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GLOBALIZATION AFTER 9/11

Krystian Piątkowski

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Krystian Piątkowski\*

## A New Type of Warfare?

The form and ideological message of the attacks of September 11 could only have come as a surprise to dilettante commentators and pundits given to routine, stale analysis. Yet the events that took place then in Washington and New York could have been foreseen – of course, only as regards their essence, not their specific parameters. And indeed they had been foreseen. For there has long been discussion among experts on the evolution of warfare and on the very concept of war. The person who shows surprise at the manner in which the United States was attacked has forgotten a basic truth that military historians and warfare researchers are mindful of: no war is an exact copy of previous conflicts in terms of the rules, methods, and means of combat. Thus, it cannot be judged according to the same criteria.

It should also be remembered that the evolution of military conflicts and warfare proceeds in stages marked by fundamental changes in concepts, organization, and developments in military technologies. It is usually only with a certain perspective that we are able to assess the evolutionary nature of these changes, as was the case with the industrialization of the battlefield before and during World War I.<sup>1</sup>

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This article is not intended to provide an analysis of all the fundamental evolutionary stages of the phenomenon called war. However, I would like to try to demonstrate that we are presently witnessing a subsequent stage of this evolution.

## The Evolution of War and Warfare

Without going back too far in time, let us examine the major stages of the evolution of war (military conflict) since the end of World War II. Since 1945, several constituents of war have remained basically unchanged. The subjects of war were states and their armed forces, which implied the acknowledgement and establishment of a series of rules related to the conduct of warfare (i.e., being at war as a separate legal state, international law and regulations, rules on the treatment of prisoners of war and civilians, etc.). Of course, there were also “dirty wars” (Algeria, Vietnam, and Afghanistan), in which armed forces were countered by guerrilla movements organized to a greater or lesser extent. However, even in such cases, the side with regular forces would try to adapt the generally accepted rules of combat to their specific needs. Armed forces were primarily trained to fight other armed forces. The organization of troops has changed slightly: they were mainly divided into three services and from there into operational and tactical formations. In the area of technology, two important events have shaped the views on warfare:

1. **The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**, particularly strategic and tactical nuclear weapons (which dominated the way war was conceived in the 1950s and 1960s), and their subsequent proliferation. This led to the emergence of new types of weapons, as well as to the development of a wide range of protective means and countermeasures. It also influenced the development of the concept of combat (the dispersal of the battlefield).
2. **The technological revolution in the 1980s and 1990s**, i.e. the mass introduction of precision guided weapons, digital technologies of

surveillance, command and communication, as well as new material technologies. The battlefield became dominated by the technological factor and this qualitative dominance enabled the armed forces of affluent countries (since only those could afford to buy the expensive new generation weapons) to gain control in terms of firepower, speed, and the precision of attack.

Throughout the post-war period, two concepts of command and control rivaled each other. In the Warsaw Pact, the idea of centralized and hierarchical command based on the minimization of risk and ready-made algorithms for managing all types of actions prevailed. The opponents of that posture highlighted the significance of the flexible use of available potential and initiative among the lower ranks of command, depending on the dynamically evolving conditions of managing combat. This was the position military commanders in Western states tended to uphold.

This virtually canonical view of the evolution of warfare was not disturbed until the 1990s when a need emerged to use military forces in a new kind of operations, i.e., peacekeeping activities. These operations, ones which extended beyond the classic definition of war (and were even contrary to the main mission of the armed forces, i.e. combat), were becoming the dominant form of operations for Western forces. This gave rise to a number of definition, training, and technical concerns that have yet to be resolved (for instance, whether to form units trained exclusively for peacekeeping operations, or whether to use “ordinary” troops for that purpose).

All these developments have long been subject to attempts to embrace them within the framework of a general theory explaining the nature of the evolution of warfare. One of the most popular theories in recent years has been that put forward by Alvin and Heidi Toffler in the book *War and Anti-War*, which paired the development of methods of waging war with the main stages of the progress of civilization and formulated the notion of “primary-, secondary- and tertiary-wave” wars. The first, typical of agrarian and pastoral societies, was characterized by a low level of technological development and the physical, human factor’s key role in the outcome of

struggle. “Secondary-wave” wars are fought by industrial civilizations deploying massive armies bristling with technical equipment multiplying the firepower, which fact is decisive for the outcome of a clash. The essence of “tertiary wave” war was a departure from the quantity and mass factor in favor of the speed and precision typical of post-industrial civilization. Consequently, the outcome of a tertiary-wave war depends on strikes targeted at destroying the key elements of an enemy’s potential, as this prevents the opponent from fighting without the need to kill a large number of soldiers.

This theory, which offers a convincing description of the development of warfare instruments, proves to be useful in the description of war in the classic meaning of the word, i.e. a conflict between states and their armed forces. It is, however, completely useless when it comes to describing the attack of September 11 and the retaliatory operations in Afghanistan. The very definition of “war” has also proven inadequate, since the events of 9/11 and the operations in Afghanistan transcend it. According to the theory, after all, we should be dealing with a confrontation of typical “tertiary-wave” powers (American and Allied troops) with an opponent that culturally and mentally belongs to the “primary-wave”, but uses weapons from a “tertiary-wave” arsenal.

In order to evaluate the present-day conflict and the new dangers properly, we need to redefine war. In the classic approach, which still applies in Polish military academies, an armed conflict classified as war must satisfy a number of legal (declaration of war between two countries or among a group of countries), structural (the subjects of warfare are states and their armed forces) and functional conditions (the purpose of war is to impose one state’s will on another state through the physical destruction of its armed forces and facilities). The key to this Clausewitzian approach to war is the systemic relationship between the confrontation of armed forces and sovereign state policy.<sup>2</sup> One of the meaningful signs of such a conservative approach to the definition of war was the television statement given on 9/11 by a leading Polish theorist on warfare, in which the scholar affirmed that the terrorist attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon could not

be considered as acts of war since the assailant did not conform to the classic definition of a belligerent. That statement, which was correct in the light of prevailing theory, justifies the following question: has the time not come to revise the definition of “war”?

