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## THE ASYMMETRIC THREATS IN GLOBAL SECURITY AND THE MILITARY-POLITICAL ASPECTS OF BIOSECURITY

### **Abstract:**

*It is noteworthy, that in the modern international security environment, states have many threats, risks and challenges. States have to fight and deal with them, which requires great and significant efforts. It is also important to develop and implement the right strategies for risks and threats. The issue of biosecurity has become quite topical in the context of the worldwide Covid pandemic. The states try to help each other in fighting the pandemic. Because all of this has taken on a global face, which has somewhat increased the interdependence between them. The paper discusses the asymmetric threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that pose a significant challenge to global security. Also, significant attention is paid to the military-political aspects of biosafety and biosecurity issues. The threats posed by weapons of mass destruction in the context of biosecurity are discussed. The foundation of sustainable international security in the 21st century is to develop and enhance the form of international cooperation, as well as to jointly fight the new threats and challenges of modernity. The states, international and regional organizations have an important role to play in protecting global security because without them it is impossible to fight modern threats.*

### **Keywords:**

*Biosecurity, Covid-19 pandemic, asymmetric threats, global security, weapons of mass destruction, bioterrorism.*

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## Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, states face many threats and challenges. All of this has a significant impact on their security and the stability of the international security system. Also, it is quite important to highlight several factors that affect the security of the international system. These are: instability in various regions, armed conflicts and wars. These, as well as socio-economic and environmental factors, can affect security and stability. Lack of openness and transparency in military-political matters leads to serious negative consequences. It also causes a variety of conflicts. It must be said that existing agreements and international legal instruments on arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation, trust and security restoration, if not addressed in a timely manner, could have a significant impact on world security.

When discussing issues such as armed conflict and war, it is important to clarify the meaning of both terms. There is no treaty definition of 'armed conflict', including within the text of the Geneva Conventions 1949 or Additional Protocols 1977. Therefore, international case law, State practice and academic scholarship have been especially important in determining the legal meaning and parameters of this concept. Two categories of armed conflict are identified under the existing treaty regime: international armed conflicts (IAC) occurring between two or more States, and (b) non-international armed conflicts (NIAC) which occur between State and non-governmental armed groups, or only between armed groups<sup>1</sup>. War, in the popular sense, is a conflict between political groups involving hostilities of considerable duration and magnitude. In the usage of social science, certain qualifications are added. Military writers usually confine the term to hostilities in which the contending groups are sufficiently equal in power to render the outcome uncertain for a time. Armed conflicts of powerful states with isolated and powerless peoples are usually called pacifications, military expeditions, or explorations; with small states, they are called interventions or reprisals; and with internal groups, rebellions or insurrections. Such incidents, if the resistance is sufficiently strong or protracted, may achieve a magnitude that entitles them to the name 'war'<sup>2</sup>.

In the modern period, the most widespread category of threats to the member states of the international system, as well as to the people, remain the threats posed by interstate and intra-state conflicts. Such conflicts also pose a

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<sup>1</sup> *Categorization of an armed conflict*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, July 2018, p. 1, <<https://www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/terrorism/module-6/key-issues/categorization-of-armed-conflict.html>> (30.11.2021).

<sup>2</sup> J. Frankel, *War*, "Britannica", March 2021, p. 1, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/war>> (30.11.2021).

threat to neighbouring territories. That is, it can lead to instability and other threats, such as asymmetric threats and, above all, terrorism, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Also, human rights violations, mass deportations, deteriorating socio-economic conditions and illegal migration are quite common in the world. Illegal migration is accompanied by the threat of terrorism. It is quite difficult to control those people and identify who is crossing the border of that state illegally.

It is necessary to separate the role of weapons of mass destruction in global security from the above-mentioned threats and risks. The most important threat is the issue of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear safety, which can cause the greatest harm to humanity, living populations and the world as a whole. Indeed, the discovery of these weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists will lead to the greatest threats and human losses. It must be said that terrorists are focused on seizing certain components of these weapons in order to be able to carry out large-scale terrorist acts. However, counterterrorism cooperation is essential to prevent these threats and risks. Also, international or regional organizations such as NATO, UN, OSCE, EU, etc. involvement. In this paper, we provide an overview of asymmetric threats and the current military-political landscape of biosecurity threats, since the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic revealed vulnerabilities on a global scale to biosecurity threats, including biological and chemical attacks.

