, training of state security forces and security personnel. The activities of private military companies also include

¹⁸ Żebrowski, A., *Wýwiad i kontrwýwiad...*, op. cit., p. 289.

security education provided by private universities, where security professionals are trained in military and non-military spheres to become security officers or risk managers. Practical training takes place on the territory of, among others: France, Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom. Such services also include the protection of facilities of international organisations, embassies (consulates), diplomatic and consular staff, business representatives, economic facilities, natural resource exploitation sites, protection of transmission infrastructure and hydrocarbon extraction sites and military hostage-taking operations etc.

The unfolding negative phenomena in the global security environment require increasing investment in protection which, for private military companies, means expanding the range of services provided. Such an example is the range of services offered which includes security and armed protection in all crisis situations on land, sea and in the air.¹⁹ The services offered include maritime security tasks that include: combat operations, apprehending smugglers, protecting vessels with armed underwater search teams and security training for the entire crew. The service is the prevention of unlawful seizure of a waterborne vessel (mainly commercial and container vessels).²⁰ Protection against hijacking and the release of hostages, fighting organised crime, money laundering and human trafficking are also among the services they offer.²¹ Another offering is the so-called Intelligence sector, related to intelligence and espionage activities. Developments in ICT and communication techniques mean that there is a demand for services concerning interception and eavesdropping on electromagnetic signals as well as on Internet communication and e-mail.²² The sector also deals with image-based reconnaissance, which enables the production of reconnaissance data on the basis of imaging from photographs, radio locators, infrared and thermal electro-optical instruments and other devices.²³ Particularly noteworthy is the conduct of personal penetration of the information space with the participation of agents. In addition, intelligence activities include: client protection, guarding, analysing the possible risk of an attack and planning action strategies.

An example of a company that set the course for private military services in the future (globally) was the company Executive Outcomes (EO), which was founded in 1990 in South Africa. The facts speak for themselves:

- firstly, it was one of the first private military companies in general;
- secondly, EO was something new in that it was constructed around the company's empire;
- thirdly, EO was admittedly a small, but complete, autonomous private army.

The scope of its services was comprehensive and included: advice, training, coaching, direct participation of combat units in combat, provision of armaments, logistics,

¹⁹ Uessler, R., *War as a Service...*, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 47.

²³ Nowacki, G., *US and Russian Federation satellite recognition*, AON Publishing House, Warsaw 2002, p. 54.

technical supervision, intelligence and counter-intelligence security, as well as physical protection. Its autonomy also stemmed from having its own weapons, its own reconnaissance system (including intelligence services), supply bases and transport system. Within the structure of Executive Outcomes, there were the following organisational (executive) units: oil and gas production, geophysical, hydrogeological and water drilling expertise, investment and consulting for industrial plants, air transport, airlines, exports, imports, customs, engineering, infrastructure, logistics, NGO support services, advertising agency, advertising companies and tourism.²⁴

Another example is the US private military company “Kellog, Brown & Root, offering logistics, procurement and technical supervision services during peacekeeping operations carried out by US troops since June 1999. American soldiers were provided with: more than one billion hot meals and more than 200 billion litres of water, one billion litres of gasoline and disposed of more than 90,000 cubic metres of rubbish. The services provided also included construction, transportation, engineering, technical supervision of buildings and their equipment, road construction, provision of electricity, water and gasoline, foodstuffs, cleaning of clothes and delivery of correspondence. It turns out that without the services of this company, US soldiers could neither eat nor sleep, and could not carry out their tasks due to the lack of fuel, weapons and ammunition supplies.”²⁵

“The main driving force behind the process of privatising security and outsourcing military services in the US was the defence budget cuts that followed the end of the so-called Cold War. The military came to the conclusion that the army would save money when certain tasks not directly related to the conduct of military operations – such as procurement, transportation, protection of property and persons or logistics in the broadest sense – were transferred to private entities. [...] The most memorable were the mercenaries involved in the protection of VIPs and important facilities. Private soldiers, for example, often had nothing to do with Iraqi law and ordinary Iraqis. They covered themselves in grim glory in their willingness to pull the trigger. Four security guards from the notorious Blackwater company were sentenced to years in prison for orchestrating a bloody fight in the streets of Baghdad.”²⁶ It is worth bearing in mind that the Pentagon is the largest employer for the private military companies it uses. “It appears that no operation of the US armed forces can now take place without the support of civilian personnel. As the situation in regions of interest to the US administration escalates, their numbers will increase. And who says war is not conducive to doing business?”²⁷

The next country that uses private military companies in the implementation of its foreign policy is Russia. “They are involved in conflicts in the former Soviet Union, as well as where it has important political and economic interests – mainly in the Middle

²⁴ Uessler, R., *War as a service...*, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 99–100.

