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NEW OLD WARS – ASYMMETRIC ACTS OF WAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: The end of the twentieth century wars initiated a paradigm shift. Conflicts that emerged at the end of the last century and developed in the early 21st century revealed new aspects of the armed struggle. The classic perception of war has been blurred. In place of the bipolar symmetry appeared asymmetric threats. The former state monopoly on the use of force was lost. Some new members of armed conflict appeared, traditional battlefield setting disappeared and progressive imbalance between the parties for the disposition of potential violence leads to inequality and instability in the world. Asymmetry became a main factor in determining the image of modern warfare.

Clausewitz himself wrote of war as a phenomenon adherent to every age. Looking back, it is hard not to agree with the Prussian theorist, because phases of the evolution of war were inseparably linked with the changes taking place within societies, national structures and the international order. Wars of our times are conflicts, which we can identify as a result of globalization processes and of the emerging post-Cold War order. Expected peace at the end of the bipolar reality did not occur. The world has not freed itself from phobias, crises, conflicts and wars.¹ To make matters worse, the impact of the mentioned phenomena has acquired even

¹ J. Piątek, *Demokracja a wymiar współczesnej asymetrii militarnej*, „Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i praktyka” 2008, No. 1–2, p. 23.

more negative dimension. Cruelty, tenacity and bloodiness have become the inseparable elements of them.

Therefore, what led to the appearance of modern warfare? Francois Heisbourg, a former director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, notes that: *twenty years ago, we could easily describe the functioning of faxes and PCs, but much more difficult – and more important – was to predict their huge impact on society. We are witnessing the transformation of both the causes of the outbreak of wars, and of the means of their conduct. The fall of totalitarian ideologies, which accompanied the industrial revolution; the disintegration of the Soviet empire; the weakening of the traditional role of the nation-state as the only currency emitter and the organizer of armed forces; the emergence of large-scale supranational centres of power and influence, from the world's financial markets to international criminal groups; tribal war revival, not only in the ex-communist countries – all of these factors affect the change of nature of military operations*². Perhaps the words of Heisbourg are only a part of the explanation of the nature of new wars, however they are a contribution to the search for further causes of the transformation of wars.

However, the most important is that the war as a means of resolving disputes still has its established place in the civilizational relations. There is nothing surprising in this, because for most societies throughout history, war was a normal and a primary occupation of people, before it has become the *ultima ratio regum* in the hands of the rulers. Pierre Hasner stresses that the process of civilization depended on the gradual elimination from societies of institutions based on violence – from slavery to a duel, through feudalism and private armies, to giving the state the right to use force. Currently, the process progresses. Although in our eyes, wars are regarded as the greatest possible horror and with common sense they have to lose legitimacy, the spirit of trade and entrepreneurship, privatization and mutual dependence, does not allow for their complete rejection. Furthermore, as described in the previous section, the processes of globalization has been largely contributing to the development of war, and even to its improvement³.

² F. Heisbourg, *Wojny*, Warszawa 1998, p. 7.

³ P. Hassner, *Koniec pewników. Eseje o wojnie, pokoju i przemocy*, Warszawa 2002, p. 192.

Today's picture of the world is blurred. It is difficult to distinguish the national interest from international one, state from society, politics from economics, the public sphere from the private, military from civil, etc. The concept of deterrence, which the Cold War period was based on, ended. Violence and conflicts have become a means of solving problems around the world. States, which have so far operated with the supreme strength, plunged into crisis. Coming back to the Hassner's idea, evolution that happened, is a throwback to the Middle Ages. It has a positive side in the form of a global community, developing new international entities and nationalities, but also negative, such as the revival of private violence and the increase of conflicts of a religious nature⁴. Modern wars have not transformed as a result of the revolution, it has been therefore a long process, unnoticeable and poorly perceptible until it has reached the highest climax. Why, then, has this process been invisible?

Cold War rivalry overshadowed the image of the changing nature of war. Something, which for the last several years has been recognized as a classic war, changed its image unnoticeably. The countries, which are the existing monopolists of violence, began to cede the field to the new, non-state entities. New actors of war in the form of local warlords – terrorist organizations, guerrilla groups and private military companies – established their own rules of war.

German researcher Henfried Münkler in his life's work "Wars of our times"⁵, presents a thesis which depicts new wars as a return to the days of the beginning of the modern era, when the war was not subject to nationalization. In fact, Münkler's assumptions are based on the characteristic similarities which have already occurred during the period of the Thirty Years War. Equally the economy of war, violence, and connections of values and interests of individuals engaged in warfare are the characteristic features of modern warfare. Historical figures such as Wallenstein and von Braunschwig were guided by the desire to enrich and broaden the influence of their power, Cardinal Richelieu and Bethlen Gabor motivated their decisions with their expansionist aspirations, while Swedish King

⁴ Ibidem, p. 194.

⁵ H. Münkler, *Wojny naszych czasów*, Kraków 2004.

