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Modern Understanding of Security: Basic Terminology

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BASIC TERMINOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the basic terminology for contemporary security concepts. It defines the concept of security itself and related terms such as security as a need and value, subjective and objective security, security as a process, external and internal security, subject- and object-related dimension of security, security analysis levels, security categories: political, military, economic, cultural and identity-based, environmental and societal, as well as security opportunities, challenges and threats. The terminology presented in this article is a synthesis of the author's reflections on theoretical foundations of security published in the monograph: Bezpieczeństwo. Zarys teorii (Security: A Theoretical Outline) published by the Academic Publishing House of the Pomeranian University in Słupsk.

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INTRODUCTION

A need to use the same, understandable language while speaking about the security of an individual, who is struggling with everyday problems of personal security, and the security of the nation and the state, as well as diverse human collectivities within it, requires a methodological ap-

proach that will be based on systematically organised concepts and terms. An attempt to respond to such a need is a monograph: *Bezpieczeństwo. Zarys teorii*[1] (*Security: A Theoretical Outline*) issued by the Academic Publishing House of the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, in which the author undertakes to present an orderly conceptual apparatus to explain a multidisciplinary nature of the contemporary security. This article refers to the basic terms and concepts contained in that monograph.

Definition of Security

In general, security is the certainty of the existence, possession, functioning and development of an entity resulting from the absence of threats or the ability to defend. The existence (physical survival), possession (preservation of material and non-material values) and development (unrestricted by other entities) that make up the definition are the parameters of security that are shared by all entities in general, regardless of their category or individual characteristics. A possibility of losing any of such values, in whole or in part, causes unrest, concerns, anxiety or fear and is tantamount to an emergency that is equated with insecurity.

Security as a Need and Value for Individuals and Social Groups

Security is a primary and existential need of a human being as it pertains to his existence, harmonious functioning and development, and as such is an incentive to act when even the slightest threat emerges in the environment. Satisfying the need for security is a purpose of human aspirations, and thus a desirable state at which a person is intentionally aiming. In other words, striving for security is about fulfilling own needs and protecting something of value. Therefore, security, in its general meaning, is a value that consists of specific components, called the protected values, security values, or security components. They vary depending on the type of entity, and usually differ between entities within the same category as a result of their individual characteristics and operating conditions.

Subjective and Objective Security

In its very essence, security can be interpreted in the context of real factors that are seen as negative (i.e. threats), but also in the sphere of their

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[1] See L. Chojnowski, *Bezpieczeństwo. Zarys teorii* (*Security: A Theoretical Outline*), Academic Publishing House of the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Słupsk 2015.

relative perception. For this reason, the analysis of security of entities should cover both: the sphere of reality in which threats are generated, but also the sphere of consciousness in which such threats create a sense of uncertainty, concerns, anxiety or fear. Because of such duality of security, the literature on the subject distinguishes between the concept of objective and subjective security. The perception of security or insecurity that is incommensurate with the objective conditions within the external environment and the internal state of the entity is referred to as the misperception of security, i.e. its wrong perception, which is not compatible with the actual situation. It could manifest itself either as an insecurity obsession or a false sense of security. Obsessive insecurity means feeling threatened in a situation where threats are non-existent or are insignificant but still perceived as huge ones. A false sense of security involves not being aware of or ignoring the actual, objectively existing threats, or misinterpreting their scale when serious threats are perceived as minor. A subjective feeling of security or insecurity is termed a sense of security or insecurity respectively.

Security as a Process

Security is a dynamic phenomenon, which results from ever-changing conditions of the external environment but also from the internal conditioning of an entity. The variability of factors that stand behind security means that, on the one hand, the entities become creative and therefore shape such (external and internal) security determinants to make them more advantageous. On the other hand, the same entities react to any unfavourable developments that could jeopardise the values that they are determined to protect. In this sense, security is understood as a process: a continuous activity of entities (both creative and reactive) in creating the desired state of security while faced with dynamic changes in the (internal and external) security environment.

External and Internal Security

The location of sources of threats and the direction of the entity's pro-security efforts are the criteria for distinguishing two basic categories of security, i.e. the internal and external security. The essence of this division differs depending on whether it refers to an individual or a collective entity. In the first case, internal security refers to a psychophysical state

of a human and means his internal stability and harmonious functioning, commonly referred to as health. On the other hand, external security refers to the environment in which a human being functions, and in particular to any harmful factors resulting therefrom which can disrupt the internal stability of the body and mind.