²⁶ Bednarzak, T., *Private military companies are getting rich from the war against ISIS*, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/prywatne-firmy-wojskowe-bogaca-sie-nawar-with-isis6025270123840129a>, [accessed: 29.05.2020].

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

East and North Africa. Between several hundred and up to three thousand Russian employees of private military companies are present in each of these places. They are also employed by Russian state corporations such as: Gazprom, Rosatom, Rosneft, Russian Railways – to protect resource extraction sites and networks, construction sites or to convoy transports in African, South American and Middle Eastern countries. In addition, countries such as Syria and Libya, when asked to protect hydrocarbon extraction sites and transmission infrastructure, offer a significant (25–30%) share of the contracts concluded for the sale of energy raw materials, giving private military companies significant revenues.”²⁸

It is worth bearing in mind that the asymmetric international security environment will continue to evolve towards widening differences in civilizational development. Existing and emerging threats primarily relate to deliberate human activity aimed at destroying adversaries. These adversaries are not only societies, but also their natural environments, which is being degraded (very often irreversibly) through progressive erosion. These conditions include many states which, in pursuit of their particular interests, are involved in a race to access modern technologies used to control and consequently, take control of the international security environment. Accordingly, they will conduct offensive information operations by, among other things, engaging private military companies. They will continue to use information operations to influence the situation in other states. They will continue to support arms supply, training and operations in the personal and technical information space. Private military companies are an important tool of international influence; through them states are able to exert political and military influence in regions of interest (conflicts, political and military instability), without officially committing their own armed forces. Given the scale and scope of operations (including information operations) by private military companies, further conflicts between them and the armed forces and private forms of other states with interests in the region should not be ruled out.

“Private military companies (PFWs) operate in most (around 110) countries in the world. Of the 30 most important, the largest number were established and are based in the USA and the UK. Their activity is mainly visible in places of armed conflict or where the political and social situation is unstable. Their activities are generally coordinated with the foreign policy objectives of the country of origin. The most important tasks include: securing the activities of regular armed forces (logistical security, convoy protection), training, protection of facilities and people. They work for both state and private entities. They are also used by UN agencies – UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), Development Programme, International Red Cross, among others.”²⁹

It is worth bearing in mind that members of private military companies are active participants in the ongoing global information conflict. This is supported by the penetration of the personal and technical information space in the course of intelligence and counter-intelligence operations. Information operations are

²⁸ Dyner, A.M., *The importance of private military companies in Russia's foreign policy*, PISM, 4 May 2018, https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/Znaczenie_prywatnych_firm_wojskowych_w_polityce_zagranicznej_Rosji, [accessed: 29.05.2020].

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

most often clandestine in nature because they very often secure the activities of the regular components of the armed forces of countries involved in armed conflicts, or provide logistical security for military-civilian participants in peace support operations.

Observation of this global services market allows one to hypothesise that private military companies have been able to grow to the point where they have, in a sense, displaced state security structures³⁰ from the space of many states. This situation in the private security market will further intensify as states have generally lost their monopoly on the internal and external security of the state.

An important aspect of current geopolitics is the dynamic changes in the global security environment. States that have freed themselves from the pressures exerted by the leaders of political-military blocs have become the target of rabid and pervasive propaganda. The transformations that followed brought them under the influence of globalisation processes. The mass movement of peoples causes cultures and religions to mix, which is the source of numerous problems. The cultural and religious specificities mean that the internal security of many countries is under threat. Cultures are changing, the standards of which were once clearly defined. In the culture of the 21st century, ideas, images and symbols are constantly evolving, from which only a few elements can be grasped. This conditioning means access to more and more information.