Carl Gustaf Adolf based his policy of interventionism on the desire to defend certain values. An equally important role was played by internal strife for power in the region and the religious factor. All these qualities perfectly blend in the contemporary image of war, where there are private interest groups, and the motivation of warfare is purely subjective and based on individual aspirations. There is no need to look far, it is enough just to mention the example of the ongoing wars in Africa (Sudan, Congo, Angola), Chechnya and Afghanistan. All of these conflicts are more like the Thirty Years War than the traditional state wars of the 18th-20th centuries. Therefore, talking about new old wars has its strong justification.

A military historian Martin van Creveld expresses himself in a similar way. He emphasizes the importance of low-intensity conflicts that emerged after the ending of the Cold War. According to van Creveld, world based on Clausewitz's trinity – the government, the army and the population – which the states drew their organizational chart from, is heading towards an inevitable end⁶. Clausewitz's theory of the existence of militarily powerful countries began with the establishment of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and has dominated the scene for an extended period of time. From the period of the end of the bipolar division of the world, non-state parties began to play a stronger role – the end of post-Clausewitz's vision of war took place. The new face of wars is no longer based on the aforementioned trinity, and the role of the state is greatly reduced on the battlefield. In the globalized reality, wars attract war-profit organizations which governments are not able to exercise control over. In fact, which is highlighted by the Israeli scholar, the new wars appear to be conflicts of low intensity (low-intensity conflicts) – which means that their impact will not be felt strongly at the macro level but at the micro level they will lead to a disruption in the arena of national security, which today is inseparably linked to international security. The number of low-intensity conflicts will increase, which will also translate into a drop of wars of “the state against the state” type (state to state warfare). Interestingly, one of the reasons for this state of affairs Israeli sees in the spread of nuclear weapons. In conclusion, the states lose their monopoly on the use of armed force. The future wars, in

⁶ M. van Creveld, *Zmienne oblicze wojen*, Poznań 2008, p. 318.

the opinion of van Creveld, will not be conducted to the dictation of state and national armed forces, and will be carried out by non-state entities such as terrorist or guerrilla organizations.

British army man Rupert Smith wrote about the change of the war paradigm. Wars and conflicts which emerged in the late 20th century and the early 21st century were different from their predecessors. General R. Smith – ex commander of NATO forces in Kosovo – does not use, admittedly, the term “new wars”, but he shows the changes in the nature of war, opposing the previously existing paradigm of industrial wars with the new one – wars amongst the people. According to this paradigm the traditional scenery of the battlefield fades away, and classic armies are no longer facing one another. While in the industrial paradigm there was a sequence of: peace-> crisis-> war-> settlement, in this new reality there is no clear division like that. Instead, the interpenetration of confrontation and conflict takes place⁷. Smith points out that the war between societies are the reality in which people on the streets, in the houses, on the battlefields, all the people, fight a battle, which can take place literally anywhere. Moreover, armed clashes may occur in the presence of the civilian population, against it, and in order to defend it. In most of the new conflicts, sides are not and will not be states. War paradigm among societies proposed by R. Smith can be described by six distinctive features:

1. The growing importance of the media in the context of war.
2. The blur of the purposes of war. Non-state targets begin to dominate.
3. Timeframe of wars undergo dispersion. Those involved in the fighting often prolong the given conflict in order to the realize their objectives.
4. Saving power. Sides of the conflict are trying not to involve maximum powers. Achieving the objectives of the conflict in accordance to the principle of “by all means” is no longer fundamental.
5. At every opportunity given, war actors are trying to use and adapt the old equipment to new tasks.

⁷ B. Balcerowicz, *Sił zbrojne w stanie pokoju, kryzysu i wojny*, Warszawa 2010, p. 156.

6. The rise of significance of non-state entities and their participation in the war. In the armed conflicts state forces and non-state entities face each other⁸.

Speaking of new wars, the publication *New and Old Wars*⁹ by Mary Kaldor cannot be overlooked. Based on the analysis of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the researcher put forward the thesis, according to which at the beginning of 1990 a new type of organized violence with a change in the methods and goals of fighting was born. M. Kaldor sees the source of the creation of new wars in the erosion of the autonomy of states, or even the complete disintegration of state structures¹⁰. The geopolitical and ideological goals of wars in the Cold War period are long gone, and in its place there appeared a struggle for “political identity”. This identity in the classic sense meant the desire to gain national, religious or linguistic power. Thus, the war led to a collision between two identities. Meanwhile, new wars are not focused on building a state, and identity goes far beyond the borders of the state. Identification is local, global, and most importantly transnational¹¹. The phenomenon in the new wars is a picture of cruelty with the emphasis on ethnic cleansing. The actors of war do not depend on winning the “hearts and minds” but on the destruction of identity, deportation and mass killing.

Without a doubt, the gradual disappearance of the state’s participation in the conflicts at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries is common to all new wars. As shown above, each of the theories on modern warfare sees this relationship. It is worth noting that the term “new wars” is conventional, as in the literature, as observed by B. Balcerowicz, there are other terms used, such as “internal wars”, “civil wars”, “low intensity conflicts” or aforementioned “fourth generation wars” etc. Also significant is the use, in their characteristics, of the terms “post-modern”, “informal”, and finally, the most important because of the problems dealt with in this paper, the

⁸ R. Smith, *Przydatność siły zbrojnej. Sztuka wojenna we współczesnym świecie*, Warszawa 2010, p. 40.

