

# Key Challenges and Threats to National Security: The Polish Perspective

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## Introduction

In the early twenty-first century, threats to the security of Poland have been substantially reassessed, and are still evolving. Currently, the threat of a conflict emerging that could lead to war on a global scale is less likely to take place. However, new sources of potential conflict have appeared that can pose serious challenges and widespread threats to Polish national security. In order to face these challenges and effectively deal with the resulting threats to its national security system, the Polish leadership needs to determine which threats are most fundamental in nature, and which are of secondary concern.

This article is intended to clarify the current challenges and threats to the national security of the Polish Republic, and to help build awareness of the challenges and threats that exist. Perhaps some of its conclusions can be of use to decision makers who are responsible for maintaining Poland's security. The process of explaining the pressures posed by these threats to national security was best initiated by formulating a set of questions about each potential conflict: What threats to the security of the Polish Republic does it pose? How might these threats come about? And why is this particular conflict of concern?

This essay aims to overcome the difficulties arising from a teleological approach by beginning with the problem and formulating a working hypothesis that is best able to reflect the essence of the current challenges and threats to Poland's national security. This method is made possible by the careful arrangement of a set of semantic concepts underlying the systematic study to be carried out, and then interpreting these different types of challenges and threats.

The solution of the problem and the verification of the working hypothesis required the use of both deductive and inductive research methods. The interpretation of the underlying concepts as carried out mainly through the analysis of word formation, inductive and philological reasoning, and deductive inference, which provided new scientific facts and made it possible to create the necessary definitions. However, the system of risk was constructed following the principles of formal logic and rules of dichotomous divisions of the Platonic form (as contradictory characteristics). The development of the characteristics of different types of threats was achieved through the analysis of the many examples available in the literature, conducting verbal tests of these models of threats, and a synthesis of the causal analysis of the results obtained. Finally, in drawing

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definitive conclusions, I relied on incomplete enumerative induction (Mill's canons) and deductive inference.

## Basic Concepts

Obtaining a relatively orderly response to the questions, What threatens the Polish Republic? How and why does it do so? requires a method of clarification that is adapted to the needs of working out this mode of understanding a set of elementary concepts. Without such a clarification of the basic concepts being used, a description of the national security threats is in practice impossible. These concepts will be discussed below.

The dilemmas of the state with respect to resolving security matters are usually considered in the literature as challenges to national security.<sup>1</sup> These challenges may either be taken up or ignored, and either decision may create additional opportunities or pose additional threats. Such an understanding of the challenges of national security should be considered reasonable on the condition that the understanding of the challenges is defined more precisely.<sup>2</sup> A 'challenge' (after a small modification of the approach to the category of national security, as presented by M. Cieślarczyk<sup>3</sup>) is recognized as the situation (or information about a situation) which—if not discovered on time and if suitably selected arranged activities are not identified, arranged, accomplished in the right place and time, with the involvement of adequate capacity—may turn into a 'threat.' Alternatively, it might become an opportunity, that would come to be understood as such depending on circumstances conducive to the state's interests and objectives.

In turn, threats to state security are often understood in terms of their potential destructive impact on the country, and are exemplified in the form of 'crises' and 'conflicts.' In the glossary of terms already quoted, threats are understood as a 'situation,' while different types of threats are characterized as "derivatives of globalization," "combination of events," etc. In this situation, it is appropriate for Poland's national security needs to understand threats to national security as a collection of events taking place within and/or outside the state that could result in the failure to meet or restrict the following:

- The preservation of the country's territorial integrity, identity, and its sovereign power
- The survival of the nation
- Maintaining internal order and the rule of law

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<sup>1</sup> See *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego* (Dictionary of National Security Terms) (Warsaw: AON, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Later in this essay, national security will be understood as democratic state security, hence the security of the Polish Republic.