The interpretation of internal and external security is somewhat different in the case of collective entities. Here the first type of security refers to internal problems of functioning that are encountered by a particular human collectivity. They may involve conflicts between individual members or smaller groups within that particular collectivity, and usually result from the necessity to subordinate individual goals to the interests of the group, or from conflicts over the change of roles[2]. In this context, internal security of a group implies the certainty of its existence (survival), possession and development, resulting from its internal coherence, stability and harmonious functioning.

External security of collective entities is a product of conditions of the environment in which they are embedded, as is the case with individual human beings. Although the environment itself makes it possible for a group to function, it is also the source of various factors that threaten its security. These are related to the natural environment, but above all to the functioning of other groups. Conflicts between various collectivities, especially states, have always been and still remain one of the major security problems. The issue of the external environment of groups is dealt with within the context of external security, understood as the certainty of survival, possession, functioning and development, resulting from the absence of threats generated by the group's environment and/or the ability to stand up to harmful external factors.

Although isolation of internal and external security concepts facilitates cognitive processes, both dimensions are strictly interdependent and the processes involved often extend over both dimensions. Today, along with the progressive development of civilisation and the process of globalisation, some new security threats have emerged that cannot be unambiguously classified as internal or external threats. Threats of this type are referred to as cross-border threats.

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[2] Social roles are the group members' shared expectations as to the behaviours of particular individuals. See E. Aronson, T. Wilson, R. Akert, *Psychologia społeczna* (*Social Psychology*), Zysk i S-ka Publishing House, Poznań 2006, p. 245.

Subject-Related Dimension of Security

Security is a subject-related need because it concerns the human being and different collectivities, which encompass a variety of collective entities, ranging from small social groups (such as families), through local communities (societies), ethnic groups, national minorities and nations, up to civilisations and the global society (the human species). The subject-related nature of security means that it is always the security "of someone" and is felt in the human mind, motivating an individual to take appropriate preventive and preparatory actions. Security, while perceived from the perspective of an entity, is referred to as the subject-related dimension of security. Most generally speaking, it is about answering the question: Whose security do we have in mind? Within the subject-related dimension of security, the security analysis is carried out from the perspective of a particular entity and its existential values. The abundance and heterogeneity of forms and functional determinants of human collectivities make the specific content of their security different. The diversity of categories to which security entities can be assigned has led to the spread of related concepts and definitions, such as national security (understood as that of the state and the nation), international security, security of local communities, groups and social organisations operating within the state, and human security, referred to as personal security.

Levels of Security Analysis

Human collectivities occupy a specific position in the structure of the international community (the Earth or global community), giving it a layered character. The layering of the collectivities that make up the international community is at the heart of the concept of levels of security analysis. Such a system makes it possible to comprehensively analyse security of various categories of entities, systematised according to the criterion of their position within the structure of the international community. This concept takes into account the characteristics specific to the category of entities (e.g. the category of 'states'), as well as the distinctive interactions between different categories of entities operating on the same level, as well as between entities located on different levels. According to this concept, the entire conceptual framework related to security consists of five levels:[3]

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[3] See B. Buzan, O. Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, *Security A New Framework For Analysis,* Lynne Rienner Publisher, Boulder, London 1998, p. 5–7.

1) the international system, 2) the international subsystem (security regions and complexes), 3) units (mainly the state and the nation, but also non-state transnational entities), 4) subunits or collective entities operating within the state, including local communities, and 5) the human being.

Object-Related Dimension of Security

This dimension of security refers to various areas of human life and the functioning of society at which they direct their activity to fulfil the need for security. Most generally speaking, the security analysis in this dimension is about answering the questions: What kind of security do we have in mind?; What is the object of security?; Which areas of human activity is it related to? or What is the object of human activity when it comes to ensuring security?

Exploring and a better understanding of complex phenomena, events and processes that occur within the sphere of security, and stem from the complexity of the modern environment in which individual humans and their collectivities have to function, requires the division of the entire human activity into specific spheres or sectors. In this way, the complexity of security issues is reduced as we reduce the number of variables in the analysis of individual sectors, which in turn results in a better understanding of a multi-faceted and multidimensional aspects of security[4]. Typically, several but less than twenty security sectors are distinguished. The author is a proponent of the six-sector approach, including the political, military, economic, environmental, cultural and identity-based and societal security sectors that correspond to various types of security. Within these sectors, some further, more specific areas can be identified, known as subsectors[5].

Political Sector of Security

The analysis of the political sector of security[6] focuses on sovereignty, organisational stability and ideology, based on which the entities oper-

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[4] Ibid, p. 7–8.

[5] For a more detailed discussion of the concept of „Kwartalnik Bellona" nr 1/2012, p. 62–75.