⁹ M. Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Stanford 1999, p. 76.

¹⁰ E. C. Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

¹¹ B. Balcerowicz, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

term – “privatized wars”¹². No matter how we define wars and what terms will be the most useful for us, the most important is what they mean. Making a specific summary, you will notice that in every publication dealing with the issues of contemporary conflicts, we see common features and specifications of new wars and conflicts.

I. FEATURES OF THE NEW WARS

Just like every conflict has its own characteristics, so the wars over the centuries were characterized by certain fixed principles. It is not different in the case of new wars. Analyzing the conflicts which have taken place from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the first decade of the 21st century, you will notice some patterns that can be treated as qualitative and quantitative characteristics of new wars. The aforementioned researchers are also compatible as to the specific nature of contemporary conflicts which is often uniform. What new is then reflected in the wars on the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries?

While traditional thinking about wars was based on state-building purposes, in the case of new wars there might have been the considerable reservations about that. In the classic sense the state, which had a monopoly to use force, led war to defend its lands or used the war to expand its territory at the expense of another state. Also, speaking of state-building factor, the importance of fighting for independence should be stressed, such as the War of Independence of 1775. In every case, the wars were conducted to some extent without foreign interference, i.e. political influence. Meanwhile, contemporary wars often lead to the collapse of small and poorly organized states, and the influence of external decisive forces is huge. A special role in this process is performed by economics, which determines the outbreak of the conflict itself. Having rich natural resources not only attests to the power of a country, but it can be often the source of a conflict. In particular, deposits of oil, metal ores, diamonds mines, which constitute the strength of the economy of weak countries are closely linked

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 160–161.

to the global economic system. Today, the governments of poor countries, with such deposits, cannot decide independently on their reallocation. This clearly highlights the processes of globalization destabilizing national economies. Natural resources in weak, failed states also affect negatively the rulers who are not interested in the improvement of state structures, but only in enlargement of the number of money held in foreign accounts. Corruption and looting of national treasures are now common in these countries. To sum up, what could attest to the power of the state, becomes a source of its degradation due to coups, rebellions, civil wars and total instability within the society.

The duration of new wars has also been transformed. State-led wars in Europe from the mid-17th until the early 20th century were relatively short conflicts. Their scheme was, in most cases the same: the sides declared war, they led it, and all ended up in concluding a peace treaty. Moreover, during the state conflicts, sides tried, more or less, to respect to the laws of war (during the First and Second World War, however, the rules of war have been broken). Meanwhile, new wars are characterized by ... the lack of rules and no respect for any rules of war.

Traditional war theatre is disappearing, because the front, middle and back of a fight are not crystallizing. Military action can be and are conducted at any time and place. Clausewitz's concept of the decisive battle has no right to exist in today's wars. Sides avoid decisive clashes, and their tactics is often similar in nature to guerrilla warfare or terrorism. As rightly H. Münkler states, actors of new wars often refer in their war strategies to Mao Zedong's combat rules, according to which the most important is the "brinkmanship".

Thus, in a conflict, in which one side is much stronger than the other, has a greater human technological and strategic potential, there should be used tactics of stroke and retreat for the gradual bleeding out of the opponent. Interestingly, the fighting parties of the new wars avoid the end of warfare! As long as the material base allows it, the war for them can go on forever and it has its logical explanation.¹³ Therefore, if we compared the

¹³ H. Münkler, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

classic wars to the present ones, we can identify significant differences between them:

Table 1. Own elaboration

State wars	New wars
Declaration of war	No declaration of war
Pursuing the decisive battle	Avoiding major clashes and decisive battles
Relatively short duration of warfare	Warfare led as long as possible (endlessly)
The conflict ended with peace and concluding a peace treaty	No interest in peace. The peace treaty replaced by the peace process

On the basis of the analysis of data in the table above a clear conclusion occurs: it is difficult to determine the beginning and the end of modern warfare. At the same time the thesis of M. van Creeveld on low intensity war confirms. According to it a conflict breaks out, extinguished, erupts, expires again etc¹⁴.

Bloodiness and cruelty which accompany today's conflicts, overwhelm the idea of conducting the war with respect for international law. As previously mentioned, the codified war rules cannot exist during the course of current warfare. There is, therefore, no wonder that the new war victims are mostly civilians. It is true that the 20th century was the bloodiest period in history. As noted by J. Piątek, as a result of organized violence at that time from 167 to 168 million people were killed¹⁵. However, it should be noted that 90% of the number of the dead were soldiers (according to the definition of international law). In the case of new wars, this trend is totally changing, because as many as 80% of the dead and wounded are civilians, while only 20% are soldiers¹⁶. Therefore, it is worth to pose a question about the reasons for the reversal of such proportions. Of course, moving away from the idea of the state war is one of the important factors, but it is not the most important one. The essence of the new wars is the focus on the warfare against the civilian population, and it is related

¹⁴ M. van Creeveld, op.cit.

¹⁵ J. Piątek, *Wymiar współczesnej asymetrii. Demokracja przez wojnę?*, in S. Zyborowicz (Ed.), *W poszukiwaniu modelu demokratycznego*, Toruń 2009, p. 101.