We are seeing an increasing role for national and religious factors, which have a very strong emotional impact. Fuelled and properly directed, they take the form of nationalism and xenophobia, which is evident in many countries. There is a source of danger where the use of accumulated military potentials can give rise to rash decisions.

Global propagandists are aware of this, which is used in the organisation and conduct of psychological warfare. It is accepted that the basis for the effectiveness of information conflicts is the use of force over a long distance in the shortest possible time. Such possibilities are provided by modern ICT, communication technology and the Internet. These tools allow synchronisation and coordination of actions taken in the political, social, economic and military spheres, where the terrain of confrontation is cyberspace. This allows interference in the internal affairs of other states, depriving the opponent of the will to fight. Skilfully conducted propaganda, taking into account the cultural and religious factor, can lead to the decomposition of the existing order in the sphere of security in states, regions and sub-regions. The rapid development of information technology is fundamentally changing people and their environment. It increases the flow of information, which allows offensive parties greater opportunities to influence the consciousness of the object of attack. In this process, the adversary takes into account, among other things:

- 1) human-information-technology relationships that are changing people's behaviour, habits and also their way of thinking,
- 2) human-society relations, where there are undoubtedly generational differences, which affect the perception of the security environment (individual, social group, nation and state).

³⁰ Scahill, J., *Blackwater*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2007, pp. 88–93.

A condition for the occurrence of change is the developing information and communication systems, which increases the possibilities for information aggression. Therefore, in a world dominated by information warfare, it is necessary to try to understand the internal and external environment (near and far) of the state, the processes taking place there, but also oneself. Furthermore, it is also necessary to understand the information activity (including intellectual activity) of the adversary and the relationships occurring in order to be able to more easily decipher the challenges (opportunities and threats) to the security of the individual, social group, nation and state.

The great unknown for the level of international security is the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States. Four key questions arise: will he continue the aggressive foreign policy of his predecessor? Will he change the existing US National Security Strategy and War Doctrine? Will the policy be rational from the point of view of the global information space? These and many other questions concerning this area are likely to dominate the international political scene supported by information operations. The pandemic and the new US president, are key issues for the international security environment, and this space will evolve in fundamental ways. An evolving international security environment includes intensified negative co-option by key players in international relations and global information warfare.

We are witnessing how the dominant position of the United States on a global scale is being threatened by other states (e.g. China, Russia, Turkey and Iran) that seek to participate in shaping international security. "The foreign policy of the US administration (under President Trump) has fundamentally changed the balance of power at the time. The emergence of new players – strong above all militarily (holders of nuclear weapons) – threatened US hegemony. This qualitatively different situation was reflected in US military policy, which was reflected in the country's new national security documents and war doctrine."³¹

However, the ongoing changes in the global information space following the US presidential election, and the decisions made by President Biden, indicate that it is the continued policies of former President Trump which pose a threat to not only regional, but to global security. Continued policies take the form of concrete decisions and actions, such as:

- 1) The redeployment of four B-1 aircraft to Orland airbase in Norway. This is a very important airbase where military aircraft, search and rescue helicopters and E-3A SENTRY AWACS aircraft are based. This base can accommodate 95,000 personnel at a time. B-1 US strategic bombers with variable wing geometry can carry a wide range of conventional and nuclear bombs and missile weapons in three internal bomb bays and on six external hard points. It is expected they will carry nuclear weapons in the form of B28, B61 and B83 bombs and missiles.

³¹ Żebrowski, A., *Security and defence of the United States under President Trump*, [in:] M. Winiarczyk-Kossakowska, S. Saletra-Półgrabi, P. Skorut (eds.), *NATO w dwadzieścia lat po akcesji*, Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JA, Warszawa 2020, p. 281.

