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QUO VADIS HUMANITY? A VIEW OF SOME CURRENT GLOBAL SECURITY THREATS AND CHALLENGES[1]

Abstract: *Human society is constantly changing and evolving. It changes and develops as a whole; just as individual areas of society change and develop, too. As the new millennium began to unfold, one of the most dynamically changing and developing areas of human society is the area of security. It was transformed in a significant way after the end of the Cold War and the end of the bipolar division of the world, when there were fundamental changes in the global and regional security environment. It is also very significantly influenced by increasingly deepening globalization, which brings not only many positives, but also many negatives, which appear mainly in the form of new asymmetric security threats and challenges. That is also why the authors in their article, using relevant methods of interdisciplinary scientific research, deal with selected significant global security threats and challenges that pose a danger to the entire human society.*

Keywords: *Human society, security, global security threats and challenges.*

INTRODUCTION

At the very beginning, it is necessary to point out that the current security threats and challenges in the global security environment are of a military and non-military nature; however, most of them are non-military in nature. These security threats and challenges are closely related; as a result, the situation in one area can very seriously affect the situation in other areas. At the

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same time, in this context, it is necessary to say that most of the current threats and challenges occurring in one region of the world are also common to adjacent regions. We can even say that this is due to deepening globalization also in many more distant areas. This only underlines the complexity of the current international security environment, in which the distinctions between regional and global security are blurring. Therefore, the main item is the concept of "comprehensive security", which considers the whole range of direct and indirect security threats and challenges for individuals, social groups, societies, nations, regions and also humanity as a whole. That is also why the authors in their contribution, using relevant methods of interdisciplinary scientific research, deal with selected significant global security risks and challenges of the present day, which mainly include problems related to global terrorism, armed conflicts, governmental instability, civil unrest and disorder.

GLOBAL TERRORISM

Global terrorism is a serious threat to the international community. This also includes western individuals traveling or living abroad overseas and a substantial threat to indigenous individuals located near, or within, unstable regions or areas of terrorist activity. Globally, every region has recorded a higher average impact of terrorism in recent years than in the early 2000s. The increase in the impact of terrorism was mostly felt in the Middle East and North Africa, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. There is considered to be a heightened threat of terrorist attacks globally, especially against western interests and nationals from groups, or individuals motivated by the recent conflicts in these areas (Rapoport, 2008).

Global terrorism is an unfortunate reality of modern times. These indiscriminate and targeted acts can come from several terrorist organizations, small groups, or lone individuals. These attacks can affect any person, establishment, or business at any time and target any location across the globe.

Conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism in most countries throughout the world. The countries with the highest impact of terrorism will generally be engaged in at least one conflict. Although these countries account for the majority of all deaths from terrorism in recent years, during and following these conflicts there has been a substantially increased threat and

increased number of targeted attacks against the public, police, government and the military of countries and communities outside of these regions (Trifunović et al., 2021).

Terrorism is a threat that does not recognize borders and may affect states and peoples irrespective of their geographical location. Seemingly stable unaffected states and citizens, residing in these areas, are not an exception. Individuals and groups who believe that they can advance their political aims by using terror pose a serious threat to societies around the world and the rights and freedoms of citizens, especially by indiscriminately targeting innocent people.

Increasingly, terrorists attack targets that are not well-protected places, or areas, and where an attack against a soft target would be the most devastating. These places include entertainment and recreational events and facilities, places of worship, tourist sites, airports and transport networks or links. Significant dates, anniversaries, public holidays, religious festivals and political events are all examples of places and times that have been targeted. Terrorists have also conducted attacks in response to international political or social developments, that they have considered offensive (Ivančík & Nečas, 2019).

Terrorist groups and organizations have been constrained in several ways and now exploit technology to organize attacks. This includes social media to inspire or direct so-called 'lone wolf' attacks which are difficult to predict and disrupt and could take place in almost any country at any time. This means terrorists have a wide audience and motivate sympathizers to carry out attacks by remotely calling for violence, of any nature, against any target across the world. This also includes random small-scale attacks against innocent people and symbols of their perceived hostile party.

Although governments and the justice systems in many countries have taken a harder line against terrorism, including being better prepared and dedicating more resources to defend against global and local terrorism, which in turn has had an effect of reducing the impact of terrorism in recent years, there are areas in which the threat and potential acts of terrorism look set to increase shortly (Trifunović et al., 2021).