¹⁶ H. Münkler, op.cit., p. 24.

to two aspects. Firstly, during the conflict there often comes to ethnic cleansing, and because of the fact that there are no traditional battlefields, civilians are constantly exposed to contact with the parties of the conflict.

Secondly, the war becomes a way of life. In other words, there is a link connecting business to the war, resulting in a war economy based on looting and plundering, slave labour, and long-term development of the crime sector (e.g. extortion, drugs, prostitution). As a result, the war is starting to produce profits, so its end would be an uneconomical movement on the part of the interested parties. It is also clear that with using violence against the civilian population, there must come to a bloody impose of their will in order to collect the material goods. For this reason, the presence of group rapes, mutilations, massacres and the treatment of human bodies as trophies is commonly noted¹⁷. "Soldiers" taking part in the fighting are becoming none other than the ordinary robbers and degenerates. In conclusion, gradually but effectively the lines between violence and paid employment blur. Something, which the state wars were able to separate (more or less successfully), today is closely linked. Actors of war cooperate with the criminal world. There are no clear war aims, it is also difficult to distinguish civilians from soldiers. Civilians become victims of attacks (physical, sexual and psychological) just because they were on the way of armed thugs.

¹⁷ The best example of this brutality was the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the most shocking photographs documenting war crimes was a picture of a Saudi militant holding a head of Serb Blagoje Balgojevic as a war trophy or an image of a few heads of Serb civilians treaded by soldiers' boots. Dariusz Wybranowski, who deals with the issues of militant Islam, emphasizes that during the aforementioned war the common practices were: beheadings, mutilation by plucking out the eyes, nailing to trees, and even burning alive. It was completed by the mass rape of women and the destruction of the places of worship. Most acts of violence were related to the civilian population, D. Wybranowski, *Udział ochotników muzułmańskich w Bośni i Hercegowinie*, in: G. Ciechanowski, J. Sielski (Eds.) *Konflikty współczesnego świata*, Toruń 2006, pp. 81–82; cf. D. Ratajczak, *Balkańskie preludium*, <http://www.koreywo.com/Ratajczak/balkanskie.htm>, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

Table 2. The main asymmetric differences between conventional and new wars

Classic wars	New wars
Organized structures	Informal structures
Possessing advanced technology	Using currently available technology
Logistic dependence	Logistic independence
National character	Transnational, often local, character
Homogeneous doctrine	Doctrine created ad hoc
Pursuing the decisive battle	Raids, occasional and unexpected attacks; avoiding major battles
Soldier	Militant, terrorist, criminal, hacker
Allies	Associates
Segregation	Integration

Source: M. Hong Kian Wah, *Low-Intensity conflict*, http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2000/Vol26_3/7.htm, (accessed: 02.10.2012)

II. MAKING WARFARE ASYMMETRIC

One of the most important features of modern warfare is their asymmetry. After the end of the Cold War, many scholars and army men believed that the threat of an outbreak of the global conflict receded with the fall of the Soviet superpower. Only few have noticed that instead of the bipolar symmetry, there will appear asymmetric threats. The growing disproportion between the parties in the field of having the potential for violence led to more inequality and instability in the world.

In the simplest terms, the term “asymmetric threats” means the potential for conflict in which there are at least two entities: weaker and stronger. The difference between the two lies in the disproportion in the possession of means, access to technology, and even in the diversity of the used methods. In the asymmetrical relationship the weaker entity hinders or prevents the stronger side to exploit that potential, which at the same time should lead to the defeat of the opponent.

Asymmetric threats can be depicted from many angles. Marek Madej distinguishes two: wide – military and narrow – of political science. In the

first case, the threat can flow both from non-state actors, as well as from the state itself. Military approach focuses on the difference in the application of methods of warfare, like guerrilla tactics. However, this idea has many weaknesses, because the definition of threats is expanded, as in any armed conflict, evident disproportion of forces is visible, and the sides almost always use different modes of operation. Thus, the military approach causes that almost every conflict can be considered as asymmetric. In addition, a broad approach leads to relativization of the concept of asymmetric threats. It is impossible to compare the spectrum of asymmetry in the same way for a strong state such as the USA and a weak state such as Bangladesh. Finally, the military definition leads to blurring of the differences between the threats arising from the activities of states and the activities of non-state actors¹⁸.

The negative sides of the first concept make us lean towards the second option – the one of political science. As noted by M. Madej, narrow approach is associated with the activity of non-state entities. As compared to the previous concept, the recognition of political science does not focus solely on the methods of operation. This approach focuses on multiple grounds – from differences in the potential and the legitimacy of using the methods in rivalry between non-state actors and states. And although the concept of political science is not perfect, it eliminates the disadvantages that occurred in the broad one. It allows you to focus better on the categories of threats resulting from new wars. It is worth noting that regardless of adopting a narrow or broad concept, new wars are asymmetric not only from the military point of view. In addition to purely military grounds, asymmetry also manifests itself in phenomena of different fields such as: ecology, information technology, demography, economics, etc¹⁹.

