

Original article

Theoretical aspects of modern security threats Definitions, typologies, evolution

Agnieszka Rogozińska 

Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, Poland,
e-mail: arogozinska@op.pl

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ABSTRACT

In the literature on the subject, the term “security” is accompanied by the terms “non-threatening state”, “non-threatening state of peace”, “state of peace”, “state of certainty”. The lexical meaning of the term (Latin sine cura – no worries) should be understood as a situation in which there are no threats. In the context of lexical meaning, the term security means a risk-free situation. Contemporary understanding of the term focuses its attention on learning security understood as the resultant of the theory and practice of providing a reference subject with the possibility of survival (existence) and the pursuit of own interests, particularly using opportunities, taking challenges, minimizing risk and counteracting all types of threats. Definitive approaches to the term security indicate that it should be understood as a state and process. The state of security should be understood as a sense of confidence of the subject and guarantee of its survival, while the process – as chance for improvement and development of state’s means to protect and defend it. The current catalog of security threats proposed by Barry Buzan was extended in the second half of the 20th century from military nature threats to threats of a political, economic, social, and environmental nature. These changes have redefined the modern understanding of security. The main research problem was formulated as the question: what are the theoretical aspects of contemporary security threats? The article aims to analyze and diagnose contemporary definitions of security and its threats. The research process uses methodological methods of scientific cognition, mainly analysis and criticism of literature.

KEYWORDS

security, security science, threats, theory, typology



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Introduction

Security belongs to the basic needs and values of individuals, communities, and nations (states). The lexical meaning of the term (Latin: sine cura – no worries) should be understood as a situation in which there are no threats. In the subject literature, the term ‘security’ is accompanied by the terms ‘non-threatening state’, ‘non-threatening state of peace’, ‘state of

peace', 'certainty' [1, p. 22]. However, the available definitions indicate a broader semantic context of security, which means both the duration and development of reference entities [2, p. 20]. In seeking the proper meaning of this term and defining its synthetic meaning, it is no less important to identify the subject and object of safety reference. As Ryszard Wróblewski rightly noted that without this procedure, safety, which does not belong to the ontological category, is an abstract concept filled with content [3, p. 13]. Therefore, security should be considered through the prism of the features of the object it covers. Taking into account the universal understanding of security, we can repeat after Waldemar Kitler that in terms of subject matter, it concerns: 1) a human being as an individual having a specific value system that, from their point of view, requires protection and defense – individual security (individuals); 2) groups of people (social groups), formalized (family) and informal (ethnic, nationality, religious and denominational groups), having everyday needs to be protected (customs, social norms, beliefs) – group security; 3) various organizations created by people operating on the economic market, in the sphere of politics, or other forms of social activity – organization security; 4) formalized and territorially recognizable structures, guided by specific legal norms, such as commune, powiat, voivodship, state, group of states [4, p. 33].

The essential entity securing the needs of both individuals and social groups in the field of security remains the state, seen from the external and internal aspects. There are several reasons for this two-factor relationship: 1) the state is primarily a conglomerate of cultural, material, and institutional content that determines the success of its development and its position in the international arena. At the same time, it is an institutionalized form of international relations; 2) a democratic state on the international forum presents such values in the field of security that the society that creates them recognizes and accepts, regardless of the differences between its individual groups; 3) the security of the state consists of values professed by the individuals inhabiting it, forming the society of a given country, and the resultant security of subjects of international relations; 4) society inhabiting a given country defines its security through the prism of challenges and threats resulting from several factors, i.e., social relations, civilization development, technological progress, and actions of natural forces [5, p. 14-15].

The problem addressed in this way allows us to formulate the main research problem: *What are the theoretical aspects of modern security threats*. The research problem consists of detailed problems formulated in the form of questions: 1. *What are the modern definitions of security?* 2. *What are definitions of threats and their typology?* 3. *What is the evolution of threats in the modern security environment?*

The article aims to analyze and diagnose the contemporary definitions of security and their threats. The research process uses methodological methods of scientific cognition, mainly analysis and criticism of literature.

