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SPECIFIC NATURE OF MILITARY THREATS TO SECURITY

ABSTRACT The end of the Cold War and the East-West confrontation had a very large impact on limiting the importance of the military plane, which directly translated into a decrease in the importance of military threats in international relations. The aim of this article is to analyze the specificity of military threats to security. The first part analyzes the definition of military threats after the end of the Cold War, taking into account the perception of this term by researchers in Poland. In this part an attempt to indicate the directions of changes is also made. The second part covers the specificity of the scope of military threats. The most important element of the scope of the concept of 'military threat' is the use of armed violence by states or various non-state entities, including private ones, against another entity. The sources of military threats go beyond the military sphere and cover all areas of social life. Compared to other types of threats, they are often intentional and targeted. They concern the vital interests of the state, but also non-state entities. In a situation where disputes are not resolved by peaceful means, it is necessary to use military potential in various forms to reach a compromise or achieve one's own goals. As a result of escalation in an extreme situation, military threats can lead to the collapse of the state or threaten the biological survival of the nation.

Keywords: military threats, military security, military potential, armed violence, armed forces.

Military threats constitute one of the dangers to national and international security. However, due to the importance of military power in politics, they were treated as the most important types of hazards by states. The situation changed at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.[1] Firstly, the end of the Cold War and the East-West confrontation limited the significance of the military sphere, which was also associated with the reduction of the military potential of states, also within the framework of arms control and arms reduction. This translated into a reduction in the perception of military threats at the global level. These processes were particularly visible in Western Europe – the emergence of *peace dividend*. However, in other international regions, this happened to a much lesser extent. Moreover, in the military plane, there was effectively only one superpower left – the United States of America (USA), significantly exceeding the other states in terms of combat capabilities of its military potential. Secondly, after the end of the Cold War, the importance of non-state actors increased and began to affect national and international security. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, led to a reassessment of the approach to the issue of military threats in the United States. At that time, it was assumed that it was not the military potential of states but the activity of non-state actors that posed the main threat to the United States. 'Traditional' wars between states were replaced by conflicts fought within states, in which a significant number of different non-state actors participated. The nature of their activities goes beyond traditional military threats, and they are also directed against societies. Greater attention was paid to asymmetric and hybrid threats.[2] Thirdly, after the end of the Cold War, the importance of non-military threats increased, their so-called demilitarization. Greater attention was paid to ensuring security other than military security. The purpose of this article is to analyze the specificity of military threats to security after the end of the Cold War.

Geopolitical location has a significant impact on the perception of military threats. The Transatlantic Area is an example of this phenomenon. The situation changed to some extent in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the war in Donbas. However, the issue of military threats in the European region, and especially in the countries of the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance, was significantly reevaluated with Russia's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2024. Secondly, the abandonment of the arms control and reduction and development in terms of qualitative and quantitative military potentials, including the nuclear component by the most important powers, started. These actions led to a significant reduction in the disproportion in relation to the military capabilities of the USA, which may lead to an increase in the level of military threats at the global level and in some international regions.

The article consists of two parts. The first one analyzes the definition of military threats after the end of the Cold War and considers the perception of this term by researchers in Poland. Additionally, it is an attempt to indicate the directions of changes.

[1] I. Topolski, *Siła militarna w polityce zagranicznej Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Lublin 2004, pp. 26-36.

[2] M. Pietraś, "Specyfika zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa w procesach globalizacji," in H. Chałupczak, K. Marzęda-Młynarska, M. Pietraś, R. Sudoł (eds.), *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa w procesach globalizacji. Zagrożenia polityczne*, Lublin–Zamość 2020, pp. 23, 31-32.

The second part covers the specificity of the scope of military threats, considering its most important elements, including primarily the sources, entities and forms of the armed violence employment that affect their changes and dynamics.

1. (RE-)DEFINITION OF MILITARY

According to the *PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language*, the term 'threat' is defined as *a situation or state that threatens someone or in which someone feels threatened, or someone who creates such a situation*. This term has two meanings, i.e.:
1) *to scare someone to force them to behave in a specific way*;
2) *to become a real danger to someone or something*.

According to Bolesław Balcerowicz, the term 'threat' is a situation in which there is an increased probability of a dangerous state, i.e. a state of lack of security. Threats also determine the level of security and constitute one of its basic categories.[3] Using the level of involvement of armed forces as a criterion for determining the type of threats, two such types can be distinguished: military and non-military threats.[4]

In 1983, Richard H. Ullman pointed out that one should focus not only on the traditional concept of national security, in terms of military threats originating from the outside, i.e. those arising outside the borders of one's own state, for two reasons. First, it diverts attention from non-military threats that may affect the stability of many nations in the future. In addition, it wrongly assumes that external threats pose more danger for the security of a state than those arising within it.[5]

However, Richard H. Ullman considered a more useful, and at the same time unconventional, definition. He proposed defining threats to national security as actions or sequences of events that drastically, and in a relatively short time, worsen the quality of life of residents or threaten to limit the scope and options of political choices available to the authorities, non-governmental entities and private individuals in a country.[6]

The solutions proposed by the author in both definitions also appeared in the literature on the subject in Poland, including:
a) the issue of threats arising within the state;
b) actions or sequences of events that in a short time affect the existence and functioning of the state and society.