<sup>3</sup> Marian Cieślarczyk, *Teoretyczne i metodologiczne podstawy badania problemów bezpieczeństwa i obronności państwa* (Theoretical and Methodological Bases of Researching the State Security and Defense Problems) (Siedlce: Wydawnictwo Akademii Podlaskiej, 2009).

- The conditions necessary to ensure quality of life and national development.<sup>4</sup>

However, a threat is generally understood as an event that is caused by unpredictable natural or intentional events that have a negative effect on the functioning of a system or cause adverse (dangerous) changes in its structure and functioning.<sup>5</sup> If left untreated, accumulated threats may lead to a crisis situation, both in the present system and its environment.

‘Security’ in the narrow sense is widely regarded as the feeling of the absence of risk. Such a close connection of threats with the concept of security leads to clarifications of how national security can be understood in the context of a threat. In theory, an understanding of national security functions includes such factors as values, needs, status, process, and aims.<sup>6</sup> Such an understanding of national security allows us to better understand its essence; however, this approach also contains significant logical flaws.

The most important one is *non-definito fit per genus et differentia sepecificam*. A possible solution to the problem of assigning a definition to national security is the security classification of the category of certainty. However, clarifying the difference of kind may be achieved through the computation of the most essential values of safety. Piotr Sienkiewicz draws our attention to the attributes of security such as existence, survival, integrity, identity, independence, ownership, and certainty of development.<sup>7</sup> The same author lists the following fundamental values of national security:

- Survival of the state as a political organization, the nation as a distinct ethnic group, and biological survival of the population
- Territorial integrity
- Political independence (the level of political freedom, e.g., the case of a nation without their own state)
- Quality of life, which can also be quantified as the standard of living, level of socio-economic development, the rights and liberties, “national style of life”
- The environment, development, and others.<sup>8</sup>

In turn, Waldemar Kitler presents such values of national security as survival of the nation, state identity, internal order, rule of law, high international standing, and moral and material strength.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it can be justified to understand national security as

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<sup>4</sup> Stanisław Dworecki, *Zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa* (Threats to the Security of the State) (Warsaw: AON, 1994), 61.

<sup>5</sup> Krzysztof Ficoń, *Inżynieria zarządzania kryzysowego* (Crisis Management Engineering) (Warsaw: Bel Studio Sp, z o.o., 2007), 76.

<sup>6</sup> Jerzy Stańczyk, *Współczesne pojmowanie bezpieczeństwa* (Contemporary Understanding of Security) (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1996), 15–19; Waldemar Kitler, “Bezpieczeństwo narodowe” (National Security) *TWO, Zeszyt problemowy* 1:61 (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Piotr Sienkiewicz, “Analiza systemowa polityki bezpieczeństwa państwa,” (Systemic Analysis of Security Policy of the State), *Zeszyty Naukowe (NDU Scientific Quarterly)* 4 (2005): 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Kitler, “Bezpieczeństwo narodowe,” 22.

the certainty of being able to maintain territorial integrity and political independence, the legal system, a high international standing, and moral and material strength of the state while ensuring national identity, human and civil rights, life and health, culture and customs, freedom, high quality of life, and development of individuals and social groups.

*Characteristics of Threats to National Security*

The understanding of the categories of challenges, threats, opportunities, and national security permits us to undertake an attempt to systematize national security threats. Finding a single criterion that carried across multiple levels of security threats to different elements of the state was not easy, but it turned out to be possible. Although in the literature one encounters the opinion that “the dynamics of the identified threats today do not allow for the creation of a permanent classification,” one should not succumb to such suggestions.<sup>10</sup> They rather relate to specific types of classification (e.g., variable characteristics) performed according to an objective criterion. These classifications are inherently difficult to complete and, without the included distinction of “other threats” than those that have already been identified, it never will be complete. The relative instability of such a classification should not be regarded as a defect, but rather as a classification attribute due to variable characteristics. Nevertheless, it has to be accepted that numerous and different threats to national security are identified in the literature on national security, varying in scope and content according to their objective classification function.