1. The contemporary definitions of security

Contemporary definitions of the term 'security' proposed in the literature indicate that we can consider them the highest, absolute, and lasting value [6, p. 29]. Ryszard Jakubczak draws attention to the material and immaterial dimension of security, defining the concept as *a state, process, value, need, and purpose* [7, p. 14]. Ryszard Zięba perceives the meaning of this term in the context of certainty of existence and survival, ownership, functioning, and development of the subject. Certainty results from the absence of threats (their absence or elimination) and *arises from the subject's creative activity* [8, p. 8]. According to this proposal,

security should be considered in terms of threats and protection against their existence and development [9]. According to Roman Kuźniar's proposal, security is *the primary, existential need of individuals, social groups, and, eventually, countries* [10, p. 7]. The fundamental values that security should ensure are survival, integrity, independence, and the development and protection of security reference entities' identity. According to the definition proposed by Jerzy Stańczyk, *the essence of security based on guarantees of inviolable survival and freedom of development is certainty* [11, p. 261]. Although certainty is a condition of both components, it can be objective or subjective [12, p. 18].

Perception of security – according to the solution proposed by the Swiss political scientist Daniel Frei – can take the following forms:

- 1) *a state of insecurity, which is characterized by the occurrence of a considerable real external threat, and the perception of this threat is correct (adequate),*
- 2) *a state of obsession when a minor threat is seen as high,*
- 3) *a state of false security, which means a situation where the external threat is severe and is sometimes seen as minor,*
- 4) *a state of security that occurs when the external threat is insignificant, and its perception is correct* [13, p. 17].

The definitions presented above allow for the formulation of the conclusion that modern security can be defined as objective certainty of the guarantee of inviolable survival and development freedoms guaranteed to security reference entities. A common feature of the proposed definitions of security is understanding this concept as a social state and process. Contemporary science points to two ways of understanding the term security: narrow (negative) and broad. In the case of a narrow approach, security should be understood as the absence of threats and guaranteeing the security subject's survival. The broad approach assumes both a guarantee of the entity's integrity and freedom of its development. However, these elements should not be regarded as equivalent [14, p. 124]. The basis of the security of reference entities is the guarantee of the entity's inviolable survival, which is the basis for its further development. Ensuring security consists in constantly undertaking activities aimed at improving the mechanisms of ensuring it. The dynamism of defining security is conditioned by the variability of environmental conditions, civilization progress, and the scope of the individual entities' needs [1, p. 22]. The individual's sense of security is subjective. The subjectivity of the feeling of security is based on individual human characteristics and conditions of the environment in which one operates. The subjective feeling of security is associated with the occurrence of two negatively assessed phenomena, challenges, and threats. Challenges are a catalyst for the occurrence of new situations in which there are inalienable needs and, accordingly, appropriate actions of a state or group of states to achieve a specific state of security. According to M. Berkowitz's and P.G. Bock's proposal, national security can be [...] defined as *the nation's ability to protect its internal values against internal threats* [15, p. 13]. The contemporary definition of security is a consequence of continually evolving threats. Along with the changes taking place in the security environment, in the catalog of threats accompanying individuals from the beginning of their existence, new ones, conditioned by civilization's development, appeared. The basic needs of society in the field of security are determined based on a list of contemporary challenges and threats. According to Waldemar Kitler's position, two main areas of security can be distinguished: society, towards which the state is obliged to guarantee survival and development, and the state, exposed to threats and crises caused by political, social, environmental, and negative

effects of civilization development [4, p. 33]. According to Józef Kukułka, the basic catalog of national security values includes the survival of security reference entities, which is superior to others since the latter lose their relevance in the event of a threat to the entity's survival. The author includes fundamental protected values: territorial integrity, political independence, and quality of life. A real threat to any of these values results in reducing states' vital interests, which translates into a reduction in national security [16, p. 34].