In the case of literature on the subject available in Western countries, mainly the USA, several issues influenced the definition of military threats. First of all, threats to the security of states after the end of the Cold War became less obvious.[7] Secondly, as mentioned above, the limitation of the military potential of states on a global scale

[3] B. Balcerowicz, *Wybrane problemy obronności państwa. Materiały studyjne*, Warszawa 1999, p. 50.

[4] D. Majchrzak, *Bezpieczeństwo militarne Polski*, Warszawa 2015, p. 14.

[5] R.H. Ullman, "Redefining Security," *International Security*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1983), p. 133.

[6] Ibid., p. 133.

[7] *RUSI State Threats Taskforce: 'Assessing the Responses'*, Conference Report, London 2021, pp. 3-4, at https://static.rusi.org/406-CR-State-Threats-Taskforce-2-web-final.pdf, 11 IV 2025.

reduced the level of military threats. The third issue concerns the growing influence of non-state actors on national and international security after the end of the Cold War, especially after September 11, 2001. The asymmetric and hybrid activities they conducted went beyond the traditional definition of military threats. This resulted in the hybrid threat becoming paramount in the scientific discourse in the West and *de facto* replacing the use of the concept of a military threat.[8] In Poland, however, both concepts functioned in the literature on the subject.

The report of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Mitigating Space Threats through Norms, Regulations and Principles of Responsible Behavior included the position of the Russian Federation, which defined a 'military threat' as a state of relations between states or within them, characterized by a real possibility of armed conflict between opposing parties and a high degree of readiness of a given state (group of states) or separatist (terrorist) organizations to use military force (armed violence).[9]

Branislav L. Slantchev defined the concept of 'military threat' as any physical movement (actions taken) that simultaneously meets two criteria. First, it is costly by nature, also for the opponent, who must take a specific reaction. In addition, it changes the distribution of forces during a crisis. Actions taken are associated with costs incurred not only of a military nature, but also economic, political and social. This includes, among others, the maintenance and supply of troops with necessary means. To physical movements that meet the above two assumptions, which also affect increased preparation for combat, the author includes:[10]

1) moving naval, air, or land forces near a potential combat zone;
2) placing nuclear forces on alert;
3) canceling military personnel's leave and calling up reservists;
4) conducting military maneuvers and demonstrations in strategically sensitive areas;
5) occupying or fortifying strategic positions;
6) concluding agreements with third parties to allow the passage of troops or grant overflight rights;
7) establishing military bases;
8) financing or supplying third parties hostile to the adversary, especially if they are currently engaged in a conflict;
9) ordering a full-scale general mobilization.

Moses Bongani Khanyile pointed out that in the traditional approach, military threats are associated with the possibility of using armed force against another state by an aggressor.[11]

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[8] F.G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington 2007, pp. 7-59; Id., "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Focus on Land Warfare*, iss. 52 (2009), pp. 34-39, at https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA516871.pdf, 17 III 2025.

[9] *Reducing Space Threats Through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours. Report of the Secretary-General*, p. 78, at http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/A-76-77-E.pdf, 24 X 2024.

[10] B.L. Slantchev, *Military Threats. The Costs of Coercion and the Price of Peace*, Cambridge–New York 2011, p. 52.

[11] M.B. Khanyile, *South Africa's Security Relations with the Mercosur Countries*, Pretoria 2003, pp. 29-30, at https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/23435/01chapter1.pdf, 23 X 2024.

In Poland, the term 'military threats' is defined in the literature on the subject in various contexts. In the first half of the 1990s, the definitions of this concept presented by Stanisław Dworecki and Andrzej Madejski can be found. Additionally, the proposal of Bolesław Balcerowicz from 1997 is worth mentioning here. All these notions, especially the term in Stanisław Dworecki's understanding, constituted – to a significant extent – the basis for further analysis of military threats by other authors. According to Andrzej Madejski, the concept of 'military threat' is the probability of a political and military situation in which the independence (sovereignty) of the state (nation) could be lost or violated.[12]

Stanisław Dworecki defined the term 'military threats' to the security of the state as a combination of political and military events, in which two situations may arise because of military action, e.g. an armed attack. Firstly, the limitation or loss of conditions for the undisturbed existence and development of the state (nation). The second issue concerns the violation or loss of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state.[13] Bolesław Balcerowicz, on the other hand, defined the term 'military threat' as the existence of the probability of the use of armed violence by a potential enemy.[14] Nevertheless, the proposals from the 1990s did not take into account the possibility of using military force by non-state entities.[15]

Bolesław Balcerowicz pointed out the necessity of supplementing the above definitions with entities existing within the state that could also use military force. He proposed to expand on Stanisław Dworecki's proposal with the phrase: that a series of internal events in which the use of armed violence may result in a limitation or loss of conditions for undisturbed existence and development, or even a loss of sovereignty. Bolesław Balcerowicz also modified his own definition presented earlier, according to which the term 'military threats' denoted the existence of a real probability of the use of armed violence by a potential opponent or violator of internal order. The author noted that they may take an extreme form as war threats, i.e. a situation in which there was a real probability of direct use of armed violence, in which the (potential) enemy aims to achieve its goals through war.[16]

In the *Dictionary of National Security Terms* devised by the Department of Strategic and Defense Studies of the National Defense University in 2002, Stanisław Dworecki's

[12] A. Madejski, J.S. Zieliński, *Prognoza sytuacji polityczno-militarnej i wynikających z niej zagrożeń RP*, Warszawa 1994, p. 10.