## The Necessity to Redefine “War”

There are several reasons for taking this question seriously. The first is historical. The definition of war based on a modified description by Clausewitz, which is accepted by the modern world and almost indisputably considered an axiom in Poland, is not history’s first definition of war. Nor can it be applied to all armed conflicts throughout history. It is definitely inappropriate for the medieval feudal wars that were frequently fought across geographic and political divisions, as well as for wars fought by such entities as the Hanseatic League. Nor can it be used to examine the conflicts of the ancient world or Pre-Columbian America, since their dynamics were largely controlled by magical and religious rituals. The past decade has also confirmed the obsolescence of the definition.

The next premise refers to **legal** considerations. The requirements of international law regarding the existence of a state of war (a declaration of war) are applied ever less frequently. In fact, most conflicts of the post-war period did not meet this condition. In this regard, neither the Vietnam War nor the USSR’s intervention in Afghanistan, nor the Gulf War can be considered wars. From the perspective of international law, nor can the operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan be considered war. This is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in history – the existing and formally accepted rules of law become inadequate due to the gradual departure from them.

The revision of the classical definition of war is also supported by **structural and functional** circumstances. We can observe ever more international conflicts<sup>3</sup> where one of the sides is not a state or group of states, but an international organization of a terrorist, criminal, or perhaps soon also economic nature.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the objectives of the struggle of

these organized groups with a state or a group of states can increasingly surpass classical war objectives. The objective of the struggle is becoming more ideological and irrational. Therefore, the conflict instigated by the attack of 9/11 is a classic example of a confounding situation for theoreticians.

## **What is Asymmetric Warfare?**

The notion of asymmetric warfare came about with the gradual “blurring” of the classic categorization of armed conflicts. The term appeared in specialist publications in the 1990s during the debate that was taking place in the USA on the proper direction for the development of the country’s military potential following the end of the Cold War. Asymmetric warfare was defined as such an armed conflict in which the state and its armed forces confront an enemy whose aims, organization, means and methods of combat do not fit the conventional notion of war.<sup>5</sup> A party involved in asymmetric warfare does not engage in direct confrontation with enemy troops on the battlefield. Instead, it aims to strike a painful blow to the foe using such unconventional methods as: terrorism (including weapons of mass destruction); psychological warfare (attack on the morale of the opponent’s leaders and society); information warfare (IT attack); or economic attack (destabilization of the financial system and stock exchange). The subject of asymmetric warfare need not be a state; it may also be any organized (political, religious, criminal, ideological, or ecological) group of people united by specific objectives. The notions of battlefield or front are foreign to asymmetric warfare, since it is characterized by dispersion and the absence of any geographical or chronological continuity. A party engaging in such a war will employ all available instruments to achieve its objective. Methods of warfare include treacherous assassinations, public demonstrations, media campaigns, dissemination of poisonous agents by post or water lines, provoking international pressure campaigns, destruction of symbolic sites, or manipulation of share prices on the stock exchange.

The essence of asymmetry is based on the lack of convergence between the war efforts of both parties: conventional armed forces, even if equipped with state-of-the-art weapon systems, are unable to effectively oppose mass-suicide hijackings of passenger airplanes.

Paradoxically, the emergence of asymmetric warfare has resulted from the rapid development of military technologies over the last twenty years. The introduction of new generations of conventional weapons by the US and NATO members and those countries' "envelopment" with digital reconnaissance, command, and communications systems has given the West such a technological advantage in conventional weapons that neither its real nor potential opponents are able to effectively counter it on the traditional battlefield. The Gulf War confirmed this theory. And since the imbalance in conventional weapons has not led to a pacification of the hot spots in today's world (mainly those in the Middle East), those who blame the United States and the West for their perceived ills, dispirited by the impossibility of traditional countermeasures, concluded that actions exceeding the conventional definition of war are the only way of defying the "arrogance" of the West.

But what are the features of asymmetric warfare? This type of war is characterized by:

- 1. Goals.** The entity conducting asymmetric warfare does not restrict the attack to the enemy's military potential, but as a rule considers its entire territory, society, and resources as the target. This gives asymmetric warfare an absolutely total character by definition. The assailant accepts no legal or ethical restrictions and the value of each strike is measured by the degree of torment it inflicts on the opponent. Spectacular targets are preferable, as their destruction brings about the most powerful psychological effect.
- 2. Organization.** Asymmetric warfare need not be conducted by armed forces. Regardless of whether it is inspired, supported or conducted by some state or upon its order, asymmetric strikes are performed by groups conspiring in enemy territory. Wearing uniforms is out of the question. Quite the opposite: the aim is to mingle in with the society

under attack as fully as possible. Asymmetric operations on a major scale require considerable organizational effort to be successful. The need to acquire and process intelligence data, to train people, coordinate preparations, and protect the assailant personnel makes it necessary to use the support of specialized structures, for instance, intelligence services. In addition, it would be difficult to organize and conduct asymmetric operations without extensive financial and territorial support. In today's world, such support can only be offered by another state or a group of states.

3. **Technology.** In asymmetric warfare, anything may serve as a weapon. Soldiers in this kind of war can use conventional weapons (small arms, explosives, portable missiles, or mortars), weapons of mass destruction (portable nuclear devices, chemical and/or biological weapons), and non-conventional means (passenger airplanes, car bombs, exploding industrial installations, induced floods, etc.). The selection of weapons depends on their availability and effectiveness. Asymmetric operations are facilitated in the territory of economically developed countries, where the extensive communications infrastructure and access to multiple technical appliances for civilians favor constant diversification of the ways and means of attack, as well as secure communication between particular groups.
4. **Operating methods.** The less an operating method has in common with conventional military operations, the more likely it is to be used by an asymmetric warrior. Imitation of the opponent or mingling with its society, non-compliance with rules and conventions, secrecy, changeability, and surprise are the key elements of asymmetric warfare. Those conducting asymmetric warfare will draw on the methods and procedures known from the operations of intelligence services, guerrillas, organized crime and religious sects, as well as any combination of these.
5. **Range.** As opposed to "ordinary" terrorist operations, asymmetric warfare is distinguished by its specific scale and range of operations.