ARMED CONFLICTS

Armed conflicts continue to rage around the world. There have been between 30-52 conflicts being fought at any one time in the last 20 years. Whether inter-state or intra-state they have had far-reaching implications for the regions and the rest of the world alike. The dangers of armed conflict can not only be a major threat to people in the immediate and surrounding area, but it can also create weak governments and a poor security environment for other countries in the region, that terrorists can take advantage of and thrive in.

Armed conflict continues to rage in many places around the world and has been continually waged in numerous parts of the world in some form without interval post both world wars, without exception. In this modern era, there have been over two-hundred and eighty distinct armed conflicts around the globe, with ongoing conflicts in the past twenty years numbering between 30-52 at any one time (Kazanský & Ivančík, 2015).

At the end of the Cold War, there was a new era of optimism. Ongoing conflicts ended in Central America, South and Central Africa and the UN-brokered accords ended disputes in the far east. After the invasion of Kuwait in1990 by Iraq posed a serious threat to Saudi Arabia, the response was an overwhelming demonstration of force from a United States-led coalition, that subsequently brought about a sense of a 'brave new world' in which the United States as a superpower would act as a global policeman under the auspices of the UN. This short period was known as the 'New World Order' (Nečas & Szabo, 2006).

During the next decade, this new world order did not see the presumed positive effects play out in reality. In North Africa, a decade-long civil war erupted. In Central Africa there was an escalation of violence and subsequent massacre, then genocide of Hutu and Tutsi people, with up to a million people killed. In Europe, Yugoslavia violently broke apart and in Bosnia Herzegovina, there was mass ethnic cleansing. In the Caucasus in 1991 Chechen opponents to the Russian Federation broke free leading to an invasion and subsequent bloody conflict over almost two years.

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of major conflicts has been decreasing, post-Cold War has been a period in which inter-state conflict has been significantly reduced, but intra-state violence symbolized by hatred and ethnic violence would be a new normal. Irregular warfare, which includes insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism, became the dominant form

of armed conflict and violence, with the distinctions between sides and supporters becoming increasingly blurred (Majchút, 2018).

During this time there have been overlapping trends in armed conflict have emerged. The event that defines the conflicts and violence of the early 2000s was the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Armed violence was prevalent across the world, with Central African conflicts being an example, but 9/11 was an attack on a global superpower and produced a major response defining the major conflicts in the following years (Kazanský & Ivančík, 2015).

The subsequent Global War on Terror led to the crushing of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein and his army in Iraq. The war on terror against Al-Qaeda had a major impact on countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It also affected the credibility of the United States and its allies' ability to demonstrate that an invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and subsequent occupation, with an aim to rebuild these nations, would be possible and beneficial for each nation involved.

There have been several trends that have persisted after the beginning of 'the war on terror'. After Al-Qaeda was seen to be sufficiently dismantled, several offshoots, or 'franchises' established themselves, one of which was in Iraq and would develop into the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS). As of 2014, ISIS had become the primary focus of the terror wars, effectively becoming an insurgency and at the same time influencing terrorist attacks in the United States and Europe over this time (Majchút, 2018).

After the focus of the terror wars was directed towards Afghanistan and Iraq, other protracted conflicts driven by ethnicity, identity, or religion, but with specifically local concerns were then overlooked. These included others like Darfur, Kashmir, the Caucasus, Central Africa and the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict that all ensued. The conflict in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia are also examples of this trend. Religion is a major factor, it is ethnicity and identity which predicate these conflicts, exacerbated by tensions over resources and territory.

Other trends include the 'Arab Spring', which has reached across the Arab world and has seen disastrous conflicts like Libya, Yemen and Syria take place and descend into civil war, setting the conditions for the rise of the Islamic State insurgency in Syria and Iraq. In many cases the causes were localized and, in the case of Iraq and Syria, there are also roots in the occupation of Iraq that had an effect. The uprisings and protests that began in 2010 came about through the

demands of the people of each country for better governance, better human rights and quality of life. As the vast majority of outcomes after revolution and uprisings, the response by these governments varied from small concessions to harsh repression, with only Tunisia moving towards democratic governance. The Islamic State insurgency forms only one part of the Syrian civil war and is but one part of the social and political problems besetting Iraq, but their assumption of the role of global jihad and threat to Iraq has ensured western military involvement (Jurčák & Majchút, 2016).