[13] S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa (Wybrane problemy)*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 25, 82.

[14] B. Balcerowicz, *Obrona państwa średniego*, Warszawa 1997, p. 72.

[15] A. Misiuk, J. Itrich-Drabarek, M. Dobrowolska-Opała (eds.), *Encyklopedia bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, Warszawa 2021, p. 296; M. Czternastek, G. Torbiczuk, "Bezpieczeństwo militarne państwa," *Współczesne Problemy Zarządzania. Zeszyty naukowe*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2018), p. 84, at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354994670_Bezpieczenstwo_militarne_panstwa, 15 X 2024.

[16] B. Balcerowicz, *Bezpieczeństwo Militarne. (szkic do skryptu - materiał pomocniczy do przedmiotu: Bezpieczeństwo Militarne)*, p. 4, at https://www.studocu.com/pl/document/wyzsza-szkola-bankowa-we-wroclawiu/security/boleslaw-balcerowicz-bezpieczenstwo-militarne/40574756?sid=b2bee06a-c948-4c28-b830-d1bde1702a681786113327, 24 IX 2024; A. Misiuk, J. Itrich-Drabarek, M. Dobrowolska-Opała (eds.), *Encyklopedia*..., pp. 296-297.

definition of the term 'military threat to the state' was adopted.[17] In the 2008 edition, this concept was defined as the use or a threat to use military force by states. At the same time, it was indicated that organizations that are not subjects recognized by international law can also pose threats to the functioning of states. This concept was further simplified and defined as military weakness and the state's unpreparedness to defend itself.[18] For comparison, in the 2020 *Dictionary of Security Terms*, the term 'military threats' is defined as any potential or existing events (actions) resulting from the use of armed force against another entity.[19]

In the 2012 *National Security Strategic Review*, military threats included the use or threat to use military force by entities recognized by international law but also included the ability of non-state structures to use armed violence (terrorist attacks) to achieve their own goals. In this context, the term 'military threat' meant a real possibility of using armed violence.[20]

Other proposals are also worth noting, and they are distinguished primarily by the use of military force – armed violence. For comparison, according to Michał Huzarski, military threats are the possibility of the opposing party to use military forces and means as well as the implementation of intentions considered by the international community as elements of these threats, i.e. loss of sovereignty and territorial integrity.[21]

Zbigniew Ciekanowski describes the concept of a 'military threat' as a direct use or threat to use armed forces (military force) by states, but also organizations that are not subjects recognized by international law.[22]

According to Włodzimierz Fehler, the term 'military threat' defines a situation in which the normal functioning of the international system, a group of states or a state, is disrupted by the unauthorized use or threat to use armed violence in any form.[23]

Dariusz Majchrzak defined the concept of a 'military threat' as an event or the probability of such an event occurring that affects the vital interests of the state and may

[17] W. Łepkowski (ed.), *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, ed. 4, Warszawa 2002, p. 167.

[18] J. Kaczmarek, W. Łepkowski, B. Zdrodowski (eds.), *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, ed. 6, Warszawa 2008, p. 176, at https://elk.wans.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Slownik_terminow_-z_zakreu_bezpieczenstwa_narodoweg.pdf, 28 X 2024.

[19] J. Pawłowski, B. Zdrodowski, M. Kuliczkowski (eds.), *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa*, Toruń 2020, p. 277.

[20] "Aspekty bezpieczeństwa militarnego w ujęciu Strategicznego Przeglądu Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego," *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, no. 3–4(23–24) (2012), pp. 38-39, at https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/informacje-o-bbn/publikacje/materialy-archiwalne/kwartalnik-bezpieczens/4343,Kwartalnik-Bezpieczenstwo-Narodowe-nr-23-24-Glowne-ustalenia-i-rekomendacje-SPBN.html, 15 X 2024.

[21] M. Huzarski, *Zmienne podstawy bezpieczeństwa i obronności państwa*, Warszawa 2009, p. 22.

[22] Z. Ciekanowski, "Rodzaje i źródła zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa," *Bezpieczeństwo i Technika Pożarnicza*, no. 1 (2010), pp. 27-46, at https://yadda.icm.edu.pl/baztech/element/bwmeta1.element.baztech-article-BGPK-2860-1288, 10 X 2024.

[23] W. Fehler, *Bezpieczeństwo wewnętrzne współczesnej Polski. Aspekty teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Warszawa 2012, p. 25.

result in the loss of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will also trigger the need to respond with the state's military forces and means.[24]

According to Sławomir Wojciechowski, the term 'military threat' means a real possibility of using armed violence, as well as the ability of non-state structures to use armed violence.[25]

Agnieszka Rogozińska observes that military threats occur when there is a likelihood of the enemy using armed forces and physical violence.[26]

Magdalena Tomala and Maryana Prokop defined military threats as the use or threats to use military force by an international entity, as well as those that may come from within a state. This concept means a real possibility of using armed forces for the purpose of armed violence. The authors also use the more extensive term – war threats – to describe a situation involving the possibility of using military force against a state to achieve political and other goals by entities in military-political relations. In this approach, the characteristic feature is not the potential possibility, but the intention to use military force.[27]

The remaining proposals should be presented in a different context. According to Przemysław Mazur, a military threat represents the effect of a combination of various causes, interests, plans.[28] A slightly extended definition of this term was proposed by Marek Kubiński, who defines it as the result of a combination of various reasons that may lead to the use of armed violence.[29]

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[24] D. Majchrzak, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, pp. 32-33; Id., "Teoretyczne i praktyczne aspekty bezpieczeństwa militarnego Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej. Czynniki bezpieczeństwa militarnego Polski. Wojna w Ukrainie," *Wiedza Obronna*, vol. 282, no. 1 (2023), pp. 9-11, at https://wiedzaobronna.edu.pl/index.php/wo/article/view/213/207, 17 X 2024.