The latter is not limited geographically – the adversary is attacked on their own territory, but also at any spot of the globe where its citizens or resources are located. The same applies to the scale of operations – by definition they are to be intense.

The specific nature of asymmetric warfare's threats to industrially developed states depends on a number of factors, but first and foremost on the aforementioned **incompatibility of potentials**, leading to the asymmetry of operations. The armed forces of the West, whose main task is to defend territories and societies against an external attack, are completely unprepared for operating on an asymmetric battlefield, despite the state-of-the-art weapons they possess. Although these weapons are capable of combating all kinds of the potential opponent's traditional weapons (i.e., tanks, planes, and ships), they are utterly useless in the face of passenger plane hijackers or squads poisoning water supply systems simultaneously in twenty major cities. The infrastructure of the party conducting asymmetric warfare is concealed, dispersed, or imbedded in the infrastructure of the host state or enemy, which makes it barely susceptible to strikes with precision guided weapons. The value of such targets is usually incomparably low in relation to the costs of the arms used for their destruction. As a result, the armed forces of an industrial state can attack enemy targets, but with relatively low effectiveness and at enormous cost. And the opponent, although unlikely to ruin the industrialized state's military potential, can deal it severe, and often even humiliating blows.

The second threat to the developed nations is the **ease** of conducting asymmetric warfare. The high-tech telecommunications infrastructure, anonymous financial circulation, freedom of movement and weak control mechanisms (viz. features permanently embedded in the structures of a liberal-democratic market economy state) all help to prepare and conduct asymmetric operations. The allies of asymmetric warfare soldiers are the Internet and cell phones, technologies which offer instant communication and anonymity. We need also list the ready exchange of capital which makes it possible to obtain funding for operations, as well as the freedom of movement and speech and non-intrusive models of policing.

The third threat is of a **social** nature. Post-industrial Western societies are not resistant to violence. Their consumer lifestyles, individualism, affirmation of comfort, wealth, and pleasure and the relative indifference to patriotic sentiments lead to strong fluctuations in the climate of public opinion, its demobilization and compliance to pressures to act in ways fulfilling the known or presumed expectations of the adversary. The classic example of this was the “television” death of 18 US special forces soldiers in Mogadishu in 1993, which resulted in the withdrawal of Americans from Somalia. Anti-war protests in October 2001 signaled the appearance of similar feelings about the intervention in Afghanistan. The establishment of such attitudes could permanently threaten the ability of the West to perform effective military operations. It is interesting to note that the inability to tolerate casualties is a relatively new phenomenon in the West. The numerous colonial wars conducted in the 19th century, even though the overseas opponents inflicted steady and often heavy losses on the Europeans, never gave rise to waves of pacifism.

## **The First War Against Terrorism**

It is certainly debatable whether the conflict triggered by the terrorist attack on the WTC and Pentagon is the first armed conflict of the new type. The definitive answer will some day be given by military historians. However, there are certain premises in support of this view. We have already seen military attacks as a form of response to terrorist operations (for instance the US air strikes against Libya in 1986), but today’s war is different, due to its scale, range of resources used, and the predicted length. For the first time, a coalition of several (over a dozen?) states have decided to respond to a terrorist attack with a coordinated, long-term military operation that surpasses the framework of typical retaliatory actions.

The present conflict bears a veritable textbook resemblance to asymmetric warfare. Let it suffice to compare the attack and its response. The attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (and probably the

intended but failed attack on the White House) was carried out in accordance with the fundamentals of asymmetric warfare. Its objective was to paralyze the institutions symbolizing the prevalent attributes, in the attackers' view, of Western civilization: materialistic financial strength, global military power, and arrogant world power policy. It was probably also meant to paralyze the will of the USA and the Western world to continue their active political involvement in the Middle East. The attack was meant not only to physically paralyze American institutions, but also to discredit them by demonstrating American vulnerability. These events took place with the cameras on, so they produced an added media effect. Resorting to a suicide airplane attack with passengers on board and the large number of casualties among civilians are an expansion of the methods used in terrorist attacks to date and prove the determination of the attackers. The intended total and constant nature of the confrontation with the West is reflected in the reports on potential new attacks, for instance, the use of anthrax.

The asymmetric nature of the confrontation can also be seen in the course of the military operation of the joint American and British forces in Afghanistan. The USA and its allies chose to respond by using conventional armed forces with considerable support from intelligence services, the police, and financial institutions. Therefore, they used the full range of means available to combat terrorist threats. This was probably the first operation ever in the USA during which military, police, and financial forces have been so closely coordinated. This also testifies to the changing nature of war. The course of the retaliatory action and the accompanying political activities of the West also lead to the conclusion that the destruction of al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and the eradication of the Taliban regime are not the ultimate objectives of these operations. In this context, however, it is noteworthy that each attempt to buttress the long-term aims of the anti-terrorist coalition is based on speculation and analyses of the information available. As a consequence, it involves a high degree of error. Simple honesty demands that we admit this.

## The Objectives and Course of the Operation in Afghanistan

The plans of the Americans (the terms “USA” and “coalition” are used interchangeably, as the USA animates anti-terrorist activities and coordinates military operations) refer to two temporal perspectives:

- 1) **the long-term perspective** related to the coordinated action of the Western world against international terrorism on the military, police, and economic levels, and
- 2) **the short-term perspective** related to the currently ending, partially successful military action in Afghanistan and the supportive activities aimed at breaking up al-Qaeda, destroying its logistic foundations, and eliminating Osama bin Laden and the group of his closest collaborators.

We can also distinguish three basic levels (“fronts”) on which the present war is being fought:

- 1) **the external military** front encompassing military operations taking place in the territory of Afghanistan;
- 2) **the internal** front – the anti-terrorist operation and preventive activities on US territory;
- 3) **the international** front encompassing political activities aimed at supporting the anti-terrorist operation and reducing the international support for Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, as well as limiting the resources available to terrorists.