Another major theme is the re-emergence of long-standing Cold War rivalries, despite the withdrawal of United States and Soviet forces from Europe and reductions in nuclear weapons. Tied into this is the rise of China as a major economic, political, and military power, one increasingly able to assert its power around the Asia Pacific region and assert its influence around the rest of the world.

While in recent years there has been a surge in both the number of conflicts and the severity of war. This surge has now ended and has been replaced by a downward trend in conflict. However, this trend does not suggest it will continue as several particular countries and regions have the potential to slip into open armed conflict at any time, which includes tensions between countries with large military forces such as Iran (Nečas & Szabo, 2006).

The causes of armed conflict can be numerous and the pre-war conditions can differ significantly, they can be slow to manifest, or war can rapidly ensue catching many off guard, including foreign governments and intelligence agencies. Wars often also have cultural dimensions related to ethnicity or religion, but there are also invariably underlying economic causes too. Major root causes include political, economic, and social inequalities; extreme poverty; economic stagnation; poor government; high unemployment; environmental degradation; and individual economic incentives to fight between groups predisposed to conflict (Belan, 2016).

Reducing the likelihood of wars is extremely difficult, as good intentions often lead to undesirable outcomes, but it is essential to identify the fundamental problems and motives involved, without participating nations being swayed by opposing groups (either wrongly backing unknown groups financially or militarily) or being blinded by incorrect predisposed

beliefs, without fully understanding the situation or history of the tensions causing the conflict (Jurčák, 2018).

The evidence of the root causes of the conflict suggests some policy responses can be adopted to reduce the likelihood of future war. The promotion of inclusive development; reduction of inequalities between groups, tackling unemployment and via national and international sanctions and incentives in these areas, may reduce incentives to take to violence. Many groups of people who fight perceive themselves as belonging to a common culture (ethnic or religious), and part of the reason that they are fighting may be to maintain their cultural autonomy or because of ethnic or religious tensions and differences. There may also be important underlying economic and political factors that can play a major or minor role, but nonetheless must not be ignored.

The result of armed conflict around the world can be extreme, apart from the devastating loss of life and the destabilizing effect of conflict, wars are a major cause of poverty, underdevelopment, and ill health in these conflict-ridden countries. At this time eight out of ten of the world's poorest countries are suffering or have recently suffered from large-scale violent armed conflict. Wars in developing countries have heavy human, economic, and social costs and are a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment of these countries and regions. The heavy costs of these conflicts can be seen in the number of extra infant deaths caused by the war in Cambodia, for example, which were estimated to be 3% of the country's 1990 population. Most current conflicts, such as in Sudan or the Congo, are within states, although there is often considered outside intervention, as in Afghanistan. In the past 30 years, Africa has been especially badly affected by war in many areas of the continent, causing untold numbers of fatalities and injuries over this period. This also has a wide-reaching effect, whether it is large-scale numbers of refugees being displaced, huge numbers of migrants moving away from poor or conflict-ridden regions, or the spreading of global terrorism from these areas.

The dangers of armed conflict can not only be a major threat to people in the immediate and surrounding area, but it can also create weak governments and a poor security environment in the region in that terrorists thrive. This can not only affect the conflict zone but also the surrounding area, region, and the rest of the world's security. The dangers of armed conflict to the population, whether state-on-state war or civil conflicts between violent groups, within these

areas are self-evident. The risks to individuals traveling to or from conflict zones or traveling near existing conflicts or developing clashes, are also significant but are extremely difficult to evaluate, which is of great concern for governments, organizations, and individual foreign nationals that work or travel around the globe (Kazanský & Ivančík, 2015).

GOVERNMENTAL INSTABILITY

Political instability can affect any country or region around the world. This may have numerous causes developing over time or a single issue at an extremely rapid pace. This may occur peacefully or be violent in nature, being especially dangerous for those trapped when this occurs. Instability in a nation's political system can not only cause local or region-wide disruption but can have a global reach and effect nations and corporations around the globe (Jurčák, 2009).

With the ever-increasing pace of the modern world and the unpredictability of domestic, regional and worldwide developments, localized or nationwide events can take place and have far-reaching consequences in a short time. In part, due to failures of diplomacy and governance in certain regions and the accessibility of information and means of communication available for governments, official sources, opposing political organizations and the public in general.

Political instability is a natural tendency of a government to collapse either because of conflicts or growing struggles, sometimes violent, between various political parties. Political instability also occurs if there is a rapid change of government and policy, increasing the likelihood of subsequent instability. Economic growth and political stability are also deeply interconnected. The uncertainty associated with an unstable political environment can reduce investment in the country in question and affect the pace of economic development. Additionally, poor economic performance may lead to government collapse and political unrest. These conditions are a persistent and leading cause of the political instability that we see around the world (Belan & Uchaľ, 2018).