[25] S. Wojciechowski, "Pojęcie przemocy zbrojnej w badaniach nad bezpieczeństwem militarnym," *Wiedza Obronna*, vol. 279, no. 2 (2022), p. 74, at https://wiedzaobronna.edu.pl/index.php/wo/article/view/160/179, 16 X 2024.

[26] A. Rogozińska, "Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy wynikające z rosyjskich działań hybrydowych," *Kwartalnik BELLONA*, vol. 715, no. 4 (2023), p. 37, at https://kwartalnikbellona.com/article/544922/pl, 21 X 2024; A. Rogozińska, "Zagrożenia jako główna determinanta bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego," *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2021), pp. 59-60.

[27] M. Tomala, M. Prokop, "Zagrożenia militarne i wojenne a bezpieczeństwo gospodarcze państwa. Case study: konflikt zbrojny między Ukrainą a Rosją w 2014 roku," *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2021), p. 42, at https://studiadesecuritate.uken.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2021/12/3_Tomala_Prokop.pdf, 24 IX 2024.

[28] R. Kopeć, P. Mazur, *Odstraszanie militarne w XXI wieku. Polska – NATO – Rosja*, Kraków 2017, p. 57, at https://bibliotekanauki.pl/books/1966342, 14 IX 2024.

[29] M. Kubiński, "Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa," *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Securitate et Educatione Civili*, vol. 3 (2013), pp. 73-74, at https://studiadesecuritate.uken.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2018/10/Annales-2013-1.pdf, 20 X 2024; R. Chrobak, M. Kubiński, "Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa," *Zeszyty Naukowe AON*, vol. 93, no. 4 (2013), p. 259, at https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/119717, 20 X 2024; M. Kubiński, "Militarne zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa," in O. Wasiuta, P. Mazur (eds.), *Współczesne problemy bezpieczeństwa państwa. Księga pamiątkowa ku czci Tomasza Jana Biedronia*, Stalowa Wola 2017, pp. 38-39.

Ryszard Zięba uses a different approach. He does not define the concept of 'military threats', but indicates what falls within their scope, namely:

1) the potential of nuclear weapons that states have, as well as the possibility of their proliferation;
2) conventional weapons, i.e. the conventional arms race in qualitative (technological) categories, combined with the introduction of new weapon systems, and quantitative ones. In this respect, it is necessary to indicate (local) armed conflicts and increased military activity as threats to the security of states. In addition, the arms race is associated with the arms trade and smuggling of small arms and light weapons;
3) the level of military expenditure, especially their upward tendencies;
4) the development of political terrorism.[30]

In summary, since the 1990s, the definition of the term military threats has been changing, but most of them are distinguished by the issue of the use of force. This concept can be simplified to denote a real possibility of using armed violence by states, but also non-state entities, including private ones.[31] It should be emphasized that in the case of attempts to define the term military threats, in the Polish literature on the subject, a significant number of authors provide a rather general definition of this concept, but at the same time specify its sources and forms of use of armed force considered as threats. These include, among others, Zbigniew Ciekanowski, Marek Kubiński, Przemysław Mazur, Agnieszka Rogozińska, Sławomir Wojciechowski.

Definitions of the concept of 'military threats' in the literature on the subject in Poland distinguish three basic elements, present in a significant part of the proposals:

1) the possibility of a political or military situation posing a threat to the most important values for the existence and functioning of states, as well as societies and the international community;
2) entities creating the threat, i.e. states and non-state entities;
3) the possibility of using (and having) armed violence, e.g. military potential from outside and inside the state.

However, due to the specific nature of defining military threats, three equally important elements should also be taken into account, namely:

1) conscious actions aimed at achieving a set political and/or military goal;
2) a fairly limited time of action in which visible effects occur;
3) a military response by a state or non-state entity to hostile actions.

In the context of the difficulties in defining military threats, two problems should be pointed out. Firstly, in the absence of a clearly defined enemy, a gradual marginalization of military threats takes place, while at the same time the importance of non-military

[30] R. Zięba, "Współczesne wyzwania i zagrożenia dla bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego," *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2016), pp. 12-18, at www.irjournal.pl/pdf-124521-52588, 20 X 2024.

[31] B. Balcerowicz, *Obrona...*, p. 73; Z. Ciekanowski, "Rodzaje i źródła...," pp. 27-46; M. Pietraś, "Wojna hybrydowa Rosji na wschodzie Ukrainy w kontekście współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych," in W. Baluk, M. Doroszko (eds.), *Wojna hybrydowa Rosji przeciwko Ukrainie w latach 2014–2016*, Lublin 2017, pp. 17-18.

threats, as well as hybrid threats is emphasized.[32] Secondly, hybrid actions make it difficult to define military threats, as they can be deliberately directed against society in order to affect the security of the state, for example by limiting the possibilities of using or developing military potential. Moreover, actions taken by Russia against European countries, especially Central and Eastern Europe, are gradually blurring the differences between traditionally understood military and hybrid threats.