In the view of the political science approach of asymmetric threats, we should answer the question: how being asymmetric is manifested in new wars? The answer is not simple. Diversity, being multidimensional and

¹⁸ M. Madej, *Zagrożenia asymetryczne – „nowy” problem bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*, in: A. Kaniewska (Ed.), *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe*, Warszawa 2012, p. 80.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 82–83.

dynamics of changes in symmetry cause difficulties in its characterization. However, some elements are permanent in the context of new wars. The main regularities are undeniably no interest in territorial matters and active presence of non-state actors – beneficiaries²⁰.

In the context of new wars it is difficult to talk about a specific battlefield. In traditional wars battles took place on a particular ground, the territory where the battlefield could be distinguished. Meanwhile, in asymmetric wars there are no geographical and chronological boundaries of the fights and all battles take place in dispersion. The sides use all available means to win the war. Furthermore, the objectives of asymmetric warfare are closely linked with the ground the war takes place. However, this area will never be limited in any way.

Other characteristics of asymmetric wars are:

- a) **Organization** – the fights are not necessarily lead by traditional armed forces but by non-state groups. The activities of such groups may, however, be initiated by states such as failed or rogue ones. To achieve their objectives the typical asymmetric groups are often camouflaged inside an enemy state. For a complete blur inside the attacked society, members of these groups do not wear uniforms, there is no clear and transparent hierarchy, ranks (as compared to the national armies). Training of such soldiers is also not assigned to a single location. Training bases can be created in any chosen country. Enigmatic organization and command system is intentional because of the need to protect own staff, leadership, methods of operation and goals.
- b) **Objectives** – attacks carried out by entities of asymmetric wars are not limited to military targets. Moreover, purely civilian targets are more preferred. The main idea behind the attacks is the desire to achieve spectacular psychological effect. Thus, the objectives of asymmetric warfare are total in character and may refer to the territory, population and resources. Legal restrictions do not apply while defining the objectives of the war, it is about the largest destruction possible. That is why, the totality and unpredictability

²⁰ M. Madej, op.cit., p. 83.

determine the asymmetric objectives. It was most clearly shown by the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11th September 2001, in which the effect of the attack was devastating for society. Civil aircrafts were used for its implementation, the symbolic objects were chosen as targets, and served as a battlefield. It is worth noting while commenting this example, that the actions were inspired and organized in many countries, and were implemented in one – the USA.

- c) **Range** – it has already been outlined by no interest in territorial matters, so the lack of any organizational and operational boundaries. The scale and scope of activities are not limited by geography, subject and object of attack can be struck on their territory, but also in every other corner of the world, such as tourists of the given country, embassies, resources. The scale of operations is characterized by high intensity.
- d) **Methods of operation** – conventional methods of operation are not preferred by entities leading asymmetric fights, instead they use a combination of methods and procedures specific to the special forces, guerrilla groups, criminal organizations and religious sects. Elementary factors of asymmetric warfare are: becoming like the enemy or blur in their society, not obeying rules and conventions, secrecy, variability and surprise²¹.
- e) **Low susceptibility to deterrence** – due to the lack of assigned territory and, usually, nationality, asymmetric groups do not fear retaliatory attacks from their opponents. The armed forces, despite a huge advantage in military potential, are not able to lead the fight against non-state entities. This is due to a simple reason: we do not know where the impact would take place, which forces should be used. Even worse, a possible attack could have serious legal and political consequences, such as attacking a group on the territory of another state would be a violation of its sovereignty. The best example is the U.S. special forces operation to capture Osama Bin

²¹ K. Piątkowski, *Wojna nowego typu?*, „Polska w Europie” 2002, No. 39, p. 15.

Laden²², which caused outrage and protests of Pakistani authorities²³.

- f) **Low intensity** – the frequency of asymmetric attacks is very low. Most states while taking care of their own safety, are more focused on the threats from another state or non-military ones. This has serious implications, since the reduced safety perception may mean that the country, which becomes a target, would be completely unprepared for a possible attack. This would cause the increase in the number of victims, and most likely the psychological effect would double²⁴.
- g) **The role of the media** – in theory, already during the Cold War period an increase in the involvement of the media in war conflicts was marked. During the Vietnam War (1965–1975) the American media played a crucial role – it is enough to mention the example of the Tet Offensive, which from a military point of view, was the failure of the Communists, but from the media perspective was their political success²⁵. In the new wars there has been even

²² See more: <http://www.rmfm24.pl/fakty/swiat/news-osama-bin-laden-nie-zyje-zapis-relacji,nId,337765>,

(accessed: 02.10.2012).; W. Jagielski, *Świat po Osamie*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 04.05.2011, http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,9535215,Swiat_po_Osamie.html, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

²³ After a successful raid of special forces on bin Laden’s mansion, Islamabad authorities have made a firm protest against the action conducted without their knowledge on the territory of Pakistan. Moreover, the people who helped U.S. intelligence services to determine the whereabouts of the leader of Al-Qaeda were arrested, http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114881,9792819,Pakistan_drazni_Ameryke.html, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

²⁴ M. Madej, *op.cit.*, pp. 84–85.