Democratic regimes and other political regimes are fragile. Irrespective of political regimes' conflict, radical changes in regime and corruption can also lead to instability, causing a government to collapse, through sometimes peaceful or violent means. This may happen over

time, or rapidly, with momentum to effect change at great speed. In today's world, the unpredictability of serious upheaval of a previously stable government in many areas of the world can be extremely disruptive to normal life and can create a poor security situation where terrorism and serious crime can thrive. This can also happen at a rapid pace in the age of advanced communications and social media, causing a dangerous situation to rapidly develop in countries and regions, previously thought to be relatively safe. This can also be dangerous for people in surrounding areas and effect transport links through and around the disruption or violence, trapping or threatening the safety of anyone caught in these zones.

CIVIL UNREST AND DISORDER

Civil unrest and the subsequent disorder can be extremely volatile and can rapidly escalate into uncontrolled violence. Civil unrest can be dangerous for participating parties, law enforcement and innocent bystanders. The disorder can erupt at any time anywhere in the world, from volatile nations and regions to previously stable countries and governments, and can all descend into a serious security situation and threaten the safety of those caught within or near to the event. Civil unrest, disorder, protests, and riots may be planned or occur due to any number of causes, in any city or hotspot around the world. Civil unrest can rapidly and unpredictably spread and descend into a dangerous situation for those close to the activity, as well as ill-prepared persons and premises caught in the disorder and poor security situation.

The terms civil unrest, disorder, civil disturbance, or other, relate to the activity proceeding a mass act of civil disobedience. These acts can present themselves in the form of riots, protests, demonstrations, or strikes, or can evolve from these events, in which the participants become increasingly hostile toward a body of representative authority or the government as a whole, giving way to disorder or violence that authorities are unable to control or struggle to maintain public safety and order of the streets or area, over a disorderly group or crowd (Lafety, 2018).

The causes of these events can be relatively simple in nature or extremely complex, with the resulting disorder being comparable. The basic component that is required for unrest (post-event) to be triggered and descend into disorder, is the presence of a crowd. The descent into disorder can be particularly dangerous, as individuals within a crowd often behave differently, as

there is a sense of anonymity and an individual's sense of responsibility is shifted to the crowd and the perception is, that during these events, norms of individual responsibility does not apply and does not remain with themselves. Additionally, as disorder breaks out, individuals start to imitate acts carried out by other, more willing participants. These acts can take shape in the form of destruction of property, threatening behavior, violent acts, or other, against targets that may be wholly innocent. Furthermore, an undisciplined body of the authorities, for example, riot police, military, or others, may conduct themselves in the same way and act more violently, including toward innocent bystanders (Hughes, 2019).

Any number of conditions or events may cause civil unrest and disorder, whether it is a single-issue cause or a combination of causes. However, a vast amount of these eventualities originate from economic grievances, political grievances or disputes, religious or racial tension, social discord, terrorism, or the involvement of foreign agitators.

Civil disorder arising from political grievances may include a complex range of events, from a simple protest to mass civil disobedience. These events can be spontaneous and rapidly develop, but are usually planned, and generally begin non-violently (Lafety, 2018). However, these events can quickly turn violent, especially when agitators attempt to provoke authorities to take a harder line or provoke law enforcers into overreacting.

Civil disorder originating from economic disputes and social discord is generally charged with substantial amounts of emotion. For example, poverty-stricken or underprivileged people may protest actual, or perceived, injustices against them. The emotion of this civil action is often exacerbated if cultural differences are involved, which creates an atmosphere of suspicion, scapegoating, animosity, and mistrust of innocent parties and can potentially turn violent toward these individuals or groups of people (Hughes, 2019).

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME

The volume and scope of serious and organized crime have increased over recent years around the world. Also growing is the levels of violence being used to commit certain crimes or uphold the perceived authority of domestic and transnational criminal organizations.

Serious and organized criminals have adopted new ways to commit and profit from crime, due to the accessibility and rise of technology. With the aid of technology, criminal organizations have become increasingly able to adapt to new ways of exploiting people around the world with much greater impunity.