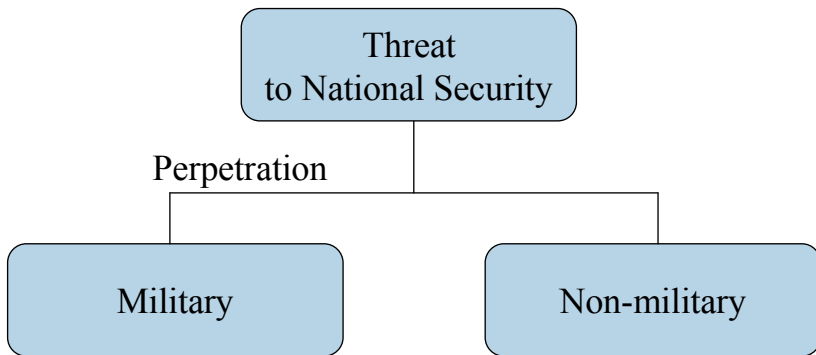


Figure 1: Diagram of Challenges and Threats to State Security (Level 1).

<sup>10</sup> Sławomir Zalewski, *Bezpieczeństwo polityczne państwa* (Political Security of the State) (Siedlce: Wydaw. Akademii Podlaskiej, 2010), 199.

The identified problematic nature of certain classifications of national security threats prompted a search for solutions to the problem of systematic risks in the area of dichotomous classification made by contradictory characteristics. However, the criterion of the division was sought and found “in the location of security among the four causes of true knowledge (which Aristotle distinguishes – *causa materialis*, *causa formalis*, *causa efficiens* (perpetration A.G.), *causa finalis*) and its identification with the form of existence.”<sup>11</sup> Perpetration among the Aristotelian causes was considered a convenient criterion for multilevel dichotomous division of national security threats.

At the same time, while choosing the type of scheme used to classify threats and the criterion to be used in dividing them, two facts were recognized. The first one is that in dictionaries and encyclopedias it is often considered to be reasonable to divide the sources of threats between natural and man-made. The second fact describes the situation of perception of the impact of the collapse of the bipolar division of the world. Before the end of the Cold War, national security was conceived of primarily in terms of military threats, while after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the definition of national security gradually took on a “Janus-faced” character, and was thought of in terms of both military and non-military causes simultaneously. It was therefore reasonable, particularly in the case of threats to national security, to divide them at the first level into military and non-military ones.

Military threats include those whose source comes from the armed forces of another country, as a subject of international law, coalition or alliance of those countries. Non-military threats, however, should be considered as all of those that are caused by individuals, social groups, or organizations that do not make use of the armed forces of the state.

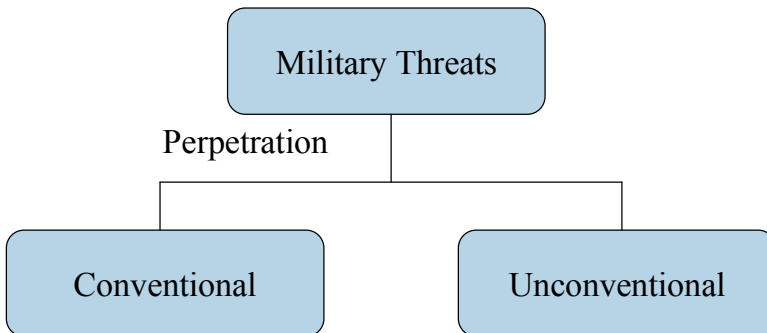


Figure 2: Diagram of National Security Threats (Military Threat, Level 2).

<sup>11</sup> Jörg Disse, *Metafizyka od Platona do Hegla* (Metaphysics from Plato to Hegel) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2005), 70.