²⁵ J. R. Arnold, *Ofensywa Tet*, Poznań 2009, p.91; Even American historians are aware of the role played by the media during the Vietnam conflict. A historian, George Herring, has even set up a thesis of “stabbing in the back” of U.S. military operations by the media: *Media continued to describe events in a highly unfavorable and sometimes distorted words. Early messages about the devastating enemy victory went largely uncorrected. The fact that the United States and South Vietnam repulsed the attacks and quickly stabilized their positions, was completely lost in the image of chaos and disaster. Tet has provided compelling arguments to those television and newspaper commentators who had long opposed the conflict. “The war in Vietnam is not to be won,” reported columnist Joseph Kraft [...]. Many*

a greater increase in the importance of the media. Armed asymmetric groups often use media as a means of fighting with the state, thus they act as a go-between of the fighting parties and the public opinion. You can even risk saying that in asymmetric conflicts the use of weapons is displaced by the use of television images. Today filmed scenes are a powerful means of combat which are very effective in the fight against governments. In a democratic state there is no control and censorship of the media, so bloody scenes from the battlefields are often used even by domestic media, which leads to weakening of political decisions within the state. Asymmetric groups are aware of the fact that the creation of public moods by the media is a powerful weapon. Washington was convinced of the power of the media when after the end of the second War in the Persian Gulf, the terrorists began to use the media to show the execution of Western citizens²⁶. The traditional role of the media in reporting on war events becomes an obsolete form. Today's media are one of the parties of the conflict, highly desired by the parties fighting, as having media on your side gives you a significant politico-military advantage. In conclusion, the greater is the importance of the camera, the more asymmetric is the conflict.

- h) **Technology** – the art of warfare evolves along with changes in the nature of war. Social, economic and technological development causes the transformation in the manner and style of life of the population. Inventions and technological innovations are forcing strategists to adapt the methods of fighting to the current environment. Technological advantage has always accompanied wars, but in the 21st century this aspect began to enlarge its importance. While in the past such technological innovations as railway were

influential people who supported the president or were only moderately critical, now have spoken strongly against the war, <http://www.eioba.pl/a/1sez/wietnam-na-szklanym-ekranie-ofensywa-tet-i-amerykanske-media>, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

²⁶ Islamic terrorists have made several executions, always recording all procedures and sending the recordings to the TV, see O. Fallaci, *Wywiad z samą sobą. Apokalipsa*, Warszawa 2005; <http://www.przegląd-tygodnik.pl/pl/artykul/terrorysci-lowcy-glow>, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

controlled by the state, the new technological inventions such as the Internet or means of telecommunication are available and controlled by non-state entities. What is more, leaving them only for the state would lead to their low efficiency. Modern technology makes conducting new wars easier. Data communication infrastructure, anonymous flow of money, freedom of movement and poor control mechanisms make the preparation and conduct of asymmetric operations more favourable. Due to the Internet and mobile phoning systems, asymmetric group members can easily connect with one another, exchange the necessary information and even hand over plans to build weapons, such as homemade bombs. The most important thing is that the communication is extremely fast and anonymous. Another aspect is the undergoing revolution in the RMA military technology²⁷, which means *a remarkable development in the field of military technology, armaments and military potential, associated with the general progress of civilization, IT and technology. It leads to significant changes in the conduct of armed struggle, its planning methods, equipment, training methods and organization of the armed forces*²⁸. The latest discoveries in the field of automation, robotics, nanotechnology, and above all information technology allow for production and use of extremely precise, sophisticated, deadly and mobile weapons. RMA is primarily used by large states, and the effectiveness of the application of technological innovations is undeniable. Only during the ongoing war in Afghanistan the operations in which high-quality technology, such as drone attacks, were opposed to tribal methods of the Taliban fighting²⁹. However, the technology which is used by the strong states, has many weaknesses and dangers. For example, the United States, which is one of the most computerized countries in

²⁷ RMA – Revolution in Military Affairs.

²⁸ Cited by: J. Piątek, *RMA gwarantem utraconej symetrii bezpieczeństwa?*, in: J. Piątek, R. Podgórska (Eds.) *Wybrane aspekty bezpieczeństwa*, Vol. 2, Szczecin 2007, pp. 230–245.

²⁹ http://www.logo24.pl/Logo24/1,85826,7152179,Wojny_dronow.html (accessed: 13.10.2013).

the world, rely smooth functioning of their government agencies on the computer network. Hence, every sphere from power industry, through transport, banking, telecommunication to medical emergency services is based on IT solutions. Non-state entities, which also have the information technology resources, could conduct (and sometimes they actually do) an attack on government computer networks; hackers working for private entities or non-state organizations, by breaking into government systems could lead to a destabilization of the state functioning. Thus, there is a real war going on, in which it is difficult to coordinate the defence lines, and winning comes without even firing a single gunshot. Attacked enemy (the state) is usually helpless and weakened. In fact, technological advances in making warfare asymmetric, created information technology wars specific to the 21st century. The most famous hacker attacks at the beginning of the new century have clearly demonstrated that the modern battlefield does not necessarily have to be located on the firm ground. The future of asymmetric operations is in cyberspace, that is where the real new war will occur.