Serious and organized crime in any form is a threat faced across the globe. It is present at street level and above and can affect anyone without warning. Whether an attack is an opportunist in nature or targeted, it can range from financial, and computer-enabled crime, to drug gang violence, armed robbery and organized vehicle theft, all without concern for its victims (Sobihard et al., 2013.

The definition of serious and organized crime may vary according to which country you are operating in, generally, it is defined as, individuals planning, coordinating, and committing serious offenses, whether individually, in groups or as part of transnational networks. The categories of serious offenses may also vary but are considered as the following: illegal firearms; illegal drugs; fraud; cyber-crime; money laundering and other economic crime; bribery and corruption; organized immigration crime; modern slavery and human trafficking; and child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Serious and organized crime affects an immense number of citizens across the globe, substantially more than is widely known and generally accounts for more than any other national security threat, broadly leading to more deaths each year than most other national security threats combined. It costs governments a vast amount of money and requires an enormous amount of resources. It has a corrosive impact on public services, communities, and the reputation of a country and effects the way of life (Hašanová & Dudor, 2021).

Crime in many countries may be considered lower in recent years than it previously was, although globally there has been a sharp increase in some low-volume, high-harm offenses, for example, serious gang violence and serious violence during robbery. It has been assessed that the threat from serious and organized crime is increasing around the globe and serious and organized criminals are continually looking for ways to exploit new victims and use new methods to generate money, particularly electronically, and online. A large amount of serious and organized crime remains hidden or underreported, meaning the true scale is likely to be greater than is

currently known. Although the impact may often be difficult to identify, the threat is a reality and occurs every day all around the general public, and around the globe.

Serious and organized criminals prey on unprotected targets and the most vulnerable in society, including young children, and their abuse can have a devastating, life-long effect on their victims. They target members of the public to defraud, manipulate and exploit, including the selling of deadly substances and the theft of personal data in ruthless pursuit of financial gain. Intimidation is used to create fear within communities and to undermine the legitimacy of the state they are operating within. Enabled by their lawyers and accountants, corrupt elites and criminals set up fake companies to help them conceal criminal profits, fund extravagant lifestyles and invest in further criminality.

Serious and organized crime knows no borders, and many offenders operate as part of large networks spanning multiple countries. Technological change allows criminals to operate more freely, sell drugs and hack into private and national infrastructure more easily from all around the world while being able to communicate much more quickly and securely through encrypted phones and devices. Continuously evolving technology has meant that exploitation is becoming easier and more widespread, from gathering information about a target to the abuse and grooming of victims through social media and other sites. Serious and organized criminals also exploit vulnerabilities in the increasing number of global trade and transport routes to smuggle drugs, firearms, and people.

Criminals have become more effective and have learned to become more adaptable, and resilient and are operating within larger networks and consider their groups to be 'above the law' of each country they operate in, around the world. In some countries around the globe, criminals have created safe havens where serious and organized crime, corruption and the state are interlinked and self-serving. This creates instability and undermines the reach of the law, hindering the ability of nation-states to protect themselves from other national security threats such as terrorism and hostile state activity. Corruption, in particular, hinders the ability of lawful government and communities to help the world's poorest people, reduce poverty and promote global prosperity and adds to the overall deep-seated threat of serious and organized crime around the globe.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is possible, in the context of the above information, to state that the changes that occurred in the security environment after the end of the Cold War and the fall of bipolarity, especially in recent years, have very clearly shown that the differences between internal and external security are gradually becoming being erased and that the nature, character, manifestations and consequences of security threats and challenges are changing significantly. Global security threats such as global terrorism, armed conflicts, organized crime, government instability, and civil unrest, along with other security threats, have significantly changed and transformed the security environment. The monopoly of nation-states on the use of force is gradually weakening, state borders have lost a large part of their importance, and non-state actors are becoming increasingly powerful, even in the field of security.

The history of human society proves that many security threats would never have grown into a full-blown problems if they had been identified and addressed at an early, or at least earlier, stage. Therefore, international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance, and the African Union, together with partners, other international organizations and companies must act as soon as possible to reduce the likelihood that security risks will develop their potential and turn into serious threats to the regional and/or global security.

Therefore, it is necessary and a great challenge for all humanity to identify potential scenarios in which terrorism, uprisings, riots, organized crime, instability and so on could be converted from abstract and hypothetical threats to real threats, causing very serious problems for people, groups, nations, states and all of humanity. For this reason, more than ever before, effective and efficient measures must be taken at a timely level, seeking concrete solutions and creating tools at the national, regional, and global levels.

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