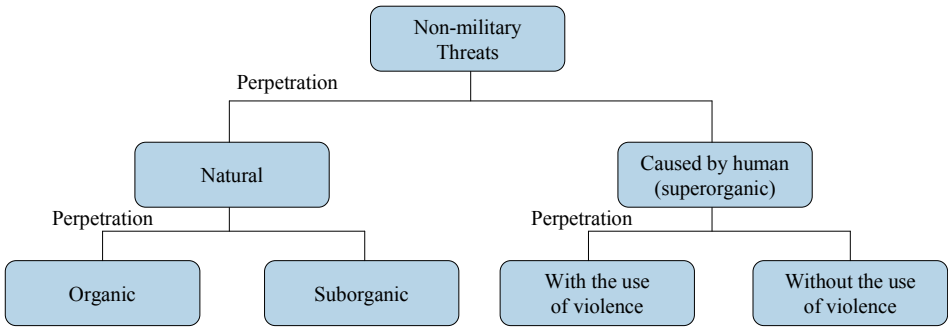


Figure 3: Diagram of National Security Threats (Non-military Threats, Levels 2 and 3).

Military threats may have a conventional character, if the enemy uses land, air, sea, and special forces, and is equipped with conventional weapons of a limited range. Unconventional military threats are associated with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but also new technologies with comparable or even greater range and/or destructive force than weapons of mass destruction, such as psycho-tropic weapons capable of affecting the mood and state of mind of whole nations. The possibility of uncontrolled transfer of weapons of mass destruction and their carriers constitutes one of the major transnational security threats. Materials and technologies that can be used to build such weapons and their carriers are becoming increasingly available. However, the instruments and procedures to detect and prevent illicit trafficking of such materials and technologies continue to be ineffective or overly complicated. Illicit trafficking of components for the production of weapons of mass destruction poses the threat of their penetration into non-democratic countries, as well as states that are affected by internal conflict or are in conflict with other countries. Such materials may also pass into the hands of terrorist or extremist groups. Poland is adjacent to an area of increased risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In extreme cases, the proliferation of WMD could cause a direct threat to our territory.

Limits to the range of military threats in both time and space may refer to their ability to affect a small area (limited in space) or their ability to affect the entire national territory for a short time (two to three weeks), or a longer period measured in years. However, non-conventional military threats, as a rule, will have long-term effects and great spatial range (i.e., they will be able to affect the whole country).

It is appropriate to divide non-military threats to national security into those of an organic or suborganic nature, and those whose perpetrator is a person (who may or may not be using violence). The individual person is understood in this scheme as a member

of a social group or organization; thus, the superorganic portion of our reality is the realm of the organization, whose highest form is the state.<sup>12</sup>

*Natural threats* to national security are rooted in biological causes (excluding human activities). Such threats have mainly a biological or epidemiological character, and rely on the transmission of infectious (viral or bacterial) diseases by animals (e.g. migratory birds). These phenomena can cause an epidemic or even a pandemic, which can threaten the security of individual nations and, in the case of a pandemic, the entire global population. One example of such a pandemic is the recurrence throughout history of influenza, which is shown below in Figure 4.

*Suborganic threats* are the result of inanimate natural forces, such as storms or earthquakes, and may prove much more dangerous for the Republic of Poland than natural threats. Ficoń distinguishes three separate, coherent groups of risks: space, climate, and tectonic.<sup>13</sup> The threats coming from space include cosmic and solar radiation, Earth's collision with a space body, changes in the intensity of the Earth's magnetism, and meeting an alien civilization. The most common categories of climate threats are floods; mudslides and landslides; droughts and heat waves; blizzards and ice storms;