[6] For a more detailed discussion of the political sector of security, see L. Chojnowski, *Polityczny sektor bezpieczeństwa* (*Political Sector of Security*), „Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL", Vol. 3/2012, p. 108–120.

ate. A detailed scope and content of the political sector depend on both the level of security (the international system, the international subsystem, the unit or subunit, or an individual), as well as a specific category of the entity. With respect to the state[7], political security means the social stability of the state and the government and its sovereignty. Threats to the political security of the state are factors that may destabilise and weaken the state institutions, thereby limiting its sovereignty and preventing it from the performance of basic functions in line with national interest. Political security of the international system and subsystem refers to the stability of international order and the structures that support its maintenance. With regard to humans and social organisations, political security and security of an individual are connected to fundamental human rights and freedoms, which are often put on a par with humanitarian security.

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The military sector is a traditional sector in the security analysis and refers almost exclusively to the state since, from the point of view of international law, only the states are entitled to possess and legally use military force. The dominance of the state in the military sector also stems from the fact that only the state has the exclusive right to manage its territory and population, and enforce that right via the armed forces, especially in some extreme situations where other institutions established for the enforcement purposes (such as the police) turn out to be insufficient. In practice, the military sector of security is equated with military security, defined as the certainty of survival and development of the state resulting from the absence of military threats or the ability to defend against such threats if they arise. Main issues in the analysis of the military sector of security refer to mutual relationships between entities, primarily between the states, in terms of coercion with the use of military force. The primary object of the analysis comprises the offensive and defensive military capabilities of entities, especially the states, but also, to a certain extent, of non-

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[7] For a more detailed discussion of the political security of the state, see L. Chojnowski, *Bezpieczeństwo polityczne państwa* (*Political Security of the State*), [in:] *Wybrane problemy bezpieczeństwa. Rozważania o przestrzeni bezpieczeństwa* (*Selected Security Problems: Discussion of the Security Space*), A. Urbanek (ed.), Wydawnictwo Społeczno-Prawne, Słupsk 2014, p. 123–139.

state actors (such as terrorist organisations) and the concepts for the use of such potentials.

Economic Sector of Security

The economic sector encompasses a wide range of subjects: from very specific entities, i.e. human beings, states and intergovernmental organisations and, to a limited extent, enterprises and social classes, to more abstract forms, such as the international system and subsystem (e.g. global or regional markets). The analysis of the economic sector of security focuses on furthering of the entities' economic interests to such a degree that their basic needs are met, making the entities able to perform their fundamental functions. The semantic scope of the "economic security" concept depends on a category of the entity concerned, and is derived from the concepts characteristic of the main schools of economic thought: mercantilism (the economic equivalent of political realism), Marxist school (radicalism) and economic liberalism. They differ, in the first place, in the way in which they perceive the role of the state in the economic system: from the minimalist one in the case of economic liberalism to the superior and dominant in the case of mercantilism and radicalism[8].

Cultural and Identity-Based Sector of Security

Within the cultural and identity-based sector of the security analysis, the entities concerned are identity-based groups (collectivities): civilisations, nations, ethnic groups and religious groups that have emerged from social splits, whereas the topic of the analysis is the collective identity of such groups. Collective identities have arisen as a result of social rifts, understood as splits in the society that reflect the diversity of its social formations, with the resulting structure giving people a sense of personal and collective identity that is based on the acknowledgement of differences. Depending on the type, the formations thus created may be characterised by social, economic, racial, religious or cultural ties. The most important social splits that lead to the emergence of identity-based groups are those related to social classes, races, gender, religions, ethnicities (including na-

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[8] For a more detailed discussion of the topic, see L. Chojnowski, *Sektor ekonomiczny analizy bezpieczeństwa. Bezpieczeństwo ekonomiczne* (*Economic Sector of the Security Analysis: Economic Security*), "Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie", 2010 (*"Entrepreneurship and Management"*), Vol. XI, Issue 12, p. 133–152.

tions and ethnic groups) and cultures. The cultural and identity-based security is the state of certainty of survival and maintenance, within the accepted evolutionary circumstances, of what constitutes the identity of large human collectivities, i.e. national awareness, ethnic affiliation, religion and culture, and in particular the language, traditions and customs[9].