III. ECONOMY OF VIOLENCE, THAT IS CHEAP WARS

The relationship of economics and violence is as old as the world. From the age of antiquity, through the Middle Ages and subsequently following periods of history, people with power decided to use violence in order to gain more power, treasure, money, and influence. It was the desire to grow rich which largely determined the majority of conflicts known to mankind.

Immanuel Kant had already written about the calculation of profit and loss resulting from the war. The famous philosopher assumed that the socio-economic conditions would lead to the disappearance of the war and the establishment of peace: *it is caused by business sense that cannot coexist with war, and which sooner or later nation will be obsessed about*³⁰.

³⁰ H. Münkler, op.cit., p. 93.

According to Kant's thesis democratic states do not conduct wars with one another, because they are unprofitable. On the other hand, war is possible with a non-democratic state, and thus a balance of profit and loss is created. The developed countries see only the negative balance of the costs in the war. Especially if the war is fought in a symmetrical manner – against another developed state. However, the advantage of costs over incomes does not apply to asymmetric conflicts. The entities which lead them (warlords, terrorists, etc.) do not cover the considerable costs of warfare. Moreover, the purpose of their existence is to carry out such actions, which would cause severe financial losses of the opponent with low own expense.

Perhaps today the factor of profitability of wars is a major determinant of their progressive becoming not connected with the state. During the Cold War period expenses spent on armaments were huge and we cannot forget that it was R. Reagan's policy of involving into arms race which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even disregarding the Cold War era, after 1989 armaments of states, the costs of military interventions, etc., were based on a multi-billion military procurement³¹. In addition, technological development meant that almost every military equipment can be computerized, not to mention expensive spy satellites or advanced missile defence systems³².

In contrast, the new wars are cheap. This is because they are usually carried out using light weapons: guns, mines, grenades, homemade explosives. Even in transport, pickup trucks are used instead of jeeps, trucks and armoured vehicles. Not without significance is also easiness in getting weapons, and their low cost (about which more detail will be presented in the next section), so that the asymmetric group leaders can easily equip their soldiers. Practically speaking, the leaders bear only costs of equipping their people with weapons, as later, in accordance with the principle: "the war must feed the war", these soldiers earn their own living by robbing, plundering and pillaging³³. By comparison to the national armed

³¹ Since 1988 SIPRI has maintained a database on military expenditure of 172 countries, see more: <http://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

³² Zob. więcej: <http://www.mda.mil/>, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

³³ H. Münkler, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

forces, to maintain an asymmetric group member seems to be very cheap, because the state soldier must be trained, armed, paid (his wages, insurance), etc. Thus, we see that the cost of maintaining a soldier with reference to, for example, a rebel or terrorist, is totally disproportionate. Moreover, we must remember that a soldier of armed forces is paid for by the society in taxes.

Economic attractiveness of new wars is also reflected by the openness of recruitment. While one can join the state armed forces after passing a series of qualification tests (psychological, physical), the warlords do not look at qualifications of a typical candidate. What matters is the fact that they can carry a gun and would be dedicated fighters for the profits which could be gained during the conflict. As it was mentioned earlier, there is a similar case with children, even easier material for a soldier. Regardless of age, for many people joining asymmetric groups is a chance for breaking out of poverty, a change of low social status, or showing themselves in their community. Easiness of the access to human potential fuels modern conflicts. As it is widely known without people there would be no conflicts, and in new wars there are more than enough of them.

Like the organization, similarly cheap are the methods of leading new wars. While in the classic sense the soldiers are trained to kill and to defeat the enemy, in relation to asymmetric conflicts this phenomenon becomes wider. Anyone who has a gun can kill, but not always bullets and shells inflict as much pain as other attacks. In the new wars the use of sexual violence against opponents is characteristic. Of course, the phenomenon of rape appeared in every armed conflict, and after the end of II World War, the Soviet rapes on German women could be a core of a separate scientific work³⁴. Nevertheless, sexual violence in past conflicts usually

³⁴ According to estimates, about 2 million German women were raped by the Red Army soldiers. In 1945, "Time Magazine" wrote: *Rapes, looting, and suicides have become common. The soldiers who entered the Haus Dahlem (maternity hospital and orphanage) repeatedly raped pregnant women and those who have recently given birth. The total number of victims of rape in Berlin itself (of women from seventy to ten years old girls) will never be known. Ryan's report, on the basis of physicians' estimates informed that it was a number from 20,000 to 100,000*, <http://historiami.pl/szal-gwaltow-sowieckich/>, (accessed: 02.10.2012); cf. A. Beevor, *Berlin. The Downfall 1945*, Warsaw 2005.

result from the principle of “the defeated takes the prize”. Meanwhile in the new wars, a woman and increasingly often also a man, is no longer solely an award for the winner, it is rather the object of attack, even if the war lasts, is not over or is already lost. During the wars in Serbia, Rwanda and Somalia, rapes were used for lowering the morale of the enemy. There is nothing surprising in this, because from a psychological point of view, an attack on someone’s woman-partner is a guarantee for the highest level of anger and desperation in a man. Besides guns, grenades and mines cost, and rapes are ... free. By raping one can save the cost of arms and ammunition, and at the same time the morale of one’s own troops are raised. Sex as a fighting weapon has become a part of the strategy in new wars, in which killing is not always profitable and not always the point is to kill. Not to mention that rapes are an integral part of ethnic cleansing, which are also linked with the asymmetric wars. Of course, according to international law codified, for instance in the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), sexual violence is forbidden, considered a crime, and the warring parties should ensure that there is no sexual assault. According to 27th article: *Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity. Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault*³⁵. However, as already mentioned, in the wars of a new type law enforcement is not respected. Women and children become targets of easy, fast and effective attack from the members of asymmetric group.