- 2) February 2021 saw the largest exercise since July 2020 in the South China Sea, with the US deploying two strike groups: the aircraft carriers USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Nimitz. Relations between China and the US have been strained for several years. Under President Trump the US started a trade war with China and now the US is accusing Beijing of human rights violations by persecuting Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang. There are intersecting interests in the South China Sea: China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, the Sultanate of Brunei and the US.
- 3) US President Joe Biden has stated that the United States will not lift sanctions against Iran until the country's authorities halt uranium enrichment. This is a condition for the United States to rejoin the 2015 Vienna Accords, signed by Tehran and the superpowers (the US, China, Russia, France and the UK), which aimed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb and for the country's nuclear programme to remain civilian and peaceful. Iran's nuclear activities were intensified in response to US sanctions.
- 4) Very dangerous is the statement by US President Biden, who announced that he is going to confront Russian President Putin. Such a stance, combined with the existing documents adopted by his predecessor (National Security Strategy and War Doctrine) and the redelivery of B-1 aircraft to Norway, should be seen as the beginning of a confrontation, which may result in the intensification of the already ongoing arms race, the formation of new political-military alliances (e.g. Russia-China, Russia-India and Russia-Turkey), the intensification of the activities of NATO member states on the eastern flank, an increase of the US military presence in Europe, the admission of new members to the Alliance (e.g. Ukraine and Georgia), an increase of economic sanctions against Russia – which may take the form of economic warfare, an increase in the number of military operations against Russia, intensified pressure by the United States on NATO and European Union member states to renounce economic cooperation with an emphasis on natural gas supplies from Russia, expansion of NATO infrastructure in countries bordering Russia and Belarus, increased intelligence penetration and intensified psychological action supported by information operations by both Russia and the United States etc. President Biden's position has and will continue to have a significant impact on the level of regional, sub-regional and global security.
- 5) April 2021 is when the political activity of the United States in Central and Eastern Europe, where an open information war with Russia in the political sphere due to the accumulation of significant forces and resources near the border with Ukraine by the Russian side, led to a so-called war of nerves. The US side most likely did not withstand the pressure of Russia's information and military activity (exercises of the Western and Southern Military Districts, after which the troops returned to their permanent location sites), which, among other things, was treated by the countries bordering Ukraine as a threat of an imminent outbreak of an armed conflict. This demonstration of military force

can be seen as probing the behaviour of the actors in international relations with particular reference to the USA. The announcement and subsequent withdrawal of President Biden's decision to engage in the Black Sea basin by sending two warships may indicate an avoidance of an escalation of tensions between Washington and Moscow. Noteworthy is the US President's offer to meet with President Putin in a third country to discuss the full range of issues facing the US and Russia. However, the decisions and actions were accompanied by nervousness, resulting in an intensified information battle in the political sphere (supported by the intelligence services of the parties involved). "The White House communicated on 15 April 2021 that President Joe Biden had signed an executive order imposing additional sanctions on Russia over its interference in the 2020 US election and hacking attacks. In addition to expelling 10 diplomats, under the new sanctions the US banned US financial institutions from trading in Russian bonds and named six companies as partners of Russian services in hacking attacks. In addition, personal sanctions were introduced against 32 individuals implicated in attempts to interfere in the 2020 US election."³² "The head of Russian diplomacy announced that Russia had expelled 10 US diplomats. This is to respond to the expulsion from the US of 10 Russian diplomats suspected of espionage. Lavrov added that the Russian authorities will prohibit the employment of Russian citizens and third-country nationals in US diplomatic representations. In addition, Russia will break with the practice of not limiting the entry of US State Department and other US ministry employees for short business visits to US diplomatic representations in Russia. Lavrov announced that Russia will propose annual parity, such as the introduction of a rule that one Russian employee may enter the US and 10 US employees may enter Russia."³³ In addition, "Lavrov announced that Russia would ban US NGO foundations that interfere in Russian domestic politics. He warned that Russia could take painful measures against American businessmen."³⁴ In a later announcement they said they were imposing sanctions on eight current and former US government officials. The politicians included US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Department of Homeland Security chief Alejandro Mayorkas, former White House National Security Advisor John Bolton and former CIA chief James Woolsey.³⁵ It is important to emphasise that in this confrontation in the political sphere, supported by information operations, the United States is using dependent countries that are members of NATO. Countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are taking unfriendly steps towards Russia, in consultation with representatives of the US Department,

³² Lavrov: *we will expel 10 US diplomats, ambassador should return to US for consultations*, <https://tvn24.plswiat/rosja-zapowiada-wydalenie-amerykanskich-dyplomatow-siergie-lawrow-sugeruje-ze-ambasador-usa-powinien-wyjechac>, [accessed: 24.04.2021].