For the purposes of this article, what is most relevant is to analyze the external dimension of the new war from both temporal perspectives. It is almost certain that the campaign in Afghanistan had two essential, closely inter-related goals:

- 1) the elimination of the al-Qaeda leaders and their support-base;
- 2) overthrow of the Taliban regime.

The action against Osama bin Laden’s organization was to result not only in the physical elimination or capture of a maximum number of its fighters (and their leader in the first place), but also in preventing al-Qaeda

from effective operation for all time. The latter aim could be attained if the Americans managed to destroy the network of training camps, depots, and stock of supplies used by the terrorists. Another objective of equal importance was to show the world, especially the states and organizations sympathizing with al-Qaeda, how determined the USA and the Western world were in combating terrorism. Quite likely, the doctrine of “active deterrence” (increasingly frequently represented as the “Bush doctrine”) may prove effective enough to stop other governments from giving open support to terrorist organizations.

The assigned objectives were meant to be achieved as a result of a coordinated, multi-stage military operation in which the main ally of the antiterrorist coalition was the opposition Northern Alliance and Pashtun enemies of the Taliban. The use of internal opposition is a typical and effective method of warfare - the Americans were punished for its insufficient application after the war with Iraq ended in 1991. The participation of the local opposition additionally meant a lower political risk related to the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan upon the completion of the military campaign.

According to the general concept of war prevailing in the USA, positing maximal risk reduction and the imposition of its own operation plan on the enemy, the war in Afghanistan can be divided into several basic stages:

- ◆ **The preparatory stage**, aimed at the political and logistic isolation of the area under attack. The Americans managed to bring about an almost complete political isolation of the Taliban regime. At the same time, the supplies of weapons and other war materials to Afghanistan broke down, which forced the Taliban to rely only on the previously collected supplies.<sup>6</sup> This stage, covering the first weeks after the attack on the WTC and Pentagon, consisted of intense intelligence activities carried out by both US INTEL means and forces (satellite, radio, and telecommunications monitoring) and with the help of allied states in the region. The purpose was not only to broaden the knowledge of Afghanistan as the theater of operations, but also to constantly survey the leading personages of

the Taliban regime and al-Qaeda and the movements of troops. In addition, the first special forces units were deployed in Afghanistan to observe key objects and transportation routes.

- ◆ **The introductory stage**, which involved strikes “to prepare the battlefield”. In the subsequent weeks, the allied air force had performed a series of precise strikes on a few fixed targets of military importance. They destroyed or paralyzed the airspace surveillance and air traffic control system and several air bases with their equipment. They attacked identified, fixed military bases, ammunition and POL stockpiles as well as government buildings and targets important for propaganda (homes of Taliban leaders and training bases of Osama bin Laden’s organization). The airspace of Afghanistan was dominated by allied forces, which was necessary for airborne mobile and raid operations. The air raids obviously did not eliminate the threat of the portable short-range surface-to-air missile launchers, a number of which (of unknown potential and serviceability) were in Taliban hands. The second objective was to reduce the military potential of the Taliban. The third objective was psychological: to weaken the opponent’s morale by showing them that the coalition was capable of attacking any target in Afghanistan with impunity. Despite the insolent declarations of Taliban leaders, the air campaign had a substantial effect, especially among the ranks and civilians.
- ◆ **The gradual escalation stage** began with the first operations of the land forces, which was hyped by the media, and the intensification of the Northern Alliance’s activity. At this stage, the Taliban government was overthrown and the infrastructure of al-Qaeda was wiped out. However, the attempts to capture Osama bin Laden failed. The principal methods were: the offensive of the Northern Alliance troops, continuation of air strikes with a stronger emphasis on helicopters and the tactics of “sweep-out” flights, rapid raid actions of assault troops and special forces aimed at destroying particular key locations (e.g., the Tora Bora base), eliminating small

enemy groups, or conducting psychological operations conducted to pacify civilian sentiments. An interesting event in this context was the setting up of a forward operational base in the territory of Afghanistan by the expeditionary force of the US Marine Corps. The Americans generally avoided direct confrontation with major Taliban forces and strove to spare civilians and religious sites. The escalation stage lasted until Kandahar was seized and the last spots of Taliban resistance were isolated in the east of the country.

- ◆ **The smooth withdrawal stage** began as the deployment of the multinational peacekeeping force had commenced, after the coalition had achieved the essential campaign objectives and a new Afghan government had been appointed. Presumably, the Americans will want to avoid a sudden withdrawal of their forces before the political situation becomes stable. This is not to say that the pull out of one of the allied contingents will not be used to stage a special media show intended to calm public opinion in the Arab world.

## **The Military and Non-Military Considerations of a Long-term Anti-Terrorist Offensive**

In order to achieve the objectives of the present war in the long term, it is necessary to undertake more multidimensional activities that are scheduled over a longer time horizon. The destruction of al-Qaeda will not make the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism disappear. We should assume that Osama bin Laden is certain to find followers among the ever more radical fractions of such groups as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, or other, completely new organizations. Therefore, with the eradication of the phenomenon of terrorism globally being impossible, it is possible to act towards limiting its free development. Any effective action against international terrorism should be based on:

- 1) building a stable international coalition, consisting of as many states as possible and accepting the agreed code of conduct regarding terrorist organizations;

- 2) internal consensus in the developed countries on reinforcing the measures against terrorism, even if this affects the range of civil liberties to some extent;
- 3) evolution of the attitudes in developed societies towards accepting the burden of the anti-terrorist struggle, including military and civilian casualties

The inability to satisfy these conditions will lead to some states breaking from the ranks of the common front against terrorism. This might be caused either by their temporary interest or the willingness to harm the West, or by a paralysis of the will of the states in the face of drastic and expensive actions and the reluctance of their society to make sacrifices. A split between the USA and Western Europe, unharmed by attacks on a scale comparable to that of 9/11, would be particularly dangerous. The prospect of a long-term offensive against international terrorism puts military actions on an equal level with other quasi-military or non-military forms of action. This is not to say, however, that its goal can be attained while relinquishing military actions. Although with non-military measures it is possible to prevent the organization of spectacular terrorist actions, they cannot be used to successfully eradicate major terrorist groups and their infrastructures, nor to enforce obedience of the states – partisans of terrorism. A draft scenario of such an offensive should assume that it will last at least several years. It should encompass actions on the following planes:

- ◆ **International law.** There is a need for two complementary networks of international agreements on the rules of combating terrorism. The basis of the first global network should be the UN. It can be pictured as a global convention on combating terrorism whose practical meaning would basically relate to the facilitation of information exchange. Failure to sign the convention by a state would expose it to a risk of international ostracism. The second, much tighter network of agreements should be negotiated by the developed states, those more interested in combating terrorism. They should strive towards signing several conventions on the rules of tracking

down terrorists, investigation, and extradition procedures and the rules of co-operation between the armed and police forces. Such agreements already exist; the point is to harmonize relevant procedures as closely as possible;

- ◆ **Economy.** This refers to the development of control mechanisms of cash flow and stock exchange transactions that would hinder the funding of terrorist operations and prevent terrorists from benefiting from exchange speculations. The atmosphere after the attack on the WTC appears favorable for the approval of financial circles for solutions that they found unacceptable only a few months ago. If the US, EU and Japanese governments managed to arrive at a common position, it would even be possible to influence the banking secret stronghold –Switzerland;
- ◆ **Institutions.** Most NATO and EU states will probably take action to improve their crisis management systems and to harmonize the competencies and procedures of their armed forces, police, and paramilitary forces, national rescue, and intelligence services. These transformations will lead to the elimination of the decision-making autonomy of the particular services;
- ◆ **Intelligence.** It seems necessary to closely coordinate the intelligence-related activities of the NATO, EU, and OECD states. These activities should be aimed at optimizing the process of collecting and processing information on international terrorism. Due to the special role of intelligence in national sovereignty, it is presently difficult to speculate on the possible directions of such coordination. An international agency for terrorism studies might be formed under the auspices of NATO or the EU (uniting analytical efforts seems easier than performing joint HUMINT operations);
- ◆ **Police and paramilitary forces.** The police forces in the developed countries need to accommodate their potentials to the new kind of threat. It is they who are responsible for resisting asymmetric strikes on the territory of their own states. It is predictable that not only the number of specialized police strike units will grow, but that also the

data collection and analysis system will be upgraded. It is also possible that the regulations on identity control (the obligation to possess an ID document) will become stricter. The police activities in the OECD states must be focused on prevention (e.g. penetration of immigrant communities from Islamic states). Coordinated Europol actions in this area are also to be expected;

- ◆ **Military.** The operation in Afghanistan is definitely not the last military operation of its kind in the coming years. The USA and its closest allies will almost certainly be trying to put pressure on the governments of the so-called “rogue” states (Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Somalia). The success of the operation in Afghanistan will condition success in other areas. Afghanistan and the ruling Taliban had been the most difficult target, geographically (the theater of operations and access to it) and operationally (a motivated and experienced adversary). We can expect shifts in the defense budgets of the NATO states in favor of funding the expeditionary and special operations forces and the reconnaissance potential at all levels;
- ◆ **Diplomacy.** The maintenance of a uniform anti-terrorist front grouping states of diverse interests, cultures, and sensitivities to the phenomenon of terrorism will demand from the West a diplomatic offensive intended to achieve a much longer-term objective than the upholding of support for the ongoing operation in Afghanistan. The USA and its allies will need to take more effective steps towards regulating the situation in the Middle East. The effectiveness of diplomatic means is threatened by the possible breakdown of the uniform anti-terrorist front of Western countries to date.

The evolution of the present armed conflict also inspires a more general question: how to fight aggressive international terrorism effectively? However successful, no single military operation will wipe out an organization like al-Qaeda, which is numerous, clandestine, and enjoys the support of at least several states. The experience of struggle with international terrorism over the last thirty years has demonstrated that it is doomed to defeat if carried out using conventional means and methods.

The new dimension of threat, indicated by the extent of tragedy caused by the attack of 9/11, compels us to take a comprehensive approach. It is doubtless that the expenditures for this purpose in the NATO and EU states will increase over the coming years. We shall witness a surge in expenses on specialized police services, intelligence, and special forces, along with structural transformations in the armed forces and police services.

## What Will the Future War Be Like?

The armed conflicts of the first half of the 21st century will undoubtedly differ from the wars fought in recent decades. Even the Gulf War that we habitually refer to when depicting a modern armed conflict can no longer be considered a representative example. There are many indicators that the nature of armed conflicts will in the near future be determined by the deepening asymmetry of military potential between the West and the rest of the world on the one hand, and the unending conflict between the visions of global order presented by the rich North and the poor South on the other hand. These circumstances increase the risk of asymmetric conflicts. Their foundations can be either ideological (a protest against Western civilization and its values), political (an attempt to undermine Western dominance in a specific region), ethnic, or economic. They can also be a combination of various factors. The likelihood of a global conflict remains low since the only empire that could possibly aspire to the role of a global rival to the USA will be China - no sooner, however, than in several decades' time.

The most important challenge facing the military leaders will be the need to transform their **mentality**. It appears that generals all over the world will soon face the problem of adjusting their way of thinking about war to the new demands, surpassing the question of mass application of electronics on the battlefield. This is comparable to the situation of the military commanders during World War I, when their military knowledge paled in relation to the reality of the industrialized battlefield, or to the dilemmas of the Austrian and Prussian generals (early 19th century) faced

with the unconventional manner in which the armies of revolutionary and Napoleonic France fought war. The new challenges are complex and related to the gradual disappearance of differences between various types of armed conflicts or their subsequent stages. A 21st-century commander must be prepared for combating an enemy that is difficult to identify, uses combat methods rejected by the democratic societies, hides behind civilian backs and skillfully uses elements of psychological warfare. The more complicated definition of the objectives of military operations, their political dimension and the necessity to constantly co-operate with non-military institutions (both national and international) will inevitably widen a commander's scope of interest. This calls for overhauling the present educational system for professional military personnel along the lines of a civilian system. A new meaning, which is particularly painful to the prophets of "computer-operated" war, will be imparted to the truth, already forgotten in some places, that war in the foreseeable future will, despite everything, remain a bloody conflict between humans, and life-threatening situations and direct confrontation with the enemy will not be rare. This is a particular problem for armies originating from Western societies, whose tolerance for physical losses is very low.