In the second half of the twentieth century, particularly after the collapse of the bipolar division of the world and the end of military rivalry on the USSR-US line, the definition of the term security has gradually changed. This change resulted from the extension of the catalog of threats and measures to counteract them. Security issues have, therefore, expanded to include political, economic, social, and environmental problems. When considering the definition of security in the context of a state as the primary reference entity, one should also refer to its external conditions. The review of the international security definitions available in the subject literature shows its most important features. According to Ryszard Zięba's proposal, international security provides states with a sense of security and the possibility of existence without danger and development without outside pressure. States are the subject of international security understood in this way [17, p. 20]. In turn, Lister Buchan defines them as *a state in which bans and brakes against warfare are stronger than stimuli; these brakes apply with equal force to all sides of every dispute, the subject of which are the ambitions and ideologies of states* [3, p. 38]. Ludwik Erlich defines international security as a state when *there will be a friendly agreement between members of the international community [...] no state, neither large nor small, will have to fear aggression from another state directed against the territorial whole or political independence* [18, p. 2]. According to this definition, there are two entities of international security: the international community and the state, with the first entity subordinate to the other, shaping the appropriate conditions of existence for it. According to Zbigniew Berent, *international security is a collective, complex concept, which includes military security measures and institutions (arms control measures, disarmament, confidence building, self-defense, etc.), political (means of peaceful settlement of disputes, "moral disarmament", and peaceful coexistence, regional arrangements, sanctions, control measures by disclosure, etc.), economic (measures and institutions of the new international economic order, elimination of barriers, strengthening trade exchange, building economic confidence, fighting protectionism, etc.), cultural and civilization (measures and institutions for developing identity) national heritage, cultural heritage, the concept of common human heritage, human rights, pacifist activities of organizations, people of goodwill, religion, denominations, means, and institutions of peaceful awareness, etc.)* [19, p. 115-116].

Witold Pokruszyński lists and characterizes international security criteria, placing in the hierarchy in order: 1) strength as a primary criterion, understood in many dimensions – geographical, political, economic, military, moral, credibility, and efficiency of governance; 2) the size of space considered in terms of land, water, air, and space; 3) credibility, particularly vital when concluding treaties on an international scale on the principles of sovereignty and universality, taking into account the principle of compliance with international law; 4) access to the latest technologies; 5) international order; 6) cooperative security level; 7) effectiveness of the fight against terrorism; 8) security democratization level [20, p. 73-108].

International security, in terms of content, is superior to national security. Its spectrum of interests includes both the security of individual states and the global system of which they are participants. International security should not be seen as a simple result of the security of individual states because its spectrum of interests includes both the duration and

development of individual states and the values protected by the international community, such as stability, peace, international order, the degree of democratization, cooperation, balance or cooperation in various areas. Therefore, it should be recognized that the definition of international security includes both the state and the process in which both individual states and the international community can implement their goals in a manner that is not endangered by political, military, or economic factors. Therefore, one should agree that international security should be perceived as a dynamic process changing in time and space. The presented definitions indicate that external security's essence has its source in various areas of national, international, strategic, geostrategic, political, economic, and military dimensions. The platform for their effective coexistence in the context of the state's activity is an effective foreign policy of the state on the international arena and efficient alliances.

2. Definitions of security threats and their typology

The issue of security until 1983 was dominated by military issues and state-international relations. In the global dimension, the extension of the spectrum of security interests was conditioned by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar division, the associated globalization process and changes in the individual's environment caused by this process. To the reasons for expanding the catalog of security threats – as directed by Barry Buzzan and Lene Hansen – should be added: progressive institutionalization and development of modern technologies, international events, including the war in Kosovo (1998-1999) and the Persian Gulf (2003), cross-border crime, epidemics and increasing environmental threats [21, p. 225]. All these elements make up the mosaic of contemporary threats, defining their broad nature.