A separate problem is the issue of approaching the significance and definition of military threats in the near future, i.e. the current decade, in the context of the rivalry between the United States and the People's Republic of China, including the military sphere. The Chinese People's Liberation Army is significantly expanding its military potential, both its offensive and defensive capabilities, which is a source of concern for other countries in the Indo-Pacific region. China has also significantly strengthened its 'strategic deterrence capabilities' by expanding its nuclear forces. In addition, there is a 'specific' arms race between the United States and the People's Republic of China, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, including the introduction of new generations of weapons, e.g. 5th and 6th generation combat aircraft, the development of artificial intelligence (AI), naval forces, unmanned systems, electronic warfare systems, hypersonic missiles. This situation means that the US Armed Forces may lose their advantages in the long term. There is also the issue of 'unifying' Taiwan using military force. Another important issue is the threat associated with the development of nuclear capabilities, including primarily the US, Russia and China, and the return to multilateral arms control and reduction.[33] These problems are strictly related to military threats, which should influence the re-evaluation of the approach to this issue in the literature on the subject in Western countries. Focusing only on hybrid threats and omitting the definition of military threats in the new international situation may significantly affect national and international security.

2. SPECIFIC SCOPE OF MILITARY THREATS.

In the traditional approach, military threats are of utmost importance for security. They are associated with the potential or real use of armed violence directed against the basic elements of the state as a subject of international law, i.e. the population, territory

[32] K. Szwarc, "Uwarunkowania ciągłości działania systemu zarządzania kryzysowego," *Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego*, vol 5, no. 1 (2014), p. 207.

[33] *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, 25 March 2025, pp. 9-21, at https://www.odni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2025-Unclassified-Report.pdf, 14 IV 2025; H.J. Rim, "Military Threats to Security," in L. Hebron (ed.), *Asian Security in the Age of Globalization*, New York 2024, pp. 34-46, at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378951950_Military_Threats_to_Security, 12 IV 2025; R. Gottemoeller, Arms Control Is Not Dead Yet: America Should Pursue Parallel Nuclear Negotiations With China and Russia," *Foreign Affairs*, 15 April (2025), at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/arms-control-not-dead-yet, 23 IV 2025; M.A. Milley, E. Schmidt, America Isn't Ready for the Wars of the Future: And They're Already Here," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 103, no. 5 (2024), at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/ai-america-ready-wars-future-ukraine-israel-mark-milley-eric-schmidt, 24 X 2024.

and authority. Their significance is essential not only for ensuring national security, but also for international security. By creating various types of threats, military operations affect the functioning of the state's authorities and defense system, as well as the values and model of life adopted by society. They also impact the level of security and stability on a global, regional and subregional scale.[34]

Defining the scope of military threats is a subjective task, as it results from the international position and the raison d'état of states, which includes ensuring military security. In this case, both the problems directly or indirectly related to great powers, as well as their weight, differ significantly from other states, especially small and weak ones. Moreover, they are dynamic and change over time. Military threats include both military and non-military issues, since they are linked to all spheres and areas of social life in the state. In practice, the lack of regulation of existing problems, contradictions and tensions of diverse origins may result in the creation of various types of military threats:[35]

1) historical – the existence of historical hostility and the influence of traditions and historical conflicts, previous experiences on relations between states, or the perception of other ethnic groups;
2) political – justifying the actions of a state, nation, ethnic group, which includes the implementation of its own goals;
3) economic – disproportions in economic development, including the standard of living of residents, access to natural resources;
4) social – demography and problems of uncontrolled migration, social stratification and inequality, infectious diseases, hunger, organized crime;
5) ecological – processes related to degradation and contamination of the natural environment, natural disasters, climate change;
6) ethno-religious – related to national and nationalist issues, religious fanaticism and extremism, and in particular, ethnic and religious divisions;
7) cultural-civilizational – the most important values for individual civilizations;
8) cyber – threats related to cyberspace, access to sources of information transmission, i.e. the Internet, information warfare as well as attacks on critical infrastructure.

[34] B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. 2, New York–London–Toronto–Sydney–Tokio–Singapore 1991, pp. 116-118; "Aspekty bezpieczeństwa...," pp. 39-40; S. Wojciechowski, "Pojęcie...," pp. 69-75; R. Zięba, "Współczesne...," pp. 13-14; A. Rogozińska, "Zagrożenia jako...," pp. 59-60.