Environmental Sector of Security

The environmental sector of security refers to the analysis of systems in terms of the environmental support for civilisation and the need for sustainable development. It covers a wide range of topics: from the survival of individual species or types of environment to global issues. Environmental security means maintaining a local and global biosphere as a basic support system – a precondition for human survival and development. Key issues within the environmental security include: 1) ecosystem disruptions, including climate changes, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, desertification and other forms of erosion, depletion of the ozone layer, and soil, water and air pollution; 2) energy problems, both natural resource depletion and deficiency, as well as uneven distribution of such resources; 3) demographic problems: population growth and consumption beyond the Earth's carrying capacity, as well as the associated epidemics and poor health care, growth of illiteracy, uncontrolled political and social migration and unmanageable urbanisation; 4) food problems: poverty, hunger, malnutrition and overconsumption and related diseases, loss of soil fertility and water resources, as well as food shortages and its uneven distribution[10].

Sector of Societal Security

Societal security means the certainty of survival and development of human beings and human collectivities resulting from the absence of destruc-

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[9] For a more detailed discussion of the topic, see L. Chojnowski, *Kulturowo-tożsamościowy wymiar bezpieczeństwa* (*Cultural and Identity-Based Dimension of Security*), [in:] *Współczesne bezpieczeństwo. Perspektywa teoretyczno-metodologiczna* (*Contemporary Security: Theoretical and Methodological Perspective*), S. Jaczyński, M. Kubiak, M. Minkina (ed.), Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities, Siedlce-Warsaw 2011, p. 117–136.

[10] For a more detailed discussion of the environmental sector of security, see L. Chojnowski, *Ekologiczny wymiar bezpieczeństwa* (*Environmental Dimension of Security*), "Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie", 2010 ("Entrepreneurship and Management"), Vol. XI, Issue 12, p. 165–179.

tive forces generated by man and the nature, and, if they appear, from the certainty of having a relevant system of protection. Societal security is provided within the framework of the civil protection system, understood as a set of internally structured and interrelated organisational, human and physical elements designed to protect people and their property from the destructive forces of nature and the consequences of deliberate and unintended human activities, overcome their consequences, and provide the conditions necessary to survive. Basic issues of the societal security sector are those related to: protection of the population from the effects of natural catastrophes and disasters, technical failures, engineering disasters and traffic accidents, security and public order problems, terrorist threats and destructive effects of armed conflicts on the civilian population[11].

Subject- and Object-Related Dimension of Security

All issues in particular security sectors remain in numerous causal relationships with other sectors. In practice, this means that most security related events and processes typically have implications for more than one area. In addition, sector-specific problems do not usually occur on their own but constitute just one aspect of a distinct situation that applies to other sectors too. Therefore, it is necessary to synthesise the sectoral analysis results, taking into account cross-sectoral conditions.

A comprehensive security analysis is possible if we apply, in an integrated way, the subject-object methodology, according to which security should be considered from the perspective of a specific entity (this will be the subject-related dimension of the analysis process, based on the concept of security levels) but also taking into account the specific conditions of its functioning (this, in turn, will be the object-related dimension, based on the methodology of security sectors.

Security Opportunities

Security is inseparably linked to threats, but often collocates with opportunities and challenges too, so we actually deal with "security opportunities,

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[11] For a more detailed discussion of the societal security sector, see L. Chojnowski, *Bezpieczeństwo powszechne* (*Societal Security*) [in:] *Wybrane problemy bezpieczeństwa. Teoria. Strategia. System* (*Selected Security Issues: Theory, Strategy, System*), A. Urbanek (ed.), Chair of National Security of the Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Słupsk 2012, p. 140–160.

challenges and threats". Security opportunities are understood as a likelihood that some circumstances and/or conditions emerge that will be conducive to the state of security or, in other words, the state of calmness, certainty, freedom from concerns, anxiety and fear as regards the entity's most cherished values.

Security Challenges

Security challenges include both persistent tendencies and new situations that may evolve into security threats or generate them, and therefore must be identified and appropriately responded to. If such challenges are addressed timely and effectively, this may not only help to prevent them but also create additional security opportunities. The ambiguity of challenges causes difficulties and dilemmas in the actors' decision-making process, especially that all decisions involve the allocation of always-scarce resources and are routinely taken with some competing goals in play. Consequently, in practice, some challenges are actually taken up whereas decisions to address other ones are postponed, while yet other challenges are ignored altogether.

Security Threats

Security threats are negatively valued phenomena, processes, events and actions, generated by the forces of nature or induced by planned or accidental human activities, which cause unrest, uncertainty, concerns, anxiety or fear related to the entity's most cherished values. Security threats are twofold and include: 1) real phenomena, processes, events and actions, and 2) the subjective perception thereof by the entity concerned. The two-pronged interpretation of security threats provides the basis for distinguishing two similar categories of security, namely the objective and subjective security. Security threats are also related to the concept of "risk", which refers to undesirable negative consequences of such threats (losses). It should also be mentioned that risk as such can stem from a decision, purpose, behaviour and a situation.

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