Asymmetric warfare does not entail the decline of traditional, **conventional military potential**. Nonetheless, the former proportions in the financing of the particular elements of military potential will be shaken up in favor of those domains that have remained somewhat in the background until now (information and psychological warfare and special forces). The conventional forces will continue to guard the territorial sovereignty of states and serve as their main deterrent (nuclear states excepted); they are also the most flexible of all instruments of power used in international relations. The arguments for their preservation are their capacity for the physical elimination of the enemy's armed forces and infrastructure and for supporting non-conventional forces. However, the military units used on the battlefield<sup>7</sup> are bound to experience the irreversible change of further diversification and specialization. We can already observe a departure from the model of heavy tactical formations to

lighter expeditionary forces with a more flexible, modular organization and mobile rear services. The forces of the Western states will probably come to structurally resemble the British army from the Victorian times with its system of “linked battalions” (a part of the tactical unit is deployed to expeditionary tasks, another part takes a rest in the homeland and conducts training to relieve the former part). In Western states, the trend to building professional armed forces will be strengthening. A professional soldier is more efficient in operations outside the territory of his own country, the investment in his training yields over a longer term and his loss is tolerated more readily by public opinion. The development of air forces seems not to be threatened. It still is the fastest, most flexible, and safest means of power projection.

Some more question marks loom over the future of **Weapons of Mass Destruction**. No nuclear power will give up its maintenance of strategic nuclear weapons as a deterrent, yet the significance of nuclear weapons as part of the military arsenal appears to be fading. This is due to the advances in other military technologies, the usage of which involves less risk. Nevertheless, the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons (cruise missiles) as a form of retaliation or deterrent to an enemy using or threatening to use chemical or biological weapons as a means in asymmetric warfare remains an open question. The basic constraint is the fact that by virtue of its properties, the nuclear weapon is best suited to the destruction of targets of major “gravity”, whereas asymmetric potential is dispersed and rooted in the civilian population. Tactical nuclear weapons can still be useful as a means against the host countries of terrorist organizations.

There is reason to fear that the states and organizations using terror will want to obtain access to chemical and biological weapons. The temptation to use this classic “weapon of the poor” may be waxing stronger. The tasks related to detecting these weapons and fighting the consequences of their use will most probably play a part in the structure of defense expenditures in affluent countries.

Non-conventional warfare methods call for **non-conventional countermeasures**. Therefore, the coming decades will be characterized by

further quantitative and qualitative development of non-conventional armed forces. The nature of threats revealed by the attack on the WTC and Pentagon and the course of the operation in Afghanistan point to the necessity to develop special operations forces that are capable of operating at a distance from their home bases. Presumably, the coming decades will witness their further development involving, for instance, an increase in the number of special units in most armies of the Western world and their further specialization. It will consist not only of creating new special units in all services, but also of forming units with new specializations. Apart from the already existing assault units (Ranger or Paracommando Regiments), special operations forces (US Special Forces) or antiterrorist units (Delta or GROM), units will probably emerge which are specialized in covert reconnaissance using new sophisticated technologies, placed somewhere in between classic military units and intelligence groups. A separate trend in the development of non-conventional forces will be the formation within the armed forces of specialized services for the protection against the effects of putting mass destruction weapons to unconventional use and against information warfare. New units may also appear, the tasks of which will be close to the missions of the police and military to be used for paramilitary (protective, stabilizing, and intervening) actions within peacekeeping operations or for actions against non-state subjects, such as organized crime groups.

The new threats must affect the shape of the **international organizations** responsible for collective security and defense. These threats and the pragmatism of the governing elite of Western states, who are unwilling to relinquish the effective guarantor of stability in the transatlantic area, are the two primary factors on the basis of which we can assume that the North Atlantic Alliance will survive. They will probably serve also as a catalyst for the development of the European Security and Defense Policy. They may also influence the redefinition of the political interests of Europe and the USA towards their rapprochement around the formula of a renewed NATO and a strong European pillar. In all likelihood, Russia too will redefine its geostrategic role towards a rapprochement to the

West and co-operation with NATO. Attempts to stabilize the political and military situation and to form regional security structures may also take place in other parts of the world, in particular in those facing real threats (South-East Asia, Central Asia, or a part of Latin America). They will probably be initiated by one of the world powers (USA, Russia, Japan, or perhaps China). In addition, we shall witness an increasing number of international military operations and further institutionalization of regional military cooperation (consultations, multinational staffs and units). In this case, the West will also play the leading role in the changes.

**New technologies** will continue to mold the nature of armed conflict in the coming decades. The deployment of new types of weapons will depend on two factors: the demands of the battlefield and technological progress. The accumulation of threats arising from the asymmetric form of military action will affect the structure of spending on research and development. In most general terms, we can expect a relative stagnation in the development of classic armaments over the coming decades. The new generations of tanks, aircraft, and ships deployed in Western forces in the 1990s are the result of research work already initiated in the Cold War period. The advancements in these categories of armaments will rather consist of a progressive upgrading of the existing types of weapons. Still, the development of the systems constituting the so-called digital battlefield, i.e. all kinds of electronic reconnaissance, communication, command and control and battlefield management systems will not be decelerated.