[35] B. Buzan, *People*..., pp. 116-118; S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia*..., pp. 27-29, 82-92; M. Pietraś, "Specyfika...," pp. 38-39; K. Marzęda-Młynarska, "Koncepcja „nietradycyjnych" zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa," in H. Chałupczak, K. Marzęda-Młynarska, M. Pietraś, R. Sudoł (eds.), *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa*..., p. 47; *Encyklopedia*..., p. 296; "Aspekty bezpieczeństwa...," pp. 39-40; R. Szpyra, *Bezpieczeństwo militarne państwa*, Warszawa 2012, p. 74; S. Wojciechowski, "Pojęcie...," pp. 69-74; R. Zięba, "Współczesne...," pp. 12-18; R. Chrobak, M. Kubiński, "Zagrożenia...", p. 258; M. Kubiński, "Militarne zagrożenia...," p. 38; W. Krztoń, "Zagrożenia militarne wyzwaniem dla bezpieczeństwa państwa," *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Informatyki, Zarządzania i Administracji*, no. 4(37) (2016), pp. 103, 109; M. Wrzosek, "Współczesne zagrożenia militarne bezpieczeństwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," in J. Kręcikij (ed.), *Rozważania o obronności Rzeczypospolitej. Doktryny i rzeczywistość*, Kraków 2017, p. 12, at https://repozytorium.uafm.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/5ae75839-ae63-4d24-a493--d570658cf3db/content, 10 X 2024.

They also constitute a major challenge for 'traditional' military alliances, which were prepared for an attack from outside, using conventional or nuclear weapons. These threats also endanger the efficient functioning of the military potential of states.

Military threats are supplemented by military sources including, among others, the issue of militarization in some international regions, uncontrolled arms trade, the possibility of acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and asymmetric (hybrid) threats and actions. Military security means the ability of the state authorities to defend themselves against external and internal military threats.[36]

In the absence of peaceful resolution of disputes, military threats may arise. They occur when the national interests and political goals of a given state are contrary to the interests and goals of other states. They primarily affect the raison d'état and vital interests of the state and society, including, above all, independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and in extreme cases, the biological survival of the nation and the very existence of the state. Existing military threats also lead to the breakdown of normal political relations and the intention to resolve political, economic or social problems by 'brute force'. In such a situation, it is necessary to use various forms and means of armed struggle to resolve them. Conducting military operations, in practice, may lead to incurring high costs, including casualties among the population, material losses and cause irreversible damage to the natural environment. It should be added that military threats also arise when the goals and policies of non-state entities, including separatists operating on the territory of a given state, force them to respond by using military instruments to ensure their survival. It should also be emphasized that in the military sphere, states have lost their monopoly on the use of armed forces. In addition to states, various non-state entities are taking action, which includes participating in armed conflicts. As a result, this de-monopolization has also caused military threats to arise when the goals and policies of non-state entities, e.g. rebels operating on the territory of a given state, force them to counteract by using military instruments to ensure their survival. A particularly important issue is the 'low' effectiveness of states' response to various forms of 'activity' of non-state entities through the use of 'traditional' military instruments, e.g. deterrence with military potential.[37]

Military threats are always associated with the threat of using armed forces by a given state both directly and indirectly as a military instrument to achieve a specific goal or to influence the position or policy of other states and non-state entities. Taking action based on a political decision, including the use of military potential, is of fundamental importance in the emergence of military threats. It is the political will

[36] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, London 1998, p. 50; Z. Szenes, "Military Security Today. New Threats, New Wars, New Theories," in G. Finszter, I. Sabjanics, Budapest (eds.), *Security Challenges in the 21st Century*, 2018, p. 72.

[37] B. Buzan. *People...*, pp. 116-118; B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security...*, pp. 57-58; M. Pietraś, "Specyfika...," pp. 28, 31-32, 40; D. Majchrzak, "Teoretyczne...," pp. 9-11; Id., *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 33; H. Wyrębek, R. Zakrzewski, W. Załoga, "Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa," in Z. Ciekanowski (ed.), *Współczesne zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa. Część druga*, Biała Podlaska 2021, p. 26, at https://bibliotekanauki.pl/chapters/2191274, 18 X 2024; M. Wrzosek, "Współczesne...", p. 13.

of decision-makers and the conscious nature of the actions taken that determine their instigation. Military threats, compared to other types of hazards, are often purposeful and directed.[38] It should be noted that the effectiveness of the threat to use military force as a means of coercion requires that two assumptions be made. Firstly, the opponent must be convinced that there is a sufficient probability of using violence if the demands put forward are not met. Secondly, taking up the fight would be significantly disadvantageous for the opponent in relation to his acceptance of the presented concessions.[39] In addition, existing military threats are an attractive instrument that political elites, both the government and the opposition, can use for domestic policy purposes. In such a case, on the one hand, the government can use them to increase socio-political cohesion or to divert attention from important internal problems and crises. On the other hand, the opposition can use existing military threats to weaken the government. For distinct reasons, military threats used for the sake of domestic policy purposes can be or are deliberately created and 'exaggerated'.[40]

On the one hand, the main source of military threats seems to be states with large military potential on a global or regional scale. On the other hand, there are militarily weak or, in an extreme form, defenseless states, which may provoke potential opponents to use violence. The threat is posed by failing states, on whose territory terrorist organizations find shelter or are penetrated by cross-border structures of organized crime. In these states, links and cooperation between organized crime structures and parties to the conflict or terrorist organizations may develop. In addition, it is also necessary to point out the emergence of non-state actors, including private ones, which include extremist ethnic and religious groups, social groups, terrorist organizations, private armies, so-called migrant warriors, rebel organizations, organized crime structures – including drug cartels, international crime syndicates, pirates and private military corporations. These entities pose a threat to national and international security by the possibility to use armed violence. These structures may possess significant arsenals (military potential), as well as armed formations of a diverse nature which do not have the status of the military or legal law enforcement forces. Although these groups are considered as illegal entities for states, they may have an advantage over them in terms of real combat capabilities. They may also possess modern technologies. However, their military or terrorist activities also go beyond state borders. They have a transnational character, and their activities are consciously directed towards societies. Non-state actors, including private ones, in certain situations also benefit from unofficial support