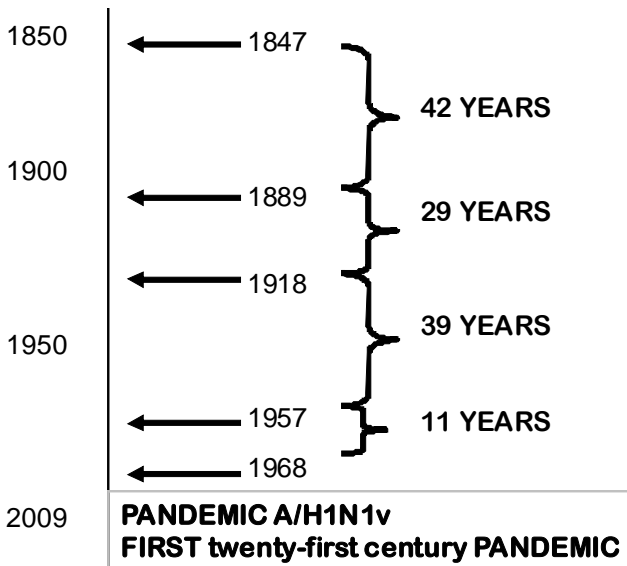


Figure 4: Frequency of Influenza Pandemics since 1847.

<sup>12</sup> The division of reality into suborganic, organic, and superorganic is suggested by Lech Janusz Krzyżanowski, *O podstawach kierowania organizacjami inaczej: paradygmaty, filozofia, dylematy* (Differentiation on the Basis of Organization Management: Paradigms, Philosophy, Dilemmas) (Warsaw: PWN, 1999), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ficoń, *Inżynieria zarządzania kryzysowego*, 83.

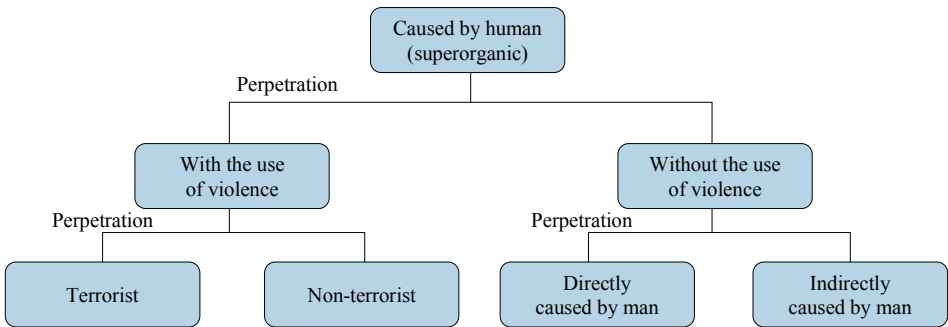


Figure 5: Diagram of Security Threats to the State (Non-military Threats, Levels 3 and 4).

strong winds (hurricanes and tornadoes); electrical storms; fires resulting from natural causes; and global warming. Finally, tectonic hazards include mainly earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Although Poland is situated in a zone of low seismic activity, the recent volcanic eruption in Iceland (in April 2010, which led to an airplane crash in Smolensk), the Polish people realized how large a risk inanimate nature may pose on a national scale (in this case, the paralysis of the air transportation system).

In turn, national security threats caused by man—classified here as *superorganic threats*—can be clearly and separately divided into those where the perpetrator is a person using violence and those where the perpetrator’s actions are an indirect cause of a threat. Violence is understood as exerting physical or psychological influence on the process of thinking, behavior, or physical condition of a person without their consent.

Modern threats to national security are connected primarily with the tensions and instability caused by international terrorism, which is located in the scheme proposed among the non-military threats, the perpetrator of which is an individual using violence. Terrorism is currently the greatest threat to international security (including Poland), although the degree of the threat posed by terrorism is different for each country.<sup>14</sup> The threat of international terrorism has taken on a completely new character, as those who organize and carry out attacks have means and methods at their disposal that do not fit with traditional ideas of terrorism. Acts of terrorism are aimed at, among others, the values, institutions, and interests of most of the Euro-Atlantic area countries. These activities have been prepared using modern communication techniques and take advantage of the ease of movement offered by the global transportation network and of conducting international financial transactions. They are ruthless in nature, and are calculated to cause maximum destructive impact among the population. One example is the preparations that were under way for a terrorist attack in New York in 2007 aimed at blowing