Another characteristic of asymmetric warfare is its cruelty. The famous maxim of General Ulysses S. Grant: *War is a terrible thing, the only way to reduce the suffering of humanity is finish it quickly. To finish it quickly,*

³⁵ Konwencja genewska o ochronie osób cywilnych podczas wojny, Genewa, 12.08.1949, (Dz. U., 1956, Nr 38, poz. 171, załącznik), http://www.stosunkimiedzynarodowe.pl/traktaty/czwarta_konwencja_genewska.pdf, (accessed: 02.10.2012).

you have to make it even more terrible, could depict to some extent the behaviour in new wars. Although the leading entities do not want them to end quickly, they seek to ensure them to be more terrible. A common sight in the new wars is a picture of the mutilated victims or dismembered corpses. Moving away from humanity reaches its apogee. People involved in asymmetric conflicts are trying to spread fear and violence with cruelty. In Rwanda, it is not the rifle that has become the main tool of violence but a machete. Hutu executed Tutsi using side arms. The example of Rwanda is not isolated. In almost every asymmetric conflict, cutting off heads, limbs or depriving of ears or eyes become a terrifying everyday life. The desire to inflict pain, that is an attack on human corporeality is justified. Oppressors are no longer interested in killing a man, but rather in his humiliation and mental breakage that an image of a cripple would come to consciousness of his brethren – the psychological effect dominates the physical one.

The essence of the new war economy is not based solely on the fact that they are cheap. Most of all, their persistence is paying off. In the bipolar world superpowers financed conflicts in the world, in the case of asymmetric wars a powerful financial spiral of private-criminal character reveals itself. International corporations, oil companies, diamond dealers and criminal organizations take the place of the USSR and the USA³⁶. Money might be drawn from private pockets. If only the private sector sees the benefits of the ongoing asymmetric conflict, without hesitation, it would finance the lease of mercenaries or a local army. And even if not from a private source, warlords can derive their financial resources from drug trafficking, prostitution and ore trade. We cannot forget also about the role played by humanitarian organizations in such practices. By providing assistance, such as food, they often push the economic situation of war. A drastic reduction in the cost of conducting war along with economic openness caused that leading new wars has become a lucrative venture.

The loss of the force monopoly by the state meant that the new type of wars are based entirely on asymmetry. Conducting actions with conven-

³⁶ H. Münkler, op.cit., p. 126.

tional forces is ineffective towards the activities of non-state entities, which perfectly fit into the concept of asymmetric wars. In the classic battles non-state actors would have no chance against the force of states, however, the newly created conditions not only give them the opportunity of efficient organization, but also the chance of effective action.

In a typical asymmetric conflict the symbolic scene of David defeating Goliath is being exposed. Hezbollah clashes with Israel proves best that the incompatibility of potential does not condemn the theoretically weaker party to failure³⁷. For years paramilitary structure of the Lebanese militants have bullied the Jewish state with their attacks, and it is a country that with its technological and military potential outgrows their opponents on many levels. What is more, a country which (unofficially) possesses nuclear arsenal. Today, the government in Tel Aviv and members of the Knesset admit that despite the obvious advantages in resources and capabilities, Israel cannot achieve military superiority, which is to neutralize Hezbollah.

In fact asymmetry of wars and their low cost of running led to the fact that such groups as terrorists, guerillas, criminals and hackers have found a perfect tool to achieve their goals. The unusual thing about asymmetric wars is the possibility to use one-off and non-standard tactics. In October 2000, a terrorist attack on the American destroyer USS Cole docked in Aden roadstead was carried out³⁸. Just two Shahids³⁹ were enough to kill 17 and injure another 39 fully trained American soldiers. They possessed limited resources – they used motorboats to attack the warship worth billions of dollars. This extremely audacious attack exposed the weakness of the armed forces towards asymmetric operations, and at the same time undermined the prestige of Washington.

The contemporary picture of global security is blurred and unclear. As long as in the international relations the lead role was performed by state wars, there was a symmetry in the organization and methods of operation.

³⁷ See more: D. Duda, *Terroryzm islamski*, Kraków 2002, pp. 44–48.

³⁸ See more: R. Perl, R. O. Rourke, *Terrorist Attack on USS Cole: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress z 30 stycznia 2001, http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/usscole_crsreport.htm, (02.10.2012).

³⁹ The Arab martyr or witness of faith, the one who gives his life in the name of God.

The complexity of the past put classic armed forces in the first place in the context of solving conflict and international issues. Unfortunately, the process of globalization and the collapse of the bipolar system led to changes in which war has seen a major transformation. Asymmetry has become a factor determining the image of today's wars. The two aforementioned examples of asymmetric military actions have illustrated best, how great a threat the countries will have to face in the 21st century.

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