[38] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security*..., pp. 57-58; S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia*..., p. 25; B. Balcerowicz, *Obrona*..., pp. 73-75; A. Misiuk, J. Itrich-Drabarek, M. Dobrowolska-Opała (eds.), *Encyklopedia*..., pp. 296-297; "Aspekty bezpieczeństwa...," pp. 39-40; Z. Ciekanowski, "Rodzaje i źródła...," pp. 27-46; S. Wojciechowski, "Military Security in Central and Eastern Europe – from Overarching Principles to Current NATO Perspectives," *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces*, vol. 51, no. 3 (2019), p. 549, at https://zeszyty-naukowe.awl.edu.pl/article/135009/en, 16 X 2024; S. Wojciechowski, "Pojęcie...," pp. 68-75.

[39] B.L. Slantchev, *Military*..., p. 3.

[40] B. Buzan, *People*..., pp. 117-118.

from great powers and large countries, which makes it difficult to combat them. They can also receive assistance from transnational corporations.[41] In the case of non-state participants, controversy is caused by terrorist armed formations, especially by the fact whether they should be identified with military threats. Doubts may be raised that not in all cases do these groups use military means of combat, and if they are used in terrorist activities, they are utilized by organizations treated by states as illegal. However, in order to be recognized as a military threat terrorist armed formations should meet the following four conditions:[42]

1) the source of threats from terrorist organizations should be located within the territory of a foreign state;
2) the effects of terrorist organizations' actions mainly threaten the vital interests of the state;
3) the actions of terrorist organizations are associated with armed violence (use of weapons);
4) military actions taken by terrorist organizations force military counteraction on the part of the state or states, but also other non-state groups.

Military threats differ in terms of both the level of armed force use and the assumed goal. The manner of using armed forces – direct or indirect – determines their form. Indirect forms are characterized by the use of the military without engaging in armed combat or with minimal involvement, which translates into intimidation or deterrence. Direct hostile use of armed forces usually means armed aggression, defined in the United Nations resolution of 1974 as the use of armed forces by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or independence of another state.[43]

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41 "Aspekty bezpieczeństwa...," pp. 39-40; M. Pietraś, "Specyfika...," pp. 23, 27, 32, 34; M. Pietraś, "Wojna...," pp. 17-22; R. Wróblewski, *Scenariusze sytuacji kryzysowych oraz wojennych i ich wpływ na planowanie sił zbrojnych państwa – członka NATO. Cz. 2: Misja, scenariusze, strategie, struktury*, Warszawa 2000, p. 76; M. B. Khanyile, *South...*, pp. 29-30; H. Wyrębek, R. Zakrzewski, W. Załoga, "System bezpieczeństwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," in Z. Ciekanowski (ed.), *Współczesne zagrożenia...*, Biała Podlaska 2021, p. 12, at https://bibliotekanauki.pl/chapters/2191275, 18 X 2024; A. Włodarski, A. Święcka, "Bezpieczeństwo w aspekcie zagrożeń militarnych," *Zeszyty Naukowe SGSP*, no. 46, vol. 2 (2013), p. 119, at http://yadda.icm.edu.pl/baztech/element/bwmeta1.element.baztech-48b4af56-7d7d-44f3-8c37-51dbf017be47, 10 X 2024; J. Mokrzycki, C. Pawlak, "Budowanie odporności państwa gwarancją jego bezpieczeństwa," in G. Ciechanowski, K. Ligęza, A. Rurak (eds.), *Kształtowanie przestrzeni bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Gdynia 2019, p. 39; W. Smolski, "Bezpieczeństwo militarne państwa," in A. Urbanek (ed.), *Wybrane problemy bezpieczeństwa. Dziedziny bezpieczeństwa*, Słupsk 2013, p. 79, at https://cms.upsl.edu.pl/content/download/44401/file/WPB_DB.pdf, 18 X 2024.

42 S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia...*, pp. 93-103; R. Szpyra, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, pp. 73-74, 101; R. Szpyra, "Military Security within the Framework of Security Studies: Research Results," *Connections*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2014), pp. 65-66, at https://www.jstor.org/stable/26326368, 14 X 2024; D. Majchrzak, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 29.

43 S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia...*, pp. 93-94; D. Majchrzak, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 29; M. B. Khanyile, *South...*, pp. 29-30; A. Rogozińska, "Zagrożenia jako...," pp. 59-60; A. Miler, "Charakterystyka i uwarunkowania zagrożeń bezpieczeństwa państwa," *Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Morskiego*, vol. 4 (2010), pp. 192-198, at https://wdiom.amw.gdynia.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/RBM_2010_cz_3.pdf, 10 X 2024; T. Kaczmarski, A. Bogucka, "Współczesne zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa," *Zeszyty Naukowe Pro*

The forms of military threats, which include both direct and indirect use of armed forces, include:[44]

1) demonstration of force;
2) military blockade;
3) military blackmail;
4) military provocation;
5) military sabotage;
6) border incidents;
7) armed attacks by informal groups;
8) limited use of armed violence;
9) armed border clash;
10) armed conflict in the border zone;
11) local crises and conflicts;
12) conflict between states.