We have been observing the evolution in security perception, expanding the catalog of measures to protect and defend the state beyond military nature. These changes are conditioned by the modern security environment's challenges and the resulting threats of various nature. Contemporary security is considered in four conceptual categories: threats, challenges, opportunities, and risks. Security threats should be understood as a set of destructive phenomena, factors, processes, and events regarding reference entities and elements of the natural environment, directly harming the priority values protected by societies and countries and the goods subject to protection. Security challenges are elements of a set of forecast events, phenomena, states, and processes that the state should consider when designing future, planned security. Security opportunities are defined as positive situations, events, processes, and circumstances occurring in the environment of a social entity, including countries conducive to the realization of its interests and achievement of objectives related to its security. Security risks should be understood as possible adverse effects of the subject's impact in the sphere of security. They can be the result of the subject's activities or occur regardless of the entity in its environment.

In the subject literature, we find various approaches to defining threats. "Dictionary of Terms in National Security" describes them as a situation in which there is a likelihood of danger for the environment. When pointing to areas where it may occur, the authors of the Dictionary distinguish military and non-military threats [22, p. 186]. Lech Chojnowski proposes understanding security threats as the subjective effects of perceiving negatively valued situations reflected in human consciousness. Individuals' perception of security threats translates directly into a sense of security, i.e., a subjective feeling of security or lack of it [23, p. 201]. According to the definition proposed by Bruno Hołyst, a threat is a situation made aware by an object that is affected by a given event. This subject should be identified with the

individual because it is the person who feels the effects of the threat to the greatest extent [24, p. 64-65]. Thereby, this is a state in which the threat is associated with a situation that occurs when people fear losing their lives and other valued values. Krzysztof Ficoń proposes to identify threats with events caused by random (natural) or non-random (intentional) causes, which harm the functioning of a given system or cause adverse (dangerous) changes in its environment [25, p. 76].

The interpretative multiplicity of hazard definitions correlates with the multiplicity of typologies proposed in the literature. From the subject's perspective, the complete model of the typology of security threats was pointed out by Lech Chojnowski, who detailed: 1) the subjective, basic, criterion: who is affected by the security risk? In this context, the most common are security threats to a person, social group, local communities, state, international, civilization, and humanity; 2) the objective criterion, being added to the subjective criterion: what areas of functioning of entities do the threats relate to? It refers to the typology of security and its division into political, military, economic, ecological, cultural-identity, and others; 3) safety values (protected values): what categories of protected values does it endanger? In this category, we distinguish threats related to survival, integrity, identity, independence, sovereignty, development, prosperity, quality of life, and health; 4) sources of security threats: who/what causes the threats? We distinguish threats arising from the forces of nature (natural disasters) and created by a human or human community, which can be intentional and unintentional; 5) the location of the source of security threats relative to the security entity: where is the source of the threat? There are external, internal, and cross-border threats; 6) the nature of the threats: what is the nature of the security threats? What is the security risk?; 7) the physical environment of threat occurrence, within it, there are land, air, space, water (surface, underwater), and cyberspace threats; 8) the spatial extent of security threats: what spatial extent does the threat have? Within it, we distinguish local (commune, housing estate, village council, etc.), national (state), international (sub-regional, regional, supra-regional, global) threats; 9) effects of security threats: threats to physical and mental security; 10) dynamics of development of security threats: creeping and dynamic threats; 11) the nature of social relations: conflict and non-conflict threats; 12) the probability of occurrence: potential, real, and close (in time); 13) the nature of the required measures to counteract them: military ("hard") and non-military ("soft"); 14) intentions/purposefulness of causing threats: intentional (planned/intended) and accidental (unintentional/random); 15) implications for state emergency: threats to peace, crisis, and war; 16) perception: objective and subjective [23, p. 213-215].

Knowledge of state threats is an essential element of its security not only internally but also internationally. While defining the categories of threats, it should be noted that all activity of security reference entities depends on the current state of knowledge about state threats.