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

leading to the expulsion of Russian diplomats. Following this, the Russian side expelled diplomats of the countries indicated. The Czech side accused Russian diplomats of being GRU members who were complicit in the blowing up of explosive magazines in 2014. The revelation of the incident comes after seven years, where a Bulgarian trail leading to an arms trafficker (Gebrev) and his links to Ukraine are indicated. The Bulgarian side reported that the said arms dealer was buying explosives from a Czech warehouse on the day the explosion took place. At the same time, there was also an explosion of explosives in a warehouse located on Bulgarian territory, which is also suspected to have been carried out by officers of the Russian military intelligence service GRU. Bulgaria, being in conflict with Russia, expelled Russian diplomats in 2019 on charges of espionage.

- 6) In the ongoing US-Russian political conflict, in addition to the countries already mentioned, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have also expelled Russian diplomats, thus showing their support for the US side. This is very dangerous, all the more so as the countries involved, despite being members of NATO, have small economic and defence potential. Moreover, such an attitude shows absolute subordination to the US.
- 7) These events involve not only the official bodies of the above-mentioned states, i.e. foreign ministries, supported by intelligence services, which may mean that these events are the result of intelligence games played by the main beneficiaries (the United States and Russia). Observation of the processes taking place, i.e. the US-Russia relationship, as well as the use of dependent states, gives global international relations a qualitatively new dimension. The ongoing information war and the political decisions taken by its participants in its aftermath have an impact on the level of security not only in Europe but also globally. It can be assumed that its consequences will be felt primarily by states that are tools of the United States. These events are accompanied by a statement made by a representative of the US embassy in Warsaw (April 2021), who stated that the US will not allow the completion of Nord Stream-2. This means that tension between the US and Russia will persist and decisions taken against Russia may lead to its escalation. If the US side, exploiting its position in the global security environment and supported by its military potential, and involving dependent states in encircling Russia, a multifaceted response from the Russian side is to be expected. It can be assumed that the strategic objective is to take control of energy resources located in the Russian Federation's sphere of responsibility.

* * *

The state of international security is also affected by events elsewhere in the world, such as the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, where the United States is not only politically involved but supports the Ukrainian side with weapons. The course of this conflict is also important for the security of the Black Sea basin countries (Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Romania and Turkey), the Sea of Azov (Russia

and Ukraine) – a disputed area between the countries indicated and the Caspian Sea (Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan). The Black Sea is important for the global economy due to the large oil deposits underneath its sea bed and which is the cause of disputes over the division of waters between littoral states.

The Ukraine-Russia conflict has fundamentally changed the situation in the Black Sea basin, where the European Union, NATO and also the United States have interests. It is worth pointing to the EU, which has strategic economic goals and treats the region as an attractive market. The Black Sea region is also important for Europe's energy security as it is located on the transit route for oil and gas from the Caspian Sea area and the whole of Central Asia.³⁶ It should also be borne in mind that the Black Sea is a transport link from Asia to Europe, which is considered a route of movement for international terrorist organisations, transnational criminal groups involved in illegal migration, drug smuggling, arms trafficking and money laundering etc., which is important for the security of the European Union and NATO member states. It is also a region of political instability with ethnic, cultural and religious issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, in Georgia Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Moldova Transnistria and Russia Chechnya. Russia's cooperation with Turkey is also important, including at the military level. For example, Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 system is the subject of a Turkish-American conflict resulting in Turkey's exclusion from the F-35 combat aircraft programme. It should be noted that Turkey, being a member of NATO, has the strongest army in the structures of this organisation. It turns out that the problem is more complex, because in the Black Sea basin both the states of the region and states and international organisations from outside the region have interests:

- 1) Western states, the United States, NATO and the European Union, which provide political, social and military assistance to countries in the region. The US and the EU want to take control of the region;
- 2) Russia and Turkey, the strongest states in the region, which seek to maintain their economic, military and political position in the region;
- 3) Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania and the Caucasus countries.

In the foreign policy process, Turkey maintains contacts with the Muslim states of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), which may have an impact on the shaping of security policy in the Middle East and Central Asia; it also maintains contacts with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and thus with China and Russia. From the point of view of economic interests, the Bulgarian branch of the Turkish Stream pipeline, which runs from the Turkish to the Serbian border, should be kept in mind. It is intended to ensure the flow of Russian natural gas from Turkey, to which it is supplied via a pipeline under the Black Sea, to Serbia and via there on to Hungary, Austria and Slovakia.