The above twelve forms of military threats proposed by Stanisław Dworecki in 1994 require supplementation, though by including the following threats related to asymmetric and hybrid activities, as well as the increased activity of non-state entities, including private ones:

1) intensification of intelligence activity (penetration) towards a specific country;
2) military assistance to the opposition in another country through the supply of combat means and the presence of military advisers;
3) asymmetric actions;
4) hybrid actions;
5) making one's territory available to another country in order to commit aggression against a third country;
6) proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In the case of asymmetric and hybrid operations, their scope simultaneously includes the issue of military and non-military threats. They are characterized by the growing participation of private non-state actors, which are also used unofficially by states or transnational corporations. Asymmetric actions are also consciously used to 'trigger' or increase the level of military threats. In addition to traditional military forms, they include diverse types of irregular operations, terrorist attacks, criminal activities and various forms of violence directed against civilians. In practice, they take on various configurations. The growth of hybrid threats poses a serious challenge to the security and most important interests of states. Entities decide to conduct hybrid operations

Publico Bono, vol. 1, no. 1 (2022), pp. 154-155, at https://zn-ppb.pl/resources/html/article/details?id=234588, 9 X 2024.

[44] *Encyklopedia...*, p. 296; S. Dworecki, *Zagrożenia...*, p. 93-94; D. Majchrzak, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 29; M. B. Khanyile, *South...*, p., 29-30; A. Rogozińska, "Zagrożenia jako...," p. 59-60; A. Miler, "Charakterystyka...," p. 192-198, at https://wdiom.amw.gdynia.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/RBM_2010_cz_3.pdf, 10 X 2024; W. Smolski, *Bezpieczeństwo...*, p. 79; M. Kubiński, "Zagrożenia...," p. 72; R. Chrobak, M. Kubiński, "Zagrożenia...," p. 252; M. Kubiński, "Militarne...," p. 37; T. Kaczmarski, A. Bogucka, "Współczesne...," p. 154-155.

because by using traditional means they are unable to effectively oppose a side with a dominant 'classical' military potential.[45] More importantly, they consciously target societies, not states.

As far as the issue of military threats goes, the possibility of counteracting their emergence and defending against them when they do occur, as well as the sensitivity of international entities to them, seems to be of great significance. In such a case, this is varied and results from the international position of a state, especially in the military sphere and its geopolitical location. Geographical distance of a state should also be considered. The greater the distance, the less susceptible the country is. The problem of military threats is varied, dynamic and changing over time in individual international regions.[46] This issue is particularly apparent after the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

For some member states of the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, Russia's military activity is not treated as important compared to, for example, illegal migration.

SUMMARY

In the literature on the subject in Poland, no uniform definition of the term 'military threats' has been developed. Considering the scope of this concept, the most important element is the use of armed violence (military force) by states or various non-state structures against another entity. In a broad sense, the term itself should include six of its most important elements.

What distinguishes military threats from other threats is primarily the specificity of their scope. Their sources significantly exceed the military sphere and encompass all areas of social life. Compared to other types of threats, they are often purposeful and targeted. They concern vital interests of the state – raison d'état but also benefits of non-state entities. In a situation where disputes cannot be resolved by peaceful means, it is necessary to use armed forces in various forms to achieve a compromise or to achieve one's own goals. It should be emphasized that the political decision to use armed violence is of fundamental importance in creating military threats. As a result of escalation, in extreme cases, they can lead to the collapse of the state or threaten the biological survival of the nation.

Military potential or, in extreme circumstances, total disarmament is the primary source of military threats. They can be external or internal. In this context, military threats are created by states or various non-state entities. Furthermore, the participation of private entities is important in the framework of asymmetric and hybrid actions.

[45] M. Pietraś, "Wojna...," pp. 14-26; Id., "Specyfika...," pp. 32; A. Raţiu, S. Nate, P. Tudorache, "Hybrid Conflicts Actors' Action Models Analysis," *International Conference. The Knowledge Based Organization*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2021), pp. 113-116, at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372531831_Military_Actions_Characteristics_in_Hybrid_Operational_Environments, 10 IV 2025.

[46] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, J. de Wilde, *Security*..., p. 59-70.

Military threats are an attractive instrument that the authorities and the opposition can consciously use for the needs of domestic policy, as well as through their appropriate interpretation.

The specificity of military threats is a dynamic process that leads to the expansion of their scope, and asymmetric threats are effectively becoming a part of them. In addition, the boundaries between military and hybrid threats are blurring. The problem of the 'gradual' absorption and/or blurring of the boundaries between military and hybrid threats calls for further continued research. In the context of the activities of, among others, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, it is becoming necessary to adapt the definition of the concept and scope of military threats to the actual international situation in the international scientific discourse.

The problem addressed in this article, i.e. the specificity of military threats to security, requires further research. First, military threats are a complex and dynamic process, which is also influenced by hybrid operations. Second, the introduction of innovative technologies is associated with the creation of new systems and generations of weapons, as well as 'non-military' means, the use of which may cause greater losses than classic weapons. The third issue concerns the influence of various non-state entities on the 'creation' of military threats on a local, regional – or in extreme cases – global scale.

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