3. The evolution of threats in the contemporary security environment

The projection of contemporary security threats is based on a study of the environment of state security in the military and non-military dimensions. The research process includes identifying, monitoring, anticipating threats, and assessing each challenge and threat compromising security both in the national and international dimensions. New military and civilian, asymmetrical and multisectoral threats require their constant monitoring and development of response plans. Nowadays, security solves military problems, which was the domain in the previous period, and political, economic, social, and environmental ones. On the one

hand, that stems from new challenges and threats to world peace and stability, and, on the other, new phenomena and processes that intensified at the end of the 20th century. These mainly include 1) the collapse of the bipolar world; 2) the superpower position of the United States of America; 3) globalization; 4) scientific and technical progress; 5) IT revolution; 6) the eruption of global terrorism. The conducted research indicates that, when taking into account new phenomena and processes of contemporary security, we can identify its main problems in the form of 1) radical changes in defense and foreign policy; 2) the adoption of a new international strategy against terrorism; 3) effectiveness of crisis management; 4) effectiveness of the peaceful dispute resolution system; 5) building a cooperative security model; 6) the multilateral cooperation as a means of strengthening peace; 7) limiting the number of countries in access to weapons of mass destruction.

An essential stage in the development of security sciences was the publication of Barry Buzan's monograph: "People, States & Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations". According to Buzan's proposal, the current subject and security reference entity – the state – has been extended to all types of collectivities and goes beyond its military dimension. The security concept proposed by this author was divided into five primary dimensions:

- 1) military: connected with the offense and defense system of the armed forces of states and mutual assessment of intentions by states,
- 2) political: related to the institutional stability of states, government systems, and ideologies that provide legitimacy,
- 3) economic: revolving around access to resources, financial resources, and markets necessary to maintain the expected level of prosperity and power of the state,
- 4) social: focused on the stability and development of traditional language and cultural patterns as well as religious and national identities and practices,
- 5) environmental: related to maintaining the local and global dimension of the biosphere as an indispensable base for all other human activity [26, p. 4].

Military security is ensured through the right proportions and relationships between offensive and defensive capabilities at the disposal of the state and through the intention to use them. Political security is focused on ensuring the stability of the state, systems of governance, and ideology that gives legitimacy to govern. Economic security refers to the level of access to financial resources and the functioning of markets for the security of social needs and the creation of state power. Social security focuses on maintaining and nurturing language, culture, religion, national identity, and tradition. The indicated sectors form a comprehensive security model that can be analyzed from the level of individual security entities: a single entity, society, nation, region, and global level. There are interdependencies and interactions between these sectors [18, p. 27].

Both scholars and politicians dealing with security issues agree that the conceptual scope of security is permanently expanding due to the civilizational development with previously unknown challenges and threats and new means and ways to eliminate them. Incredibly clearly old and new phenomena conditioning national security emerged at the end of the 20th century. New phenomena should include the internationalization of nations and states' lives, which implies interdependence in almost all areas, including security. An additional factor in this process is the appearance of other modern phenomena, such as broadening the scope of democratization, transformation, the principles of state sovereignty, the new role of powers, the promotion of civilization and human rights and civil liberties, an increase in the sense of solidarity, and a dense network of links between states leading to an increase

in their interdependencies, especially in institutional terms of regionalisms. All these phenomena will undoubtedly impact national security for the next decades of the 21st century. Soon, globalization will be a phenomenon with the most difficult to predict consequences that may significantly impact the national security policy and strategy assumptions. Governments play a unique role at this stage of development. Their importance does not decrease, but the requirements for exercising power at all levels of the state and local government structure are increasing.