A particularly turbulent development will take place in the reconnaissance and identification systems that guarantee the permanent control of all elements of one's own troops and enable the commander to detect and identify the enemy forces. A true breakthrough will only be attained in this area when nanotechnology comes into general use. It will supply the armed forces with autonomous microsensors operating in quasi-intelligent systems and conveying multi-aspect information in real time. Mass miniaturization and the development of non-lethal weapons will produce a new quality in the battlefield and greatly limit the enemy's options. 'Non-lethal weapon' is a broad term covering both impact on human behavior by means of various

waves (electromagnetic, sound, etc.), paralyzing appliances, and substances changing the physical properties of materials (metal cracking, fluid coagulation, and other effects). The currently available technologies will significantly change the commander's ability to influence combat situations. Each soldier will become a self-sustaining combat minisystem, being a source of real-time information at the same time. Today it is difficult to define the future role of unmanned and automatic combat systems. If the research studies on artificial intelligence progress faster, their significance will grow rapidly. Most of the technologies mentioned will guarantee much more effective countering of an adversary who employs asymmetric tactics, provided they are deployed on a mass scale.

## **Implications for Poland**

Will recent events affect Poland's security level? Regardless of the opinions that the new threat is selective and concerns mostly the United States, United Kingdom, and other dominant countries of the West, it seems that Poland is threatened with terrorist attacks to an extent comparable with other European countries. Let us not be deceived: in the eyes of Arab extremists, Poland is a Western country just like Sweden or Portugal. Our accession to NATO puts us in one row with the other NATO allies. Neither our lower level of wealth (making Poland less attractive as a target of attack), nor our relatively weak political involvement outside Europe can change the fact that we do belong to a geographical area and civilization that is perceived by Islamic terrorists as indisputably hostile. Another factor that may be to our disadvantage is the Polish nationality of John Paul II, the most charismatic personage of Christianity, the epitome of a world that is hostile to militant Islam.

There may also be other sources of threats. Weapons from the asymmetric warfare arsenal can also be used by criminal organizations or states seeking to destabilize this part of Europe. Any potential attack will probably not be targeted at Poland as the main target, but it will be aimed against a larger number of NATO states. A number of scenarios can be imagined:

- ◆ **an attack on government institutions** (government buildings, top officials, the Parliament in session);
- ◆ **an attack on the economy and infrastructure** (IT strike on the stock exchange, attacks on large industrial structures: the refinery in Płock, the dam in Włocławek, nitrogen plants in Police, etc.)
- ◆ **an attack on symbols** (Wawel Castle, the Palace of Culture and Science);
- ◆ **a series of attacks on leading public figures** (the president, prime minister, the primate, and figures of the cultural and business world);
- ◆ **an attack on people** (biological or chemical attack on water lines, the Warsaw underground, a mass open air event, or a football game);
- ◆ **an attack on military objects** (buildings of the Ministry of National Defense, military units, radar stations or airports);
- ◆ **any given combination of the above targets.**

The methods of carrying out such attacks are unpredictable in practice. We should prepare countermeasures against the classic arsenal of terrorists (bomb attacks or attacks using firearms), methods that can be classified as mass terrorism (the use of biological and chemical weapons, attacks using hijacked planes, explosives in buildings, etc.) and cyberwar (paralysis of the Internet, banks, or the stock exchange). Attackers usually tend to choose a method that is least expected and most painful to the attacked party.

Poland is not well prepared to counter an asymmetric attack, both in the passive domain (protection of people and resources) and in the active domain (countermeasures against mass terrorism). There are serious weaknesses in both domains. The legal system regulating the mutual relations between the authorities in the field of crisis management, war in and outside the country, and the coordination of the operations of the armed forces and other uniformed services is incomplete. The Polish Armed Forces have attempted to adjust their structure to post-Cold-War tasks only to a limited extent. The new structures of the armed forces, introduced as part of a six-year modernization plan, roughly correspond to NATO standards from the first half of the 1990s (the foundation of the

Polish army is still going to comprise the so-called heavy divisions, i.e. armored and mechanized divisions). The forces fit for expeditionary operations (aeromobile, airborne, and special operations units) are underinvested and their development is not included in the framework of a comprehensive plan. The practice of interoperability of the three formations on which the potential combat against terrorism in the country will rely - the Polish Armed Forces, Police and Border Guard - is still a mystery.

Repelling an asymmetric attack requires different methods and means than acting within a conventional armed conflict. In the circumstances of an asymmetric battlefield, most military forces are of limited use. This also refers to the technologies they employ. An asymmetric attack must be repulsed in alternative ways, with the support of special forces, other military and non-military specialist formations, and means of information warfare (intelligence, counterintelligence, reconnaissance, data processing and distribution). In this context, it is particularly important to harmonize the procedures and structures so that it is possible for all the institutions involved in operations to collaborate in an effective and prompt manner.

The state's preparations for combating military threats of an asymmetric nature should focus on the development and improvement of these four instruments. In the case of Poland, the following measures will be necessary:

- ◆ **the integration of the crisis management system** at the time of emergencies other than a state of war - both at the level of the state and the Ministry of National Defense. In the case of the former, it is necessary to complete the legislative measures related to the definition of the scopes of tasks and responsibilities of the particular national and local government bodies and services (the armed forces, police, Border Guard, intelligence and counterintelligence services), fire service and municipal wardens. The overall objective should be to form a system that avoids the duplication of competencies and clearly regulates the question of operation control in a particular area under conditions of a particular threat. The latter level, the Ministry of National Defense, needs to be transformed in such a way that it is possible, on the one hand, to use separate

military units in active operations throughout the country (although a state of war has not been declared) and also to build a command system for expeditionary operations on the other hand. In both cases, we should consider the suitability of creating joint operational commands. The establishment of a special operations command is another matter, and is discussed below;