<sup>14</sup> Jan Wojnarowski, *Współczesne wyzwania i zagrożenia dla systemu bezpieczeństwa państwa w: Narodowy system pogotowia kryzysowego* (Contemporary Challenges and Threats to the Security System of the State in National Crisis Alert System) (Warsaw: AON, 2007), 12.



up fuel pipelines supplying planes at Kennedy Airport. These pipelines run under residential buildings and apartment blocks. If they had been blown up, the consequences of such a terrorist attack are hard to imagine.

One rapidly-growing phenomenon that poses a threat to Polish national interests are non-state risks that are not caused by terrorists, but rather that posed by cross-border organized crime. This kind of crime is linked to the smuggling of weapons, dangerous materials, people, and drugs, using such methods as money laundering and corruption. The potential threat is created by the potential of mass migration of individuals or cross-border transport of materials that could pose a threat to Polish security. Poland's central location on the European continent increases the existing risks in this area, although the probability of a mass migration of this type is currently limited. At present, Poland has to take into account the economic and social impact of migration processes and to counteract their negative effects. Nowadays, a noticeable scale of economic migration poses a major challenge for state services within Poland.

Polish territory—due to its geographical location and relative accessibility—may also serve as a convenient logistic base from which to prepare and take action against citizens, institutions, and companies in other countries. This could include the likelihood that Poland could serve as a hub (rather than merely a transit corridor) for drug trafficking or human trafficking. In recent years, Poland has been experiencing an increase in transnational criminal groups' activities, which have resulted in a variety of social pathologies. This is a serious threat for Poland.

But it is human action—whether direct or indirect—that poses threats of the most severe nature for Poland's national security (apart from natural hazards of a suborganic character). These threats include technical, social, and environmental risks. Ficoń divides the technical risks into fires, including natural landscape fires, chemical, construction, and transportation disasters.<sup>15</sup> The most common threat caused directly as a result of human recklessness or intentional actions, and indirectly (due to ignorance of the law, principles of fire protection, or equipment malfunction) is that of fire. Some fires have a natural cause, such as forest fires, which are often started by lightning, and are thus included in the category of suborganic, natural hazards. However, the most dangerous fires in Poland seem to be industrial and municipal fires, which frequently kill or injure large numbers of people. Moreover, the combination of fire phenomena with the incineration of hazardous industrial substances is most commonly associated with long-term contamination to the environment over a large spatial scale.

Chemical contamination poses a serious threat to national security. Toxic industrial agents accompany the development of the metallurgical, automotive, rubber, fertilizer, paint and varnish, and many other industrial sectors. During an emergency or disaster, agents of this type can infiltrate the atmosphere, soil, and groundwater. When nuclear power plants are built in Poland, failures in their installation and at atomic power stations can pose a very serious risk. Possible radioactive contamination may result in significant mortality among humans and animals, as well as long-term contamination of the

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<sup>15</sup> Ficoń, *Inżynieria zarządzania kryzysowego*, 90.

environment, especially soil and water. Moreover, the disposal of depleted radioactive materials, whose natural activity can last up to 50,000 years, may create a significant problem.

Another category of threats includes technical risks associated with construction and transport disasters. They can stem from the construction of residential, industrial, and transportation facilities and objects. The most dangerous consequences may be caused by the failure of large hydraulic engineering facilities, such as dams and hydroelectric plants. Disasters at public facilities such as large arenas, sports halls, and shopping centers may also pose significant danger to human life and health. In addition, various types of mining disasters are not only hazardous but also often deadly.