Knowledge of state threats is an elementary element of its security both as a state entity and from the perspective of the international security environment. Following Witold Pokruszyński, among contemporary ones, we can indicate global terrorism, military threats, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime – transnational, ethnic conflicts on an international scale, economic crises, climate threats, technical threats, and environmental threats [20, p. 22-28]. Characterizing the international system as a source of threats to the protected values of the state society, Ryszard Wróblewski points to three major threats to world peace: President Putin's implementation of the process of Russia's development towards a fascist state; China's ongoing economic, political, and military expansion in the Pacific; the spread of jihadism and all forms of fundamentalism [3, p. 281].

Conclusion

The conducted research indicates that the essence of security and the accompanying threats stems from various areas that can be considered in the national and international, strategic, geostrategic, political, economic, and military dimensions. Based on the conducted research, it was established that international security expresses a broader content than national security. The optimal model of the former should be broadly understood strength and credibility in international relations and active activity in alliances. It defines both the external security factors of individual countries and the functioning of the entire global system. The key categories in the area of security include such concepts as the interests of entities (vital ones associated with existence and secondary ones related to the quality of existence) and the resulting strategic and operational objectives; security conditions, i.e., opportunities (circumstances conducive to achieving goals), challenges (dilemmas in resolving security issues, can be taken or ignored), threats (direct or indirect, destructive impact on the subject); strategic (long-term) and operational (ongoing) security concepts; security system, i.e., the resources of entities separated for the implementation of strategic and operational concepts.

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Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.


Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Agnieszka Rogozińska  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3462-7851>

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Biographical note

Agnieszka Rogozińska – Doctor of social sciences, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Security Sciences of the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce. Intern in the Polish Library in Paris, the Polish Institute and the Museum Gen. Sikorski in London, the Lumsa University in Rome, and the University of Cordoba. Member of the program board of the Strategic Analysis Center of the New Europe Institute. Her research interests focus on Euro-Atlantic security issues, the institutional dimension of security, and contemporary security threats.

Teoretyczne aspekty współczesnych zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa Definicje, typologie, ewolucja

STRESZCZENIE

W literaturze przedmiotu terminowi „bezpieczeństwo” towarzyszą określenia „stan niezagrożenia”, „stan niezagrożenia pokoju”, „stan pokoju”, „stan pewności”. Leksykalne znaczenie tego terminu (łacińskie sine cura – bez troski) rozumieć należy jako sytuację, w której nie występują zagrożenia. W kontekście znaczenia leksykalnego terminu bezpieczeństwo oznacza więc sytuację pozbawioną zagrożeń. Współczesne rozumienie tego terminu koncentruje swą uwagę na poznaniu bezpieczeństwa rozumianego jako wypadkowa teorii i praktyki zapewnienia referencyjnemu podmiotowi bezpieczeństwa możliwości przetrwania (egzystencji) i realizacji własnych interesów w szczególności poprzez wykorzystanie szans, podejmowanie wyzwań, minimalizowanie ryzyka oraz przeciwdziałanie wszelkiego rodzaju zagrożeniom. Definityjne ujęcia terminu bezpieczeństwo wskazują, że powinien być on rozumiany jako stan i proces. Poprzez stan bezpieczeństwa rozumieć należy poczucie pewności podmiotu oraz gwarancję jego przetrwania, poprzez proces szansę na doskonalenie i rozwój środków państwa służących do jego ochrony i obrony. Współczesny katalog zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa, zaproponowany przez Barrego Buzana, został rozszerzony w drugiej połowie XX wieku z zagrożeń o charakterze militarnym na zagrożenia o charakterze politycznym, gospodarczym, społecznym i środowiskowym. Zmiany te na nowo zdefiniowały współczesne rozumienie bezpieczeństwa. Główny problem badawczy artykułu sformułowano w formie pytania: jakie są teoretyczne aspekty współczesnych zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa. Celem artykułu jest analiza i diagnoza współczesnych definicji bezpieczeństwa i jego zagrożeń. Proces badawczy wykorzystuje metodologiczne metody poznania naukowego, głównie analizę i krytykę literatury.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE nauki o bezpieczeństwie, bezpieczeństwo, zagrożenia, teoria, typologia

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