### **Impact of asymmetric threats on global security**

With the development of the new millennium, we see a sphere of security that has changed radically since the end of the Cold War and the end of the world bipolar system. It is noteworthy that in the modern multipolar world the world has faced new threats and risks. Old threats or risks have really changed and taken shape. All this made them more aggressive and made it quite difficult to fight them. It must be said that globalization is getting deeper and deeper, which has both positive and quite negative factors. These threats are mainly in the form of asymmetric threats or risks in the new international security environment. So it's quite important to re-evaluate the actual security architecture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which requires serious effort. At the same time, it is clear that if we want to stabilize the security environment, we must look beyond our traditional military philosophy. Because with the advent of new technologies, approaches and methods of combat and war production are rapidly changing. Among today's most significant global security risks and challenges (except organised crime, weapons of mass destruction, or proliferation and arms control) are problems mainly related to terrorism,

nationalism and pluralism, environment, scarcity of resources, and demography and migration<sup>1</sup>.

In the modern period, the world is witnessing elements of the production of the seventh generation warfare, which are manifested in various conflicts. Examples of seventh-generation warfare include hindering the enemy's commercial and military communications systems, power grid and water utilities, using advanced electronic warfare (EW) systems, cyber weapons and localised EMP (electromagnetic pulse) weapons<sup>2</sup>. All of this poses really great threats to states and international or regional organizations. Therefore, the above structures should make more efforts to combat asymmetric threats. Therefore, if they are serious about dealing with new global security risks and challenges, then it would certainly be very difficult without a unified strategy. That is why they must unite and fight the threats posed by globalization.

Since the time of Clausewitz, it has been generally accepted that war is the continuation of politics by other, violent means. It is no longer possible to fully use this understanding of the war in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Obviously, not all contradictions in the world can be resolved by political means, and the use of armed violence in various forms continues into the new century. Accordingly, terrorists and non-state aggressive groups have resorted to asymmetric warfare to achieve their own goals. The main strategic goal of asymmetric warfare is psychological and not just military. All of this is a psychological threat to the enemy to carry out the political agenda by directly or indirectly instilling fear, panic and terror. In his typology of asymmetry, Kenneth McKenzie has identified six main types of potential asymmetric threats: nuclear, chemical, biological, information operations, operational concepts and terrorism<sup>3</sup>. Asymmetrical combatants mainly use invisible terrorist and irregular guerrilla warfare tactics. All of this is aimed at preventing direct military clashes with the superior forces of the adversaries. The essential strategic goal of Asymmetrical combatants is to win the hearts and minds of potential allies and supporters by gaining financial and logistical support. Through all of this, they are looking for ways to provide shelter and ways to fill their ranks with new fighters. It should be noted that no asymmetric organization or group can survive long if it does not have external support. This is where the key to fighting asymmetric threats comes into play. It is necessary to identify the states, organizations and certain groups or individuals that support terrorists

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<sup>1</sup> R. Ivančík, V. Jurčák, P. Nečas, *On some contemporary global security risks and challenges*, "Security and Defence Quarterly" 3/2014, vol. 4, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> M. O. Iftikhar, *The Stages Of War*, "The Nation", July 27, 2021 p. 1, <<https://nation.com.pk/2021/07/27/the-stages-of-war/>> (30.11.2021).

<sup>3</sup> K. F. McKenzie Jr., *The Revenge of the Melians: Asymmetric Threats and the Next QDR*, Honolulu 2005; A. Lele, *Asymmetric Warfare: A State vs Non-State Conflict*, "OASIS", 20/2014, p. 99.

financially, assist with various technologies or means, provide shelter, assist in training, exercises, intelligence gathering and many other issues. It is the identification of such states and groups that should be most important for peaceful states, and international and regional organizations. In the new security paradigm of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, concerns about the proliferation of sensitive technologies such as WMDs and missiles have assumed a new relevance because of the rise of non-state players and rogue states that may use such technology for asymmetric advantage<sup>1</sup>. Because asymmetric threats have a significant impact on global security. That is when terrorists can seize certain components of weapons of mass destruction that pose the greatest threat to humanity. It is also detrimental to international peace and security. Also, we must consider, that some states, considering themselves protected by the deterrent effects of WMD, may feel emboldened to clandestinely support terrorism across borders to settle regional conflicts<sup>2</sup>.

To better understand weapons of mass destruction we can summarize the acronym CBRNE, which means chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive. Weapons of mass destruction are weapons which can kill large numbers of people and cause catastrophic damage to cities, countries, nature and the biosphere, and are most commonly categorized as nuclear (to include 'dirty bombs'), biological and/ or chemical agents<sup>3</sup>. It is clear and noteworthy that even in the face of such threats, the support of terrorists cannot fully analyse the fact that they too may face quite large threats. Also, they clearly forget that there are no permanent allies in politics because achieving political goals is important and paramount for everyone. Asymmetrical combatants can also come out against states or groups that once supported them and therefore start fighting against them. Therefore, it should be noted that with international cooperation and joint efforts it is possible to combat asymmetric hazards with better results. It must be said that in the face of the threat of asymmetric warfare and the spread of WMD by terrorists, states ought to have a correct perception of real risks and threats. This is because the fight against global threats is ineffective.