The most dangerous consequences for the state stem from the danger of transport accidents and disasters. As characterized above, technical risks rarely cause serious consequences on a national scale. Transport disasters like traffic accidents and marine and aviation crashes amount to a significant number of victims; every year in Poland several thousand people are killed, and tens of thousands are injured in these types of accidents. The air and sea disasters are attributed to the inevitability of tragedy. The number of incidents and accidents of this type is not very large, but the last major air crash in Poland, of a Tu-154 on 10 April 2010, killed all ninety-six people on board – ninety-six people who were among the most important individuals in the country. This event forced Poland to take notice of how an air crash can cause a threat to national security under certain conditions. However, certainly the biggest threat—and the most difficult to overcome—are traffic accidents, which occur daily, and kill thousands each year.

Social risks are another set of threats to national security within the category of superorganic threats, and are caused directly or indirectly by man, either as an individual, social group, or organization. The main reasons behind such risks are the impoverishment of society, poverty, the growing disparity between rich and poor, gender discrimination in employment, unemployment, and a growing imbalance between employed people and the elderly. Furthermore, threats stemming from computer systems and networks, and the frequent lack of awareness on the part of users of these systems and networks of threats such as cybercrime and cyber terrorism, are also classified as social threats with a clear rising trend. The social consequences of these threats affect a range of key actors in national security: individuals, social groups, and organizations that increasingly depend on information technology. In Poland, this threat concerns millions of citizens, but on a global scale it poses a risk to at least two billion people.

In addition, an indirect threat to Poland's national security arises from the breakup of existing states, the instability caused by failed states, and the high-risk posed by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes that promote the escalation of international terrorism and that are typically unpredictable in their military actions (including a tendency toward asymmetrical actions). In these countries, non-progressive socio-economic underdevelopment causes social discontent and economic migration. Some of these economic migrants will eventually arrive in Poland, due to the improving economic situation in our country. It may be assumed that not all of them will manage to adapt socially to life in Poland, and some may come to pose various types of risks highlighted above.

Energy threats resulting from causes including insufficient diversification of energy supplies, particularly crude oil and natural gas, are also a major challenge for Polish security. Moreover, Poland's security may be threatened by the disruption of world trade and the actions on the part of our neighbors from the East in adopting free-trade standards. The development of information technology and communication systems related to capital markets causes new threats that could disrupt the stability of the financial situation in Poland.

Last but not least, environmental hazards are a very important category for the national security of the Republic of Poland. The basic groups of causes of such threats in the literature include demographic, geographic, technical, economic, and socio-cultural threats.<sup>16</sup> All these sources lead, each in its own way, to environmental degradation, resulting in threats to life, health, and social well-being. The growing number of people living in Poland, including those arriving due to migration from authoritarian and totalitarian states, can disrupt the environmental balance and the capacity of Poland's infrastructure to sustain a growing population. In turn, the geographical gap between the quantity of natural resources necessary for human life and the real needs of a given geographical area is perceived as an ecological threat. This situation results in increased pollution in the process of obtaining those resources. Ecological technical risks arise mainly from the use of outdated technologies in Poland, which normally produce significant amounts of carbon dioxide, polluting our atmosphere. The sources of eco-economic risks are associated with the location of production on Polish territory, which is ecologically burdensome for the more developed countries. These phenomena, along with the lack of legislative measures to regulate environmental pollution in a developing country like Poland, reduce the country's level of ecological security. In addition, environmental socio-cultural threats, which mainly result from the fact that Poland enjoys a rapid pace of development while it under-invests in environmental protection, may become dangerous. The most dangerous phenomena reducing environmental security include global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, and smog.

## Conclusions

To sum up, the modern national security system must meet many challenges and threats to the state. The most important challenges and threats to Poland that exist at present are listed below.<sup>17</sup>

### *Challenges to Poland*

1. Economic globalization and regionalization, and the resulting free flow of capital, goods, information, and people
2. Democratization processes in the socio-political and economic arenas

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>17</sup> Wojnarowski, *Współczesne wyzwania i zagrożenia dla systemu bezpieczeństwa państwa*, 12, 13.