- ◆ **the development of special operations forces** is presently the key challenge for the leadership of the ministry of defense. Since special operations forces will be gaining importance in the forthcoming years as a combat instrument both in a direct threat to the country and in expeditionary actions, the enhancement of their potential is of essential importance for the military capability of Poland. The objective of the changes should be to give the special forces the form of an integrated, multifunctional component of the armed forces, prepared to independent actions of strategic (political) significance, to joint limited scale operations with the allied forces at home and abroad and to effectively support military effort of the country in the event of an open war encompassing the territory of Poland. The first step in this direction should be the establishment of an integrated special operations command to control the organization, logistics and training process of the special operations forces. This command would deploy a specialized command and coordination component for expeditionary operations. Due to the very nature of special operations and the inseparable political implications, such a command should be located as high in the national defense system as possible. It seems right to subordinate it structurally directly to the Minister of National Defense (on the condition that the Prime Minister would have direct influence on the operations conducted). It should have its own budget (as a constituent of the budget of the Ministry of National Defense). The structural and quantitative growth of the special operations forces is an urgent task. Moreover, the temptation to place all the existing air assault, airborne, landing and other units under one label should be avoided. It would be sensible to retain the existing 1st Special

Commando Regiment in Lubliniec (provided that it turns into a professional unit as soon as possible) and GROM and at the same time to further develop the specialist formation of the Navy and create an Air Force (or Army Aviation) unit from scratch, to be specialized in combat search and rescue missions (CSAR), transport of special forces, and the target designation for the air forces strikes. The training and equipping of special operations forces should also become a priority. The chapter on “Special Forces” ought to become an integral part of the updated technological modernization program for the Polish Armed Forces for the next six years;

- ◆ **the development of information warfare potential** appears now to be an extremely futuristic objective, but an attack on the IT system of the country and NATO on an unprecedented scale could take place very soon (nobody had allowed for terrorist operations of the scale of 9/11). The increasing dependence of modern societies on information and the means of its transfer and the increasingly easier access to the methods and instruments of cyberwarfare may trigger an information war in the next decade, the consequences of which will be incomparably more dangerous than those of the actions of hackers today. It may almost completely incapacitate the institutions responsible for the protection of information (the police and Internal Security Agency), the potential of which is already insufficient to perform this task. The formation of IT forces whose task will be to provide complete protection of the information systems in the country and the armed forces and to conduct active IT operations against the enemy may soon become a necessity. The General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces should already commence conceptual studies of the IT threats and the methods and means of their prevention. It will not cost much to appoint a special study unit, but it could already place Poland in the first rank of the NATO member-states, which are thinking about their defense in the long-term perspective;
- ◆ **a revolution in the system of educating military personnel**, i.e. training officers and non-commissioned officers to work in the

battlefield of the 21st Century. This should cover both the area of psychology and sociological techniques (group leadership, rapid decision-making, stress management, etc.) and the professional knowledge (elements of joint operations and flexible use of available equipment). The primary objective should be to create a new type of military leader: a self-sufficient and flexible person, who is prepared to work in diverse geographical and organizational environments, who cooperates with non-military entities, who avoids schematization and routine and makes the best of the forces and means under his command.

Most experts suggest that the conflict triggered by the attack on the WTC is only the beginning of a new era of international conflicts, escalation of terror and other asymmetric threats. Poland, institutionally being a part of the West, is therefore becoming more and more threatened by such attacks. We may be increasingly frequently involved in expeditionary anti-terrorist operations. All of this not only points to the necessity to accelerate the restructuring of our armed forces, but also forces us to make quick decisions. Our armed forces and crisis management systems are becoming increasingly inadequate each day. This creates an unprecedented threat to the country even in the event of a small-scale attack.

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Every attempt to anticipate the future in a perspective of over ten years runs a high risk of error. And this is the case here. The forecasts presented in this article are based on the conclusions drawn from the recent events and the trends observable over the last few years. Due to the accelerating rate of change (in international relations, technologies, and so forth), the probability of the occurrence of new, unpredictable factors affecting the evolution of the phenomenon of war in the coming years is high. Therefore, paradoxically, the conclusion of this article is that the only predictable elements of the future battlefield are variability, fluidity, and unpredictability.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 This refers to the introduction to the battlefield, over fifty years period of 1866-1916, of such inventions as: the automatic rifle, the machine gun, the fast-firing breech-loading gun, the tank, and combat aircraft. This has resulted in a rapid increase in the firepower of armed forces. For the qualitative significance of this leap see J. Keegan: *The History of Warfare*. Warsaw 1998, p.353.
- 2 Approaching his famous definition of war, Clausewitz writes as follows: "war is instigated by political relations between governments and nations (...)". Viz. C. Clausewitz, *On War*, Lublin 1995, p. 763.
- 3 The classical notion of what is an international conflict may soon become inadequate. We may already witness the simultaneous armed conflicts of an internal and trans-border dimension, where at least one side is not a state or nation. Without taking a stand on the question, one which requires further studies, it is worth highlighting the necessity to make in-depth analysis of the issue.
- 4 A great mystery is the problem of the emancipation of large international corporations, frequently with capital from origins that are difficult to control. Although the problem seems abstract today, it is likely that our attitude towards it will differ in several years.
- 5 Professor Lawrence Freedman of King's College in London has written very interestingly about this in his book *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs* (London, 1998). There he writes, "These alternative strategies reflect those that the weak have consequently adopted against the strong: concentrating rather on imposing pain than winning battles, gaining time rather than moving to closure, targeting the enemy's domestic political base as much as his forward military capabilities; relying on his intolerance of casualties and his weaker stake in the resolution of the conflict; and playing on the reluctance to cause civilian suffering, even if it restricts military options. In short, whereas stronger military powers have a natural preference for decisive battlefield victories, the weaker are more ready to draw the civilian sphere into the conflict, while avoiding open battle."(p. 41).
- 6 The ability to be supplied and equipped from outside with essential weapons is one of the basic conditions for maintaining the effectiveness of all partisan struggles. The outcomes of the war in Vietnam and of the invasion of Afghanistan would no doubt have been otherwise had the then enemies of the US and the USSR not received assistance from abroad (respectively from China and the USSR on the one hand, and the US and the Arab countries on the other).
- 7 Of great use in this context is the concept employed in US military literature in the mid-1980s, that of the "complementary battlefield". Such "complementarity" was to rest upon the optimization of forces and means designated by an operational commander for carrying out a given mission made possible by the ability to compose forces from among a wide spectrum of available units and battle technics in a way commensurate to the geographical, tactical, and other demands of the field.