### **Military-Political Aspects of Biosecurity and Existing Challenges**

The problem of biosecurity is a growing concern among the world's population, politicians and scientists. This is because biological threats are gradually increasing. Also, biosecurity covers a wide range of issues that are

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<sup>1</sup> A. Mallik, *Technology and Security in the 21st Century A Demand-side Perspective*, "SIPRI Research Report" No. 20, Oxford 2004, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> N. Brzica, *Understanding Contemporary Asymmetric Threats*, "Croatian International Relations Review CIRR", vol. XXIV (83) 2018, p. 38.

addressed in the modern context of national security in many states. As a necessary condition for the sustainable development of countries. Biosecurity is directly related to environmental safety and poses many risks or threats to humanity.

We can identify the classification of threats that pose a significant challenge to global security in the modern era, these are:

- Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation;
- Interstate conflict;
- Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other mass atrocities;
- Asymmetric threats (terrorism);
- Environmental protection and biological safety;
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons;
- Cyberspace and the threats posed by it;
- Climate change;
- Information security (hybrid warfare).
- Transnational organized crime.

It is important to address these threats to the environment and biological safety. Throughout the history of human existence, humans have encountered many unfavourable ecological conditions. The causes of their origin are both natural (natural disasters) and anthropogenic problems. We should not be surprised, then, that society is evolving with industrialization, urbanization, and the acceleration of scientific and technological progress. Quite common are water pollution, air pollution, biological space, etc. Pollution problems gradually turned into a serious environmental problem of environmental degradation. The concerns of environmental scientists, public figures and politicians were reflected in the 1972 Declaration of the UN Stockholm Conference. Where it was presented that reflected a growing interest in conservation issues worldwide and laid the foundation for global environmental governance. The final declaration of the Stockholm Conference was an environmental manifesto that was a forceful statement of the finite nature of Earth's resources and the necessity for humanity to safeguard them<sup>1</sup>. Despite the efforts of the international community, in recent decades, environmental problems have become more global in nature. Therefore, it occupies a prominent place in the agenda of international politics. It is noteworthy that military conflicts and wars significantly pollute the environment and create many threats that are becoming increasingly difficult to overcome.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Boudes, *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment [1972]*, "Britannica", July 2010, p. 1 <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Conference-on-the-Human-Environment>> (30.11.2021).

Environmental degradation directly affects the livelihoods of the planet's population, and therefore poses a serious threat. The main types of environmental degradation are global warming, ozone depletion, marine pollution, deforestation, desertification, soil depletion, overcrowding and massive food shortages, acid rain, the threat of nuclear catastrophe, global biodiversity decline, and hazardous waste. The 'gluttony' of the modern economy, international trade, technology and the fragility of ecosystems accelerate the process of environmental degradation, and increase the speed of the spread of threats.

The health challenges in the context of biohazards are becoming a safety priority due to the rapid spread of disease and viruses. Moreover, its impact on global health security is quite significant. Also, the biggest challenge is finding the causes of these diseases and preventing their spread. It is important to better understand biological hazards and biosecurity so that they do not confuse what we are actually talking about – biosecurity: the protection, control, and accountability for biological agents and toxins within facilities in order to prevent their loss, theft, misuse, diversion, unauthorized access, or intentional unauthorized release (adapted from WHO, 2006)<sup>1</sup>.

It is important to note that in addition to these terms, biosafety and biological safety have many different definitions. For example, biosecurity refers to protecting the environment and humans from the threats posed by genetically engineered organisms, and so on.

It is noteworthy that after the First World War, many agreements were signed to protect the security of biological space and the environment. Began quite active negotiations to protect the global security space from chemical, and biological threats (after the advent of nuclear weapons in 1945). Negotiations were more successful in Geneva in 1925, with the signing of the "The Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare". On a proposal by the Polish representative, it was the first international agreement that included biological weapons as a separate arms category<sup>2</sup>.

It is also important to focus on biological weapons in the context of biosafety. The use of biological weapons for offensive purposes is prohibited by the 1972 Convention. As of 2016, 178 countries had ratified and 6 had ratified. The main purpose of this convention is to prevent biological weapons attacks. This is because all of this can lead to the death of large numbers of

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<sup>1</sup> D. S. A. Beeckman, P. Rüdelsheim, *Biosafety and Biosecurity in Containment: A Regulatory Overview*, "Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology", 30 June 2020, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

people and, at the same time, damage to the economy and infrastructure<sup>1</sup>. Many countries, including those that have ratified the Convention, are conducting research into biological warfare, which is not prohibited under the Convention.