³⁶ Kobieracka, A., *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as one of the forms of multifaceted cooperation between Russia and the People's Republic of China*, "Polskie Studium Politologiczne", 2017, no. 54, pp. 371–373.

The security and stability of the Black Sea region depends on the position of Russia and Turkey, countries that will seek to pursue economic and military policies in line with their own interests. The interests of the United States, the European Union, NATO, as well as the Muslim states of the region and members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation should also be kept in mind.

It turns out the Black Sea's problems are primarily related to its oil resources. For example, Ukraine has been in talks with the world's largest energy companies, Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell, about drilling south-west of Crimea. These two companies are also interested in exploiting the Skifska field, which stretches from the western coast of the Crimean peninsula to the coast of Romania. Today, exploitation is in question.

The emerging balance of power and international developments indicate that the collective efforts of UN member states, as well as non-state actors, do not always contribute to avoiding conflicts in the military and non-military spheres. It is worth bearing in mind that the development of international relations continues to take place in a pattern of political, ideological, cultural, economic, scientific and technical rivalry, although the military factor is increasingly decisive. The shift of NATO troops towards the east and the development of the organisation's military infrastructure are forcing Russia to make certain counter-movements of a military nature (strengthening the Western Military District and the Kaliningrad enclave with new means of precision destruction). The ongoing armed conflicts, the ongoing arms race, the military presence in various geographical regions (military bases), are constant tensions which, if they escalate, could lead to a conflict of much greater scope.

In the global security environment, talks, consultations (bilateral and multilateral), the influence of the UN, as well as informal actors (politicians, businessmen, scientists, social organisations), as well as mass demonstrations related to the violation of democracy, the rule of law, mass migrations and the ongoing information war, with varying results, do not inspire optimism. There are still states which, from the position of their potential: economic, scientific and technical, information technology, and above all military potential (possessors of WMD), shape the level of regional and also global security by conducting large-scale information operations. In addition to the problems signalled, in all fields of human activity, the military activities of states that are not only members of specialised political-military and financial-economic organisations, but also states that have a nuclear triad and/or are developing their own nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, should be recognised and rationally assessed. The armed forces of many participants in international relations show a constant trend of increasing war potential, especially in terms of qualitative improvement of the means of physical destruction. These activities are accompanied by the evolution of strategic and operational assumptions, as well as increased financial and economic efforts, which directly translates into the modernisation of the armed arsenals of individual states. This process is accompanied by the activities of organised cross-border crime, oriented towards the trafficking of weapons,

components for the production of WMD, radioactive materials and their means of delivery, dual-use technology and other materials for use on the battlefield etc.

In the global space of international security there are still many causes, phenomena and conditions which, due to their diversity and complexity, not only have not resolved the contradictions to date, but continue to be a source of increasing antagonism between highly developed states, states aspiring to superpower status (including regional ones), as well as states seeking to preserve and consolidate their dominant influence.

Existing political, cultural, social, economic and military relations between countries, as well as differing access to natural energy resources and safe drinking water supplies, have a key impact on the existing (not entirely sustainable) global security system. The existing disparities in the level of development must also be borne in mind, and they will widen with the processes taking place. They will be the source of many conflicts of varying backgrounds, scale and destructive force.

Such an alignment of political, economic and military forces on a global scale, with the ambiguous cocksure attitude of many states and the ongoing information war, means that we live with a permanent threat shaping our daily lives.

Every action requires access to certain information, which means that global security is closely linked to the personal and technical information space, where conducted communications are of interest to many state and non-state actors, and organisations that violate international and national law. Their penetration allows building scenarios as to the next steps in strengthening the security environment of the state, region and sub-region. The development of international relations, supported by information operations, continues to take place in a system of negative cooperation in the ideological, political, social, cultural, economic and scientific-technical spheres. Increasingly, however, the military factor is decisive. These processes are accompanied by the evolution of existing strategic assumptions, operational assumptions, budgets, as well as the constant modernisation of armed arsenals.

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Summary

The article identifies the problem of defining security. In addition, the changes that have occurred in international security at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries are characterised. The final part of the article describes the current situation that affects international security.