The development of means of transportation makes modern societies more vulnerable to various kinds of epidemics. In principle, the threat of cross-border epidemics is one of the oldest in human history. Suffice it to recall the Great Plague of 1348, which significantly reduced the population of medieval Europe, or the terrible flu epidemic (Spanish flu), which brought millions of Europeans to the grave in 1918. The colossal reduction in the 'pain threshold' of modern societies makes the governments of leading states take care of medical safety in the most remote parts of the world, stopping the spread of epidemics. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic claimed the lives of millions of people and the economies of many countries were faced with a crisis. At this time, even scientists are talking about the emergence of new viruses that will be much more deadly and rapidly spreading. All of this requires significant attention from national governments and international organizations, as threats are avoided in a timely manner and pandemic situations are easily managed. It should be noted that in the context of asymmetric threats, this is compounded by the threat posed by terrorists who may use certain pathogens and viruses against humanity. Also, they can spread various deadly viruses.

An insurmountable fact of modernity is the application of new approaches to new achievements in the fields of science and technology. In connection with the extensive use of information technologies in various spheres of life, the state develops important infrastructure and important infrastructure facilities. Dynamics of technical and informational progress enable the emergence of new forms and methods of stagnation, which are applied as a separate form of separation of powers and regions, as well as in the whole region. Cyber-attacks and cyberterrorism also pose the greatest threats to humanity. All of this can lead to the theft of important information, formulas, critical infrastructure security systems, and so on.

Most importantly, in the dimension of modern threats, in the context of biosecurity, protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks. In the case of terrorism, if biological agents are used, it is called bioterrorism. Terrorist organizations are actively monitoring biological laboratories and their staff. It is important to note that the protection of critical infrastructure, which can cause the death of millions of people, is a rather difficult process during hostilities. In addition to these disasters, nuclear war will cause large-scale disease and famine because it will long destroy the infrastructure necessary for

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<sup>1</sup> V. Maisaia, A. Guchua, *NATO and Non-State Aggressive Religious Actors (Islamic Caliphate, Al Qaeda and Taliban) - The Fourth Generation War Strategy and Its Geopolitical Aspects of Regional and National Security (2010-2019)*, Tbilisi 2020. p. 204.

social life<sup>1</sup>. It must be said that this is no longer about the conflict between the two states, but rather it is moving into the international dimension, which poses completely global security in the face of threats and challenges.

There is still no guarantee that numerous local wars and conflicts will not escalate into larger armed clashes, including with the use of nuclear weapons. As before, the world is full of various socio-political, economic, inter-ethnic, religious and other contradictions. The rivalry of world powers for energy, and above all oil and gas, resources is unfolding<sup>2</sup>. However, new threats to international security and the national security of states are playing an increasingly important role. The role of nuclear deterrence in relations between the great powers has again increased, despite the fact that the number of these powers has grown. It must be said that new threats have become increasingly due to the development of technological means and communications. All this has led to the creation and intensification of a network of terrorist and criminal organizations. History proves that many security threats will never turn into a large-scale problem if they are identified and addressed at an early stage. That is why states and international and regional organizations have a great role to play in safeguarding stability before humanity, and in ensuring global security, which is impossible without them. Therefore, it is necessary for them to act at an early stage to reduce the likelihood of serious development of risks and threats at the level of national, regional and global security. The problem of international safety is current for all peace, and the struggle with modern threats is possible only when a constructive dialogue between the parties is realized and the realization of all mechanisms is regional and collective.

## Conclusion

Emphasized in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, world wars and instability are still features of the modern international system. Also, recent years have shown very clearly that the nature of the threat to international security has changed significantly. The global security risks and challenges are related to resource scarcity, proliferation, nationalism, the environment or biosecurity, migration, and terrorism. All of this, along with other security challenges and risks, has created a whole new security environment. Also, the asymmetric threat is another form and challenge to global security with internationally aggressive non-state actors. The threats posed by them are: bioterrorism, cyberterrorism, nuclear terrorism, etc. At what time, the monopoly of nation-states on the use of force

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<sup>1</sup> P. D. Senarklen, I. Arifen, *International Politics: Modern Theories and Objectives*, Tbilisi 2014, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> E. E. Gvenetadze, *Aspects of International Security*, "Lawyer World", 2017, p. 124.

is falling apart? The state borders have lost great importance and private actors are becoming increasingly powerful in international security.

Importantly, the threats posed by biosecurity, affect not only one state but also other states, as well as the world economy, politics, and social security as a whole, because they all depend on each other. As a result, the nature of war has changed and the centre of gravity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has become uncertain and vague. Also, the logic of winning and losing has changed as the enemy becomes unknown, so it is quite difficult to predict his reactions. It is also vital to identify potential threats and risk scenarios where these threats can escalate from abstract and hypothetical threats into real and serious problems. That is why finding solutions and timely response to their prevention is very important.

All in all, containment of asymmetric threats is essential as the military-political aspects of biosecurity increase. Coordination and cooperation between states, international and regional organizations, and global actors should also be strengthened. In whose hands are the main vectors